

**An internal communication assessment of the  
Lilongwe City Assembly**

by

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## DECLARATION

“By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. J. D. van der Merwe", written over a horizontal dotted line.

Date: 22 October 2008”

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, who passed away a few days after the beginning of this journey last year. I salute and admire my mother's love, friendship and strength, and my daughter Tessa, who has always been on my side, supporting and believing in me. I thank Georg, my husband, best friend and partner in life for supporting this dream. Lastly, to my siblings and my friends, I express my deepest gratitude for your endless support and inspiration.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Internal communication has the potential of improving the ability of local authorities to deliver effective and efficient basic services. Local authorities are the pillar upon which governments rely to champion the decentralisation process which has been widely hailed as enabling service delivery to the communities. The Lilongwe City Assembly recognises the need to address internal communication issues, but have neither carried out any meaningful analysis of its internal communication nor has it developed an internal communication plan or guidelines. The communication audit methodology is relatively unknown in the public sector in Malawi and it is hoped that this study brings to light the advantages of giving organisational communication its deserved role in activities of the public sector. It is hoped that this study would be replicated in the remaining 38 local assemblies with a view to improving service delivery.

This study assessed the internal communication of the Assembly as part of a broader perspective of organisational communication. Specifically, it measured the effectiveness of internal communication at the Lilongwe City Assembly. The methodology involved measuring the perceived current and ideal amounts of information in eight fundamental areas of internal communication, namely receiving information from others, sending information to others, action on information sent, channels of communication, communication relationships, communication and work satisfaction, timeliness of information received from key sources and sources of information.

Findings from a sample of 186 respondents of the Assembly indicated a great need to receive information and to interact with Assembly management more frequently than what is happening currently. The communication between subordinates and co-workers seems to be satisfactory. However, the majority of respondents expressed the need to engage with Assembly management on a number of key issues, including staff welfare, salaries and benefits. In addition, a concern about the inability of employees to master the English language was cited as reducing the capacity of the Assembly to fully implement its work activities.

## OPSOMMING

Interne kommunikasie het die potensiaal om die vermoë van plaaslike owerhede om doeltreffende basiese dienste te lewer, te verbeter. Plaaslike owerhede is die pilaar waarop die regering steun om die desentralisasieproses, wat wyd beskou word as die proses wat dienslewering aan die gemeenskappe bevorder, voor te staan. Openbaresektor-organisasies is onder toenemende druk om doeltreffende basiese dienste aan die publiek te lewer.

Die Lilongwe Stadsraad erken dat die behoefte bestaan om aan interne kommunikasiekwessies aandag te gee, maar het nie enige veelseggende ontleding van hulle interne kommunikasie uitgevoer nie en het ook nie 'n interne kommunikasieplan of riglyne ontwikkel nie. Die kommunikasie-ouditeringsmetodologie is relatief onbekend in Malawi se openbare sektor en daar word gehoop dat hierdie studie die voordele om organisatoriese kommunikasie sy verdiende plek in die aktiwiteite van die openbare sektor te gee, aan die lig sal bring. As 'n uitkoms van hierdie studie, word daar gehoop dat plaaslike owerhede gebruik kan maak van die ervaring van die Lilongwe Stadsraad en die studie in al 38 plaaslike rade sal herhaal in 'n poging om diensleweringse aktiwiteite te verbeter.

Hierdie studie het die interne kommunikasie van die Raad as deel van 'n breër perspektief van organisatoriese kommunikasie geassesseer. Dit het spesifiek die doeltreffendheid van die Lilongwe Stadsraad se interne kommunikasie gemeet. Die metodologie wat gebruik is om die waarneembare huidige en die ideale hoeveelhede inligting te meet, word in agt fundamentele areas van interne kommunikasie verdeel, naamlik ontvangs van inligting van ander, stuur van inligting na ander, reaksie op inligting gestuur, kanale van kommunikasie, kommunikasieverhoudinge, kommunikasie en werksbevrediging, tydlyne van inligting ontvang van sleutelbronne, en bronne van inligting.

Bevindinge van 'n proef bestaande uit 186 respondente, getrek uit die werknemers van die Raad, weerspieël dat die behoefte bestaan om meer inligting oor verskeie onderwerpe te ontvang as wat hulle tans ontvang en om meer gereeld met die Raad in wisselwerking te tree. Die meerderheid van die respondente het egter die behoefte uitgespreek om 'n aantal sleutelkwessies met die Raad te bespreek, insluitend personeelwelsyn, salarisse en byvoordele. Daar is ook kommer uitgespreek oor die werknemers se onvermoë om Engels te bemeester, aangesien dit die Raad se kapasiteit verminder om sy werksaktiwiteite volkome te implementeer, en dit ook kommunikasie-aktiwiteite belemmer.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

This study was carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Stellenbosch University School of Public Management and Planning for a Master of Arts Degree in Public and Development Management. This study recognises local authorities as key to the delivery of basic services by governments and sets out to measure the effectiveness of communication that takes place internally in the Lilongwe City Assembly, Republic of Malawi, using the International Communications Audit method developed by the International Communications Association (ICA). The argument is that internal communication plays a leading role in service delivery. As such, the assessment of internal communication is not only necessary but also relevant to the achievement of desired goals and objectives of local authorities.

The argument of whether communication is vital for the success of an organisation is widely documented and supported by numerous studies including Hargie and Tourish (1993); Antonis (2005); Carter (2005); Walt (2006) and Opperman (2005). Antonis (2005:8) makes a valid argument in asserting the well-acclaimed reality that the effect of communication is intangible and emphasises that neither its contribution and value nor its impact on success remains clear in the ongoing discussions on the effectiveness of communication. Despite this acknowledged fact, organisational communication has continued to dominate organisational life since the 1950s. To date organisations continue to concede that communication is the lubricant required to achieve organisational effectiveness and therefore dedicate considerable amounts of time in investing in systems of communication that bring organisations closer to the achievement of desired goals and objectives.

Yet, there is evidence that despite the existence of extensive information about communicating persuasively and effectively, many organisations fail to communicate their missions, visions and values as well as they should (Dubrin 2007:357). In his work, Dubrin urges a focus on the creation of high-impact communication with a view to enhancing leadership, thereby bringing organisational communication issues to the forefront. This study recognises that local authorities play a leadership role in the provision of basic services and therefore placing communication high on the agenda of local authorities.

Within the realms of local authorities, communication is the only means available to public managers to convey ideas and thoughts emanating from organisational objectives, policies, programmes, decisions, directives or plans. Through this way public managers impact the lives of millions of citizens relying on the public sector for the provision of basic services (Fox, 1991:2). Fox further argues in favour of the notion of perceiving effective communicators and public managers as synonymous when he says “no organized group exists without communication”. This study extends this notion further by claiming that employees need communication to provide much needed feedback to public managers. In a perfect situation where managers or leaders communicate ideas and employees give full feedback, there would be no need for an evaluation mechanism.

In reality, there exist potential problems, barriers to communication and other external factors that reduce communicative efforts within organisations. These issues can be brought to light for resolution through systems that monitor and evaluate organisational communication, such as the communication audit. Regular communication auditing is necessary in the life of any organisation, similarly to a doctor’s checkup required by humans to ensure that the health system is functioning well. Often, such a checkup can expose ‘life-threatening’ issues early enough to warrant action to avert serious problems that might impact the performance of an organisation.

Organisations exist as entities comprising of several interdependent parts that are fundamental to organisational effectiveness. Employees within organisations engage in communication activities in which information is shared and meanings are exchanged, all in fulfilment of organisational goals and objectives. These activities feed into public sector goals and objectives that centre on basic service delivery in the interest of society.

The flow of messages in the internal and external context of the organisations is vital in facilitating the day-to-day activities of the organisation. Employees in the Lilongwe City Assembly are engaged in activities that can be classified into these areas which culminate in the delivery of basic services to the Malawian citizens. These areas are fundamental to the effectiveness of the Assembly as a whole and warrant an analysis to assist management in assessing how well the assembly is doing with regard to achieving its desired goals and objectives. There is growing pressure on the government to improve service delivery. This pressure is ultimately directed at local authorities who are mandated by legislation to act as the main vehicles of service delivery.

This study aims to analyse the following eight domain areas of internal communication that are common to public sector organisations, as demarcated by Du Plooy (2001:314):

- Receiving information from others
- Sending information to others
- Action on information sent
- Channels of communication
- Communication relationships
- Communication and work satisfaction
- Timeliness of information received from key sources
- Sources of information

## **1.2 Background/Rationale to the study**

Despite many efforts aimed at reforming the public sector in developing countries, the delivery of basic services is still an elusive goal of many governments in developing countries, including the government of Malawi. Ownership, leadership and transformation are three fundamental ideals that are on the wishlist of supporters of development in developing countries. The government plays a major role in ensuring that services reach the citizens. Ultimately, it is not realistic that government provides all services. Hence, government is in a position of identifying private and public sector institutions as well as development institutions that can provide services (World Bank, 1997:14).

In order to aid development efforts, developing countries, including Malawi, have been using the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to drive the development agenda. Recently Malawi replaced the last PRSP strategy with a document called the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) Framework. This framework is poverty reduction centred and aspires towards the creation of a healthy sustainable economy as well as developed infrastructure.

Theme five of the MDGS Framework, “Improved governance”, proposes seven fronts upon which good governance can be achieved, including the following: “Improving service delivery and accountability at local level through decentralisation” and “Establishing an institutional setting for good corporate governance”. Sub-theme two of the MDGS Framework, “Information, communication and technologies, communication systems and

dissemination of information in an effective manner” are cited as critical to successful service delivery and to the development of a vibrant private sector (GRM, 2006:55).

High-quality service delivery and effective institutions are cited in this strategic framework as central to the success of achieving the desired objectives and goals of the MGDS Framework. As one of the key strategies of sub-theme two of the MDGS Framework, the establishment of an efficient national and sub-national communication system at intra- and interdepartmental levels as well as inter-sectoral level highlights the need for local authorities to strive towards creating communication systems to facilitate the achievement of national priorities. Against this background, sub-Saharan Africa faces the reality of extremely low access to basic services (UNDP, 2008:1).

### ***1.2.1 Lilongwe City Assembly and its internal communication***

Malawi gained independence from colonial British rule in 1963. Thereafter a 23-year period of authoritarian rule by the Malawi Congress Party ensued. The year 1994 ushered in a new era in Malawi that saw the adoption of a new Constitution of the Republic of Malawi in 1995. This constitution upholds democratic principles of accountability, transparency and participation of the people in two key processes, namely decision making and development (GRM, 1998:5). Inevitably, this turn of events highlighted the importance of the management of governmental communication systems if the government is to be able to uphold the above principles. For instance, in order to be accountable, officials must communicate with the public to ascertain the needs and in turn communicate their plan back and get the required endorsement, and ultimately give explanations for their actions to the citizens.

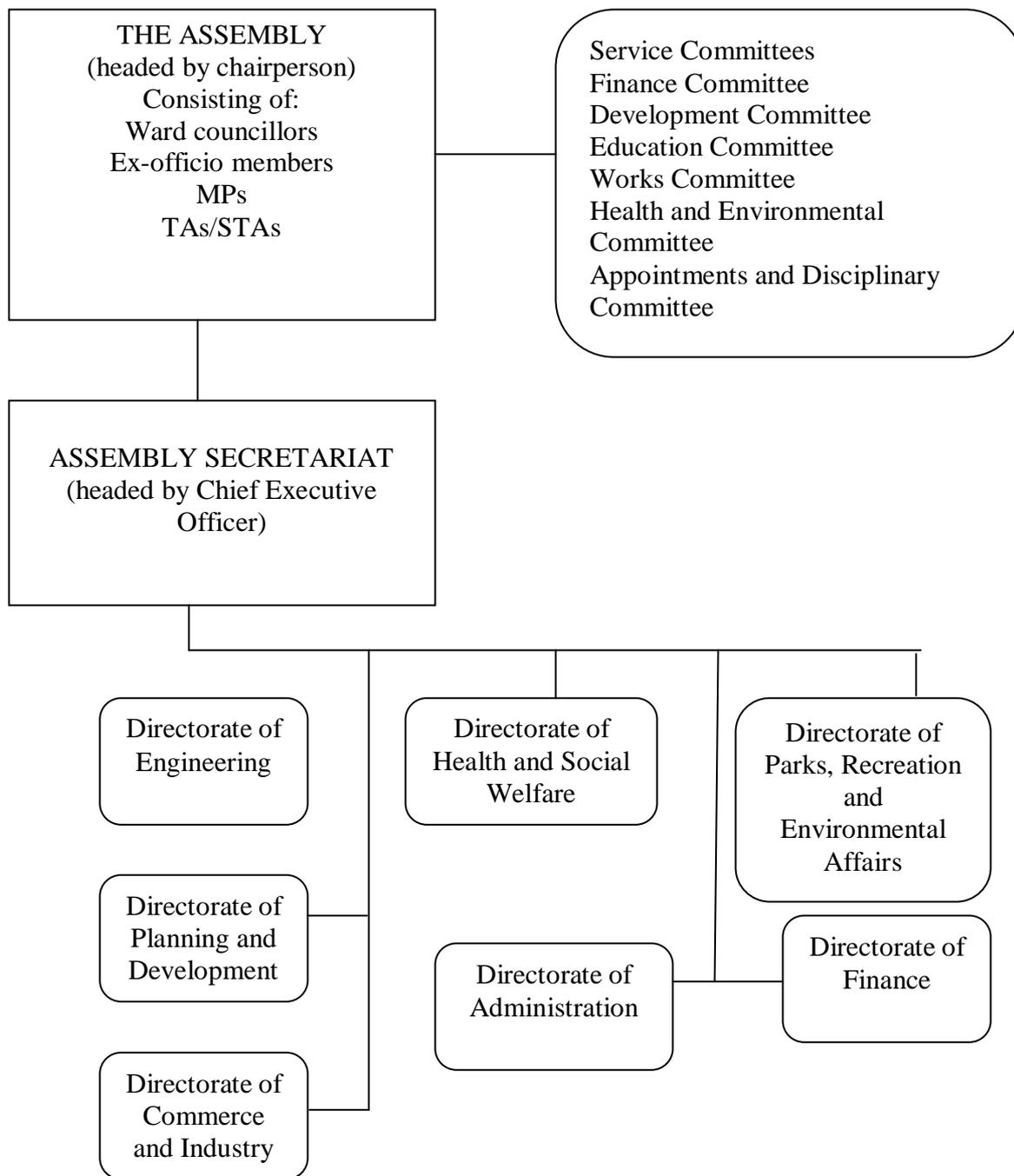
This clearly underlines the important role of communication. Communication aids transparency in a similar way where information is exchanged with a view to achieving specified ideals. Participation is all about communication and the most suitable situation is when there is over-communication by government to the people and vice versa. According to McNamara (2008:1), there can never be enough communication, but rather a willingness to convey and receive information effectively, thereby increasing both internal and external communication within organisations.

The implication of this new development is that participation of citizens became a prerequisite for the government’s programme of action to address the many challenges facing the country. According to Van Dijk (2002:236), participation of citizens is a condition for democratic

societies. Governments are required by the social contract with the people to provide information and communication activities to fulfil this democratic requirement. This highlights the need for government to put in place a solid foundation for its organisation communication in order to ensure that full participation takes place. Information and communication technologies cannot exist alone in a vacuum but need to be embedded in sound organisational communication policies and strategies that fully maximise their potential to bolster development efforts by governments.

The purpose of the creation of a local government system was to cater for the administration of local government issues leaving central government to concentrate on national priority issues. Effectively, this was aimed at drawing Malawian citizens closer to government affairs and thereby bringing about much needed development at grassroots level. Currently, the local authority institutions in Malawi are operating despite the fact that the much needed power and the accompanying financial resources from central to local government have not yet fully taken place as stipulated by various legislative directives from central government.

The Republic of Malawi comprises of three levels of government, namely national, provincial and local (local assemblies). The local government system of the government of Malawi was established in 1998 and comprises of 40 assemblies divided into 3 city assemblies; 28 district assemblies, 8 town assemblies and 1 municipal assembly (GTZ-MGPDD, 2005:4). The assemblies are each headed by either a chief executive in the case of city assemblies or by district commissioners in the case of district assemblies (Figure 1.1 below).



**Figure 1.1: The Lilongwe City Assembly organisational structure Source: (GTZ, 2005)**

There are no recorded efforts of assessments or measurements of internal communication since the Assembly was established. The management of the Lilongwe City Assembly strives for the creation of an ideal professional and open environment for all its employees. Continuous efforts are required in order to improve the system of communications available to employees to enable them to deliver quality services to the organisation's clients, namely the citizens of Malawi.

Satisfied and motivated employees are the ones who are well informed about the Assembly's programme of action, policies and programmes aimed at service delivery as well as performance-related incentives and reward systems. In this regard the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms become imperative to help the organisation evaluate its internal functioning to ensure that desired goals and objectives are being met. How can an organisation keep moving forward without evaluating itself with a view to improving itself?

Communication within local authorities is regarded as the activity of communicating, of conveying information to other employees, between people or groups. It is a connection that allows access between persons and places. Du Plooy (2001:343) defines communication as the exchange of information from one person to another (upward, downward or horizontally) in the hierarchy of an organisation.

Stanley (cited in Kayuni, 2005) argues that accountability and transparency require the support of systems that monitor and evaluate the process of ensuring participation of communities in government affairs as well as the government's responsibility. Stanley singles out "monitoring and evaluation systems, audits, technical output and impact evaluations". A tremendous amount of communication in which ideas and thoughts affecting millions of Malawian citizens are exchanged and shared within the Assembly. Therefore strategically managing communication at an organisational level (in this case local authority level) is necessary to ensure that organisational goals and objectives are met successfully.

According to Kayuni (2005:15), communication is responsible for mediating local participation and providing information on issues and problems in the community. In addition, communities learn about how they should participate in local government affairs that affect their lives through mediated communication. This conviction creates the need for the strategic management of organisational communication in local authorities. Ideally, orderly and responsive political institutions are primarily constituted by purposeful and planned organisational communication. This study presents internal communication as one of many ways available to local authorities and other local government institutions aimed at improving service delivery.

The planning of purposeful internal communication systems can ensure the promotion of the achievement of national priorities such as development or poverty reduction. It complements efforts of the government of Malawi to create local authority institutions that are sound,

sustainable and able to effectively deliver basic services – therefore heeding the call that it is time that African governments show their commitment to poverty reduction and improve the delivery of basic services.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

There has recently been a growing interest in the performance of the 40 local government areas in Malawi. Achieving high levels of participation by local authorities in the Malawi public sector is perceived by many as the key to the success of the decentralisation process and therefore to the release of many Malawians from the poverty trap. Since 1994, the government of Malawi has undertaken numerous reforms in order to increase its capacity to perform a broad range of functions, including providing basic services to the citizens of Malawi.

Service delivery by local authorities in Malawi remains low despite the establishment of the necessary legal and policy framework for propelling the decentralisation process. This situation is a cause for concern for the citizens of Malawi, the government of Malawi and its development partners. The reasons given by many scholars include the lack of financial resources to enable the local authorities to function fully. In addition to this is also a lack of a full transfer of authority to the local authorities by central government to enable local authorities to perform their functions. These two problems are cited as having led to a low access to basic services by Malawian citizens (GTZ-MGPDD:2005:7).

This study argues that internal communication provides one of many possible solutions to improving service delivery by local authorities. Internal communication provides central and local government with an opportunity to build relationships, teams and networks that work towards improving service delivery where it is needed most, namely at local level. The study will contribute to other efforts by experts in the areas of management and organisational development who are involved in institution building, capacity development and those who are championing the creation of sound and functioning institutions within the government of Malawi.

This study seeks to measure internal communication by comparing the ideal with the real internal communication within the Lilongwe City Assembly. A large discrepancy between the real and the ideal warrants the study. In light of the above background, the research problem

for this study has been formulated in the form of the following statement: An analysis of internal communication in the Lilongwe City Assembly, Republic of Malawi.

### **1.3.1 Goals and objectives**

The goal for the study was applied communication research. The study investigated a practical issue, namely the internal communication system of the Lilongwe City Assembly in order to identify problems and offer solutions to these problems. The study compared the current and ideal amounts of information in eight fundamental areas of communication through the use of a self-administered questionnaire as a measuring instrument.

The researcher identified the following exploratory and descriptive objectives as pertinent to the study:

- To carry out a methodical examination aimed at measuring the effectiveness of internal communication of the Lilongwe City Assembly.
- To diagnose possible communication problems within the Lilongwe City Assembly.
- To provide a more elaborate understanding of internal communication within the organisational communication context.
- To provide a critical analysis of the linkage between internal communication and service delivery.

### **1.3.2 Research design and methodology**

Mouton (2006:152) introduces a typology of research designs that includes surveys as an empirical type of study available for use by researchers. An empirical study based on a cross-sectional survey was selected for purposes of this study. Mouton (2006:152) classifies the survey design as empirical, as relying on primary data and numeric data and of medium control. The advantage of using this method lies in the fact that it allows for generalisations to be made to a larger group than that studied. Selection of an appropriate sampling design is the conditionality for the generalisation (Mouton, 2006:153). However, Mouton indicates the limitations presented by surveys as the widely criticised “lack of depth and insider perspective” pertinent to surface level analyses. Surveys are also prone to errors, including non-response to questionnaires and other measuring instruments.

## **1.4 Definition of key concepts**

In this study organisation communication is viewed as those activities that are internal and external to the organisation. However, as the emphasis is on internal organisational communication, a brief overview of external communication will be given to complement the understanding of organisation communication. Definitions of the following key concepts are provided below: communication, communication audit, organisational communication, and internal and external communication.

### **1.4.1 Communication**

Communication is any activity that involves exchanging information from one person to another. The direction of this exchange may be either horizontally, downward or upward within hierarchies of an organisation as a whole or within units, sections, divisions, departments and other subdivisions of organisations (Du Plooy, 2001:322).

### **1.4.2 Organisational communication**

Neher defines organisation as “an ongoing, observable pattern of interactions among people” and communication as “the process of two or more people engaging in mutual awareness and sharing of facts, feelings or intentions through the use of verbal and non-verbal signs observable in some medium” Similarly, Robbins and Barnwell (2006:6) define an organisation as “a consciously coordinated social entity, with a relatively identifiable boundary, which functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals”.

Steinberg (1995:154) defines the term organisational communication as an umbrella term for all processes involving the act of communication that takes place in the organisational context, both internal and external to the organisation. This definition captures the following processes:

- One-on-one communication (between managers and employees)
- Small group communication (meetings)
- Public communication (public speeches by the Chief Executive Officer of the Assembly)
- Mass communication (press releases, company newsletters, new product announcements)

### **1.4.3 Internal and external communication**

Internal communication creates and maintains the internal environment of an organisation. Thus it encompasses both formal and informal structures and modes of communication and includes all forms of communication including small group, management or mass internal communication as well as interpersonal communication” Mersham & Skinner (as cited in Landman & Angelopulo, 2006).

This study acknowledges the difference between organisational communication and what is loosely termed internal communication in many organisations Calabrese (2004:47). Antonis (2005:62–63) equates intraorganisational communication to internal communication in a study encompassing the broader internal aspects of organisational communication. Carter (2005:2), on the other hand, automatically assumes internal communication as a whole made up of interrelated parts in a broader organisational context, similarly to this study.

### **1.4.4 Communication audit**

Du Plooy (2001:322) defines a communication audit as a methodological and systematic way of determining the effectiveness of communication within an organisation. The purpose of this study is to diagnose possible communication problems within the organisation.

### **1.4.5 The International Communication Audit**

Developed in 1971 by the ICA, the International Communication Audit is a diagnostic tool available to management in both private and public sector organisations for performing similar functions to those fulfilled by the well-known financial audit. In this case, the tool audits systems of communication internal to the organisation. The communication audit is a basic method used in the assessment of internal communication and has proved to be useful in identifying communication problems and recommending possible solutions (Neher, 1997:328). This study employs the International Communications Audit methodology.

### **1.4.6 Local authority**

According to Opperman (2005:11), a local authority is a governing body of a town or city that addresses the administration of the town and delivers services such as education, health, roads infrastructure, water and others.

### **1.4.7 Service delivery**

Service delivery refers to the provision of basic services through government and by government as well as by private sector and non-government organisations and individual service providers. In developing countries the provision of services to the majority of the people is state-led. The role of government in service delivery is therefore critical and local authorities play a leading role in providing services directly at local levels.

### **1.4.8 Assessment of organisational communication**

The terms assessment, evaluation and measurement are often used interchangeably in the analysis of organisational communication. The notion of self-analysis through the use of various research methodologies is not a foreign concept in modern-day complex organisations and their environments. Research is an effort made by an individual or an entity such as an organisation to make an enquiry into an issue in a systematic and methodical manner. An organisation does not just set itself up and begin to operate and continue to do so without taking stock of how well it is doing. Organisational communication is so fundamental that regular assessments of it are a necessity to help organisations to determine the quality and effectiveness of their communication.

## **1.5 Limitations to the study**

The study focused on one of forty local authorities due to financial, time and human resource constraints owing to the fact that the researcher is a self-financing full-time student. The study stands to benefit all 40 local authorities and can be replicated at a later stage subject to the availability of resources. The researcher relied on remote access for literature sources from the Stellenbosch University library for data due to the reality that the libraries in the country of residence of the researcher did not house recent literature works. The researched organisation provided relatively limited access to background information due to bureaucratic procedures regarding the retrieval of information. Information is a priced commodity within this local authority and was only available through a few key employees within the organisation. The study was limited by the lack of a sampling frame due to the above limitation. The reliance of the organisation on manual processes further posed a challenge to the study.

## **1.6 Demarcation of remaining chapters**

Chapter 1 provided an overview to the study and included an introduction, background and aspects pertinent to government and its role in service delivery. The emphasis in Chapter 1 was on the linkage between service delivery and internal communications. Key concepts are defined in this chapter as well as a brief outline of the current status of knowledge in the organisational communication field of study, which underpins the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. The aspect of measurement is introduced briefly in Chapter 1 and will be covered in more detail in the following chapter. In addition, the research problem, objectives and type of study were discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 covers the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. Organisational communication is the contextual background in which the focus of this study, namely internal communication, is embedded. Concepts of organisational communication and theoretical approaches are outlined in Chapter 2. The last section of Chapter 2 focuses on the assessment of the internal aspect of organisational communication, which is referred to in this study as internal communication.

Chapter 3 covers the research methodology, while Chapter 4 presents and interprets the results of the study. Chapter 5 covers conclusions and recommendations of the study.

The next chapter provides a bigger picture of internal communication and situates it in the organisational communication context.

## **1.7 Summary**

Chapter 1 served the purpose of providing an introduction to the study and covered fundamental concepts regarding organisational communication and internal communication. The study argued that internal communication plays a critical role in the provision of basic services. This chapter puts forward the argument that internal communication plays a prominent role in local authorities and provides another alternative way of improving service delivery capacities in local authorities in Malawi.

There are numerous challenges facing internal communication practitioners within public sector organisations. This fact is pertinent to the study, since a state-led approach to service delivery is dominant in most developing countries. Local authorities emerge to prominence as the closest institutions to citizens in many developing countries. Therefore, strengthening the

capacities of local authorities is of paramount importance in order to reverse the negatively perceived trend of governments failing to improve service delivery effectively and efficiently. This chapter proposes consideration of internal communication as one of the means available to the public sector to improve service delivery. Weak institutions and weak human resource capacities cripple efforts in developing countries to deliver basic services. The measurement of internal communication allows the Assembly to obtain feedback from its own employees by collection perceptions on the eight fundamental areas of internal communication referred to earlier.

In conclusion, any organisation is interested in ensuring that its employees receive enough information, on time and through the right channels in order to enable them to carry out their work effectively. Appropriate channels for communication ought to be provided by the organisation to facilitate this. The provision of channels through which communication can take place ensures that employees receive sufficient information to enable them to do their work.

A good internal communication system is vital to an organisation in that it ensures sufficient information flows to its employees. Upon receiving information employees need to take action in order to turn the information into useable products that help the organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. There is more than one source of information in any organisation. It is important for an organisation to ensure that information indeed flows from key sources to employees who are waiting for information in order to do their job effectively and efficiently. Evaluation systems are therefore required to measure the effectiveness of internal communication including measuring the timeliness of information received or sent to other members of the organisation as well as to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the channels of communication that exist within an organisation. Feedback mechanism play a critical role in an organisation to ensure that the right messages are received by the right people at the right time.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study provides a brief introduction to organisational communication, which is the contextual background in which internal communication is embedded. The main thrust of this chapter is set on internal communication, an inherent part of organisational communication. It includes a discussion on domain areas of internal communication, communication levels and flows within organisations, methods of internal communication, barriers to effective communication and techniques for improving communication.

As early as 1947, Herbert Simon, a distinguished Nobel laureate, was recorded as having described organisational communication systems as “absolutely essential to organisations” (Wikipedia, 2008:1). According to Steinberg (1995:38), during this period, organisations began to acknowledge the need to serve in the interest of society through increased efficiency and productivity.

Doppler and Lauterburg (2001) posit that statistics demonstrate that 80% of executives engage in the activity of communicating, and they equate the company’s communications infrastructure to a human nervous system in which the malfunctioning of one part has the potential of paralysing the rest of the body. McNamara (2008:1) argues that most leaders and managers equate communication to paperwork or bureaucracy and therefore become ‘averse’ to high degrees of communication. Leadership, management and organisational development experts affirm that organisations become effective if foundations are laid on principles of effective communication. Similarly to McNamara, Booth (1988:7) accords communication a strategic role through his subdivision of management in organisations as comprising of four activities, namely controlling, coordinating, planning, and communication as the fourth and ‘cement and glue’ activity that enables the other three activities to occur effectively.

### **2.2 Organisational communication**

Organisational communication has grown into a key research area impacting both on management and organisational development areas. Reasons for this growth can be attributed to the nature of the dynamic and ever-changing environment in which modern public sector organisations have found themselves immersed in. Primarily, the implication for the public

sector has therefore become the creation of sound and healthy institutions as a prerequisite to basic service delivery. Many public sector institutions are continually considering taking deliberate efforts to ensure effective organisational communication as a means of strengthening institutions with a view to improving service delivery. Viewing communication as the glue of all that transpires within and outside public sector institutions can help organisations to create effective mechanisms to help managers and leaders to send, receive, act timeously on information, build relationships, create channels that free employees to provide feedback to management and an environment that motivates employees.

However, despite a marked growth in research in the organisational communication field, not enough research has been carried out to explore the nature, flow and functions of communication within organisations (Hargie & Tourish, 1993:1). This study therefore contributes to addressing this gap in the literature. The possible inclusion of internal communications in the core activities of human resource management is one way of giving communication its deserved place within organisations. In addition, the scholars emphasise the need to perform systematic methodologies such as the communication audit approach to the study of communication to measure communication performance as well as other organisational areas, such as finance. Hargie and Tourish (1996:38–54) further posit the finding that issues such as strike actions, productivity and increased levels of innovation can be averted by improved internal communications. Many organisations face the danger of relying heavily on management through formal structures instead of co-opting the role of social relationships in which informal structures exist.

The temptation for many leaders and managers in organisations is to become complacent and relegate the communication function to the background. On the surface, employees in organisations take it for granted that since they talk to each other day in and day out they are communicating. In many cases, findings of an audit come as a surprise to management due to the fact that often managers perceive things to be running smoothly while problems are developing and growing into cases of crises and conflict.

The measurement of internal communication systems enables an organisation to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the communication process that allows a clear distinction between measuring the existing situation against what management perceives to be the situation and what the employees perceive. Discrepancies between this comparison constitute the problem for management. The communication audit provides an element of a realistic

assessment that can be used to formulate appropriate policies and programmes to drive the organisation towards its envisioned goals and objectives.

Organisational communication has evolved from its origin in business communication in the early 1950s to impacting on modern-day organisational development studies as well as on new fields, such as knowledge management, that have emerged in today's knowledge economy. This study embraces the definition of organisational communication posited by Neher (1997:21), who maintains that it is a field of study that explores the linkage between the social patterns and networks that form when an organisation is set up for the purpose of meeting common goals and objectives.

Neher (1997:23) identifies seven levels upon which communication studies are based as a way of clarifying how organisational communication has developed:

- Interpersonal communication
- Intercultural communication
- Public speaking, public communication
- Small-group communication
- **Organisational communication (context of this study)**
- Mass communication
- International communication

In reality, levels of communication are often used interchangeably and often confused perhaps due to the overlapping of the levels. For instance, interpersonal communication and small-group communication are pertinent to the level of organisational communication and are studied by organisational communication scholars in an attempt to clarify organisational communication issues, and also more specifically by scholars specialising in interpersonal communication aspects alone. Organisational communication concerns itself with exchanges of meaning and information that are relevant to the functioning of the organisation (Neher, 1997:24), therefore implying both internal and external exchanges of meaning and information.

Considering the definition of an organisation as an interaction of people and processes aimed at achieving certain identified goals and objectives necessitates organisations to devise monitoring and evaluation systems, audits, technical inputs and impact evaluations (Kayuni,

2005:13) to manage organisational communication with special reference to local authorities. Although Kayuni's reference is aimed at accountability and transparency issues within decentralisation in local authorities, evidence suggests that these two pillars of democracy rest on the ability of communication to mediate the projection of the ideals of democracy in modern societies. Unzicker, Clow & Babackus (2000:87) consider organisational communication as part of business communication alongside managerial communication, corporate communication and business communication itself. In this context organisational communication is linked to organisational structure and how it is adaptable to the environment.

### **2.3 Internal communication**

According to Unzicker et al. (2000:89), employees are referred to by public relations professionals as "active publics". These active publics are a threat to organisational missions in that they determine key issues for the organisations. Issues that are pertinent to employees when ignored or downplayed can result in failure by an organisation to achieve goals and objectives, unrest, strike actions, high staff turnover and other related incidences, therefore highlighting the need for organisations to regularly assess organisational communication. Assessment methods such as communication audits are useful to ferret out potential problems rather than waiting to firefight using communication, as done by most organisations.

Without a sound internal communication system public managers are unable to effectively control, coordinate and plan goals, objectives, programmes and policies directed at providing basic services to citizens. The success and effectiveness of organisations have been widely attributed to communication, particularly internal communication (Byrne & LeMay, 2006; Pertinent to this study is the report of Byrne and LeMay (2006) of direct links between high-quality communications (e.g. timely, accurate, useful), productivity (quality and quantity of work, time to get job done) and reduced absenteeism. According to Snyder and Morris (1984, cited in Byrne & LeMay, 2006:57), job performance and productively are a result of satisfaction in organisational communication.

Internal communication is loosely referred to by many as employee communication, staff communications, employee relations, industrial relations or, at the other end of the spectrum, change management (Smith & Mounter, 2005:7). Internal communication is practiced in modern-day organisations in sub-areas of organisational communication such as corporate

communications, public relations and human resource communication. Some associate narrow functions such as the production of company newsletters as major characteristics of internal communication.

Internal communication assumes a more strategic role due to the fact that internal communication enables the “internal market to deliver to the internal market” (Landman & Angelopulo, 2006:73). As a result, it becomes crucial to manage internal communication in order to ensure that the desired result of service delivery is achieved through the employment of a suitable mix of skills and attitudes and the creation of a healthy organisational climate that enables high-quality services to be delivered.

The notion of service is not new to public sector organisations. These organisations are gearing themselves towards realigning organisational structures in a manner that enables them to achieve a high quality of service delivery. Criticism of the failure of governments in developing countries to deliver basic services has been growing and putting pressure on leaders and managers to seek alternative ways to attain service delivery. A cautionary note worth mentioning is that public sector organisations should not replicate private sector initiatives aimed at improving service delivery without modifying them to suit governmental contexts or their own organisational realities (Heeks, 2006:1).

### ***2.3.1 Functions of internal communication***

Literature on internal communication documents numerous classifications of functions of internal communication that inform this study. This study considers two classifications that exhibit core messages in many other classifications, namely that of Landman and Angelopulo (2006), Du Toit, Schutte & De Wet (2003).

Firstly, Landman and Angelopulo propose three functions of internal communication that will be discussed first. These functions are strategic alignment, organisational learning and knowledge management and motivation. Secondly, Du Toit et al. (2003:73) put forward four functions of internal communication that are seemingly ‘obvious’ but pertinent to internal communication. These are the information, regulatory, integration and persuasion functions. These functions are incorporated in the three functions of Landman and Angelopulo mentioned above. The purpose of considering different views on the functions is to illustrate that often organisations attach various meanings and therefore emphasise different aspects of communication.

According to Landman and Angelopulo (2006:75), internal communications serves three primary functions namely strategic alignment; organisational learning, knowledge management and information dissemination and motivation.

### **2.3.1.1 Strategic alignment function**

Communicating effectively within any organisation encompasses issues of central performance and productivity, thereby bringing to the fore the function of internal communication to ensure that employees know, understand and above all act on the organisation's strategic direction (Mahdon, 2007:1).

According to Moorcroft (2003, cited in Landman & Angelopulo, 2006:75), internal communication enables organisations to align visions, missions, goals, values and priorities with communication and appropriate actions. Organisations derive tasks and activities from the above variables in a way that allows them to steer in the direction of achievement of desired goals and objectives. Informing employees about these variables and related issues serves as a way of motivating and skilling employees such that they carry out their tasks and activities in a manner that enable the organisation to realise its goals and objectives (Landman & Angelopulo, 2006:75).

Communicating organisational goals and objectives and related strategies should not only be confined to the management team but should be disseminated to all employees of all levels (Smith & Mounter, 2005:3). The question for the organisational communication practitioner becomes "How can employees support the organisation if they are not informed of where the goals and objectives are heading towards?" Many organisations experience employees who complain about the lack of information from senior management. Perhaps organisations assume that only a certain level of employees are able to comprehend strategic 'talk'. This belief hinders organisations from surviving as they fail to acknowledge the reality that means and ways of sharing information to all levels of organisations are imperative for any organisation (HRM Guide, 2007:1).

In support of this statement, Davis (1999:1) provides a practical "skyscraper analogy", which explains that in order to hold the large tall buildings, steel and other structures are needed to keep the building erect and strong against environmental stress. These are the load-bearing structures that can be equated to employees at all levels who keep the organisation erect and upright. Internal communication is the fabric upon which the "skyscraper" can remain upright

and functioning. Internal communication functions as the glue that keeps all tasks and activities together in a way that maintains the direction of the organisation towards the achievement of goals and objectives.

### **2.3.1.2 Organisational learning, knowledge management and information dissemination**

The second function mentioned by Landman and Angelopulo (2006:26) is organisational learning (similar to individual learning, except that all information is shared and not owned by individuals), knowledge management (creation of a think tank, making knowledge an asset that is made available to the organisation) and information dissemination. Due to its nature, this function highlights the placental role of internal communication in the midst of organisational activities related to it. Internal communication serves the purpose of ensuring that information reaches all employees, thereby facilitating learning and knowledge management activities of the organisations.

Landman and Angelopulo (2006:76) argue that the ability to learn is directly related to the management of information and communication, thereby highlighting channels of communication and organisation climate as predeterminants of learning, knowledge management and information dissemination. The more enabling the channels and the climate the easier it is to share and exchange information and knowledge. Learning organisations create a climate that facilitate the conversion of information into knowledge by employees and maintain a methodological approach towards updating this knowledge. The interlinkage of the three concepts necessitates a strategically managed internal communication system.

### **2.3.1.3 Motivation function**

The internal marketing approach is defined as “attracting, developing, motivating and retaining qualified employees through job designs that satisfying their needs” (Berry & Parasuraman, 1992, cited in Unzicker et al., 2000:91). The implication of this definition is that motivation is not an isolated process within the span of human resource management efforts of organisations. It is one of the reasons why organisations situate the internal communication function within their human resource departments. In this context, Berry and Parasuraman argue that the hiring of the wrong people to participate in service delivery leads to poor service quality. Subsequently, it is difficult to motivate unsuitably hired employees, because when hiring the organisation sells its ideas and presents a vision in which the employee plays a major role. If employees do not identify with the organisation’s mission,

goals and objectives in the first place, it is difficult to try to convince them to perform towards delivery of any service or good.

Pertinent to the argument for motivation as a function of communication is the reality stated by Unzicker et al. (2000:92) that training is often received too little, too late, and that it is often irrelevant. Ongoing training efforts can be used by organisations to prepare employees to perform their functions. According to Unzicker et al. (2000:92), a clear rationale is required as to why employees should perform their jobs in a certain manner. In the context of this study, the concept of service delivery needs to be sold to employees, especially in public sector organisations. Leaders and managers can use their communication skills effectively to train, inform and most importantly motivate employees.

Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2006:216) define motivation as “the force that energises behaviour, gives direction to behaviour and underlies the tendency to persist, even in the face of one or more obstacles”. Despite the existence of numerous theories and approaches towards motivation, most scholars agree that one of the leading ways of motivating employees is to craft a well-designed reward system for good performance. Unsatisfactory performance by employees leads to the non-survival of the organisation.

An unmotivated employee is clearly an unsatisfied employee, and this affects the quantity and quality of service delivery. In order to ascertain motivation needs, leaders and managers need to ‘talk’ extensively by way of face-to-face contact wherever possible. Identifying needs from employees allows management to know how to reward employees. Internal communication can be crafted in a manner that allows the organisation to capture the needs of its employees and to act on them. Gaps in this regard lead to unproductivity.

Steinberg (1995:22) demonstrates that the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs plays a crucial role in the motivation of employees, which in turn is important to internal communication. Employees need to know how well they are doing in their work and what their specific duties are, and also what the promotional prospects and other information are that may affect their work during the life of an organisation. This group of questions can easily be answered by internal communication systems that ensure flow of information and knowledge to employees. According to studies by the Watson Wyatt Worldwide Study (1999), cited in Landman and Angelopulo (2006:48), the effectiveness of internal communication programmes, the degree of motivation and employees’ alignment to overall strategic goals

were found to be correlated. An emphasis on providing information to employees about organisational strategies, goals, objectives and values was therefore called for within internal communication programmes as a result of this study.

### **2.3.2 Other Classifications**

Koehler, Anatol & Applbaum, 1981 (cited in Du Toit et al. (2003:73) puts forward a more condensed classification of functions namely information, regulatory, integration and persuasive functions.

#### **2.3.2.1 Information function**

In order to facilitate organisational goals and objectives, information needs to flow to employees on all levels in all directions. Internal communication plays this crucial role of providing information to members of the organisation. This information must be timely, accurate and relevant to enable employees to make informed decisions and subsequently for it to impact positively on organisational effectiveness. Bredenkamp and Rensburg (1991:), cited in Du Toit et al.(2003:74) support the need for constant flow of information that is aimed at achievement of both individual and organisational goals.

Steinberg, (1995:164) emphasises the need for organisations to be in constant contact with their environment in order to inform internal functioning of the organisation and to use communication as a vehicle that drives information exchanges on organisational activities, experiences, changes and plans.

#### **2.3.2.2 Regulatory function**

The regulatory function is heavily impacted on by the dizzying pace at which technologies have enabled transfer of information to individuals and organisations at high and unprecedented rates in modern organisations. The quest for organisations to carefully ensure that relevant information that is useful for the achievement of individual and organisational goals reaches all members becomes almost impossible to achieve. Internal communication is instrumental in ensuring mechanisms that create platforms where information can be accessed timeously and easily to ensure the successful functioning of the organisations.

Steinberg (1995:165) and Du Toit et al. (2003:74) identify two main functions of regulating messages within organisations as informing employees about necessary instructions required to fulfil tasks and informing employees about the code of conduct, or more simply, the do's

and don'ts in the organisations. This function is found in rules and regulations and procedures, usually in written form, to guide employees on how to behave in organisations. This research measures perceptions on whether information on policies, programmes and rules and other relevant guidelines reaches employees as they should from the perspective of both employees and management in order to identify any gaps that need to be resolved.

### **2.3.2.3 Integration function**

Integration is defined by the Macmillan English Dictionary as “a process of becoming a full member of a group or society [in this case organisation] and becoming involved completely in its activities” and “the process of combining with other things in a single larger unit or system” (Macmillan, 2002:746. Organisations make concerted efforts through internal communication to ensure that new employees are assimilated well into the organisation, and that messages are crafted in a manner that promotes coordination of work schedules and eliminates the wasting of time and efforts of individuals, groups and departments Argenti, (1998:174); Steinberg, (1995:165), cited in Du Toit et al. (2003:74).

According to Steinberg (1995), the integrative function of internal communication is to create identity and uniformity in the organisation and subsequently achieve unity and cohesion within the organisation.

### **2.3.2.4 Persuasion function**

Persuasion refers to a process of persuading someone to do or believe in something or a formal set of political or religious beliefs (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2005:1056). In fulfilling a persuasive role, internal communication convinces members of an organisation to carry out tasks and activities in a way that leads to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives when managed carefully. This role of internal communication qualifies the previously mentioned role of information provision in the consideration of the reality that ‘unedited’ information on its own will not achieve the desired organisational goals and objectives unless messages contained therein are crafted in a persuasive manner. The reason for doing this is to allow the organisation to influence its members in a favourable manner through other innovative means rather than use of power or coercion. Research proves that authoritarian methods are ineffective and argues that employees can also use persuasion in such instances as requesting for salary increments (Steinberg,1995:165).

It becomes clearer that although the classification of functions by Landman and Angelopulo appears intimidating at first glance, most classifications of internal communication are embodied in the three categories mentioned above. This classification enables an organisation to see the 'bigger picture' easier than compartmentalising the functions of internal communication narrowly. Modern organisations begin at strategy level to incorporate internal communication and cascade the process down to operationalising strategies.

## **2.4 The communication system**

Organisations are comprised of channels or paths (routes) through which communication flows in the facilitation of information sent to other members of the organisation and information received from other members of the organisation. These channels are subdivided into formal (official) and informal (unofficial) channels and form what is known as a communication system Steinberg (1995:159). Organisations usually create formal structures through which information should flow and be directed in addition to informal structures that result from the nature of human communication within the organisational setting. Formal channels include oral and written forms such as personal instructions, interviews, training programmes, letters and reports. Informal channels include unofficial exchanges between employees about personal or work matters Steinberg (1995:159).

Humans are social beings and as a result interpersonal communication features strongly in the flow of information through the grapevine, regardless of the directions and flows prescribed in formal structures. Both formal and informal flow of information are healthy for the survival of an organisation – a notion supported by Kreps (1990:201) in Du Toit et al. (2003:74). Marriner-Tomey (1988:243) cited in Du Toit et al. (2003) distinguishes the formal path as comprising of downward, upward, lateral and diagonal communication systems.

Hierarchy is an important factor to consider when discussing organisational communication, especially in light of the fact that this study is based on local authorities. Local authorities, although supposedly monotonous in the context of the decentralisation process, remain much under the control of governmental structures where hierarchy plays a major role in the functioning of institutions in the public sector.

Steinberg equates hierarchical structure to organisational structures of organisations. Steinberg (2005:159), The frequency and quality of interactions within the organisation is controlled by hierarchical structure in much the same way as interpersonal relationships

between employees controls the channels through which information flows within the organisation.

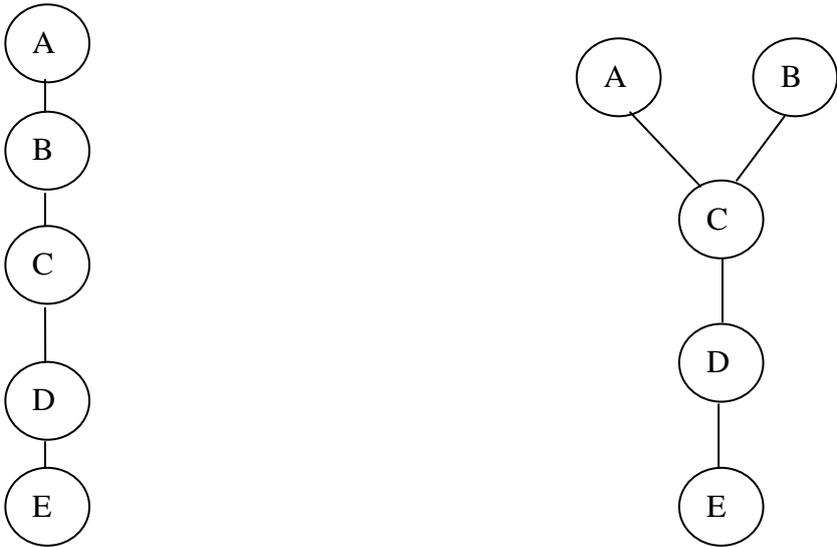
#### **2.4.1 Flows of information within the organisation**

Messages are transmitted within the organisation formally through vertical (downward and upward) direction and lateral (horizontal) flows and through informal channels. Downward communication involves the communication flow from top to bottom in the hierarchy of the organisation, usually from top management down to subordinates. A reverse flow occurs in what is termed upward communication involving communication flows from subordinates to superiors.

According to Steinberg (1995:161), managers send information to employees to provide instructions, to promote organisational tasks, to inform of policies, programmes, practices and other relevant information, to give feedback on performance appraisals and to inform them of the strategic direction of the organisation. Therefore, both downward and upward communication is useful in sending messages back and forth within the organisation. In addition, feedback finds its way back to management through the same routes. The communication audit used in this study assesses eight domain areas, namely receiving information from others, sending information to others, action on information sent, sources of information sent, timeliness of information sent, communication relationships, communication and work satisfaction, channels of communication.

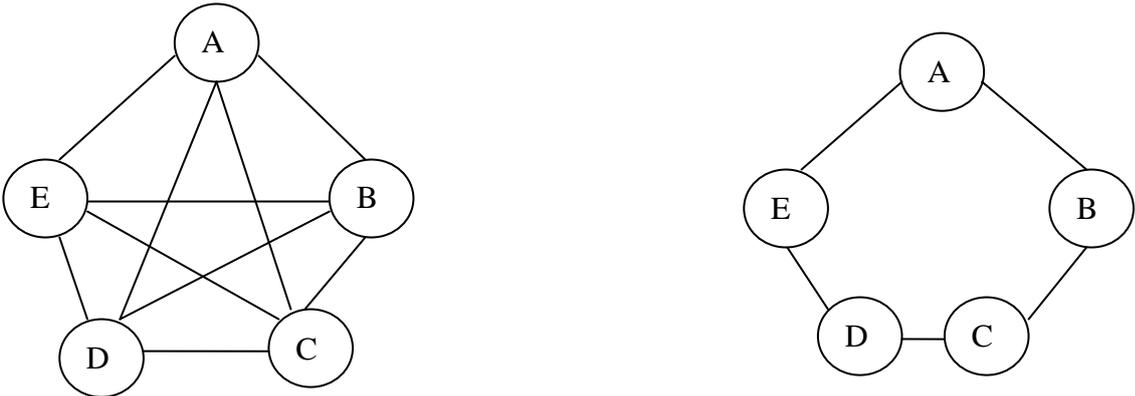
Employees belonging to the same hierarchical level are involved in extensive interactions, which are described by Steinberg (1995:160) as lateral or horizontal communication. At this level the exchanges include both personal and work-related issues in similar channels as described above for upward and downward communication. Employees are also engaged in the informal grapevine where information flows up, down and horizontally irrespective of hierarchy. The grapevine is unavoidable where human communication is active. According to Andrews and Baired (1992:80) cited in Steinberg (1995:163), research has proved that organisations can use the grapevine constructively to build loyalty and teamness among organisational members. A strong grapevine could signal that an organisation is experiencing problems with its formal channels and network leading to insufficient information being sent or received to members of the organisation.

The discussion on flows of communication is incomplete without mentioning communication networks. Defined by Steinberg (1995:140) as recurring patterns of interaction and communication, networks are an important feature of organisational communication. Networks provide researchers with information on channels and types of information being transmitted in these channels. Networks are broadly classified by Steinberg (1995:141) into centralised and decentralised networks. Centralised networks comprise of the wheel, chain and Y networks. Decentralised networks comprise of the circle and all-channel networks, as demonstrated in Figure 2.1 below:



**All-channel communication network**

**Circle communication network**



**Figure 2.1: Types of communication networks**

Leavitt (1997) cited in Steinberg (1995:141) found out in a study of the chain, wheel, Y and circle communication that information could be submitted freely, faster and more accurately from one subject to another in the wheel (most centralised) network. The circle was the

slowest, less accurate and used more messages despite exhibiting the highest levels of morale of the network. These findings applied only to simple problem solving.

The advantage cited for decentralised networks in this instance was the ability of decentralised members to better plan for complex tasks due to the ability of members to communicate directly without having to go through one central person. Results favoured the inclusion of all members of the network and cited the all-channel network as the best because of its capacity to enable free discussions and feedback. However, Steinberg (1995:143) is quick to dissuade the application of experimental studies of communication networks to real life organisational situations due to the high degree of artificialness found to exist in experiments.

## **2.5 The communication audit and its evolution**

The communication audit as an approach to assessing organisational communication has its origins in 1952, when the Episodic Communication Channels in Organisations (ECCO) instruments were first developed by Keith Davis (Goldhaber (1979) as cited in Carter (2005:14). Designed to examine communication networks, rates of flow, distortion of messages and communication redundancy, the ECCO analysis paved the way for what we know today as communication audits. The ECCO analysis was based on the application of data log sheets that monitored the progress of information by tracking its flow in the organisation between senders and receivers of information.

The term communication audit was coined by Odiorne in 1954 following the work of the National Society of Professional Engineers. Further developments from scholars Roberts and O'Reilly led to the birth of the Organizational Communication Questionnaire (OCQ) in 1973 in a study for the United States Office of Naval Research.

The OCQ comprised of 35 items and made use of the Likert scale devised to measure communication practices in various organisations to cover issues such as trust, influence in relation to supervisors, accurateness, gate keeping, summarisation, overload and importance of upward flow of communications Hargie et al. (2004:51). These developments were not without limitations, as can be seen by numerous attempts at improving the instrument into what we know today as a communication audit. One such improvement is, for instance, Hargie and Tourish's suggestion for the exclusion of interdepartmental communication aspects from the OCQ process.

The interest in surveying employees in order to ascertain the level of satisfaction with specific communication variables as a way of understanding organisational communication was clear from the onset and has continued to date. In 1974, Wiio carried out an inter-organisational study (the Communication Audit) of 5 000 employees, which yielded invaluable results from a measurement that included aspects such as demographics, job satisfaction, accessibility of information, accuracy and adequacy of information and organisation climate, including issues of trust. Information overload and heightened expectation of receiving information were cited as negatively impacting on organisational communication Goldhaber (1979) (as cited in Carter, 2005:8). The LTT communication audit was later renamed the Organizational Communication Development Audit, following more research and improvements on the LTT Communication Audit by Wiio and his fellow researchers in 1975 Carter (2005:8).

During all these developments, the environment in which organisations were prevailing was undergoing major changes such that many organisations became more aware of their communication systems. According to Carter (2005:9), these changes included a harsh economic climate that saw many organisations restructuring and therefore drawing more attention to the notion of communication auditing.

One of the most popular organisations involved in extensive research in human communication, the ICA, became even more prominent as it joined the meaningful debate on the development of the communication audit. This keen interest resulted in a much widely proclaimed and used version of communication audits called the International Communication Audit Goldhaber (1974) (as cited in Carter, 2005:11).

A communication audit is a methodology designed to measure the extent to which internal communication is effective within a particular organisation. However, since the development in the 1970s of the communication audit methodology, it has been applied to different contexts and adapted in the process to give birth to other variations of the audit. The communication audit has proved useful to the widely acclaimed social audit and forms an integral part in efforts by organisations in much the same way as the public relations audit. Other variations of the communications audit include the Communication of Audit Media, the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, the Audit of Communication Effectiveness and the International Communication Audit, which is applied in this study.

Regularly auditing communication has been proved to be useful in evaluating the internal communication systems in organisations. Aspects of communication such as content, media and information flow can be improved through the application of recommendations made from a communications audit (Du Plooy, 2001:317). Similarly, Tourish (1996) advocated that conducting the communication in phases provides analytical results that give an accurate 'snapshot' of internal communications within the organisation a particular point in time.

Furthermore, Tourish cites problems identifiable through the audit process such as lack of information, undue power of the grapevine, lack of timeliness of information, poor upwards communication, faulty channels of communication, lack of visibility of senior managers and unproductive meetings.

## **2.6 Adaptations of the communication audit**

A review of available literature in the organisational communication field reveals a lifespan of over 50 years for communication audits characterised by active research and modification. Audit approaches differ slightly in the variant forms of the communication audit and these have been subject to a series of evaluation from commendable scholars such as Hargie and Tourish, who have devoted research efforts to the communication audits and their applications in a wide variety of organisations. A communication audit is a means, not an end in itself (Hargie & Tourish, 2002:1). According to Hargie and Tourish, what is lacking is a follow-up study on communication audits to determine the impact they have on organisations. Below is a brief description of the various adaptations of the communication audit that is in existence and used to varying degrees by different organisations.

### **2.6.1 Organisational Communication Development audit (OCD)**

This type of communication audit is labelled by Sampson (2008:1) as having a simple structure with brevity and which is easy to use. It measures the relationship between communication and job satisfaction and is based on communication climate, supervisory communication, organisational integration, media quality, co-worker communication, personal feedback and relationship with subordinates. The OCD audit questionnaire is characterised by 63 items that assess perceptions and attitudes within an organisational communication system of an organisation and includes 10 demographic items. The communication environment is the major area assessed alongside specific issues of job specification.

### **2.6.2 Organisational Communication Profile (OCP)**

According to Sampson (2008:2), the OCP comprises of eight areas of organisational communication on which data is collected, which include organisational satisfaction, communication climate, information accessibility, information load, message fidelity, information dispersion, media quality and organisational culture.

The OCP comprises of three sections that firstly seeks the determination of cultural meanings, secondly 51 Likert-type items to facilitate assessment of the 8 areas mentioned above and thirdly an ECCO analysis (discussed in Section 3.2 of Chapter 3).

### **2.6.3 Organisational Communication Survey (OCS)**

Developed in 1974, the OCS comprises of 35 items that measure 15 dimensions of organisational communication, including trust of subordinate in supervisor, influence of supervisor, importance of upward mobility to subordinate, desire for interaction, accuracy, summarisation, gate keeping, overload, upward, downward and lateral directionality of information, degree of satisfaction, trust, mobility and influence (Sampson, 2005:1)

### **2.6.4 Communication satisfaction questionnaire (CSQ)**

The CSQ measures organisational communication through an emphasis on communication and job satisfaction and comprises of 40 items – of which 8 fundamental areas are related to communication satisfaction. The areas are communication climate, supervisory communication, organisational integration, media quality, co-worker communication, corporate information, personal feedback and relationships with subordinates. According to Sampson (2008:3), the CSQ is the dominant measurement for communication satisfaction in applied and basic research.

### **2.6.5 Audit of Communication Effectiveness (ACE)**

The ACE is primarily aimed at assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of communication within units and departments within an organisation. Francis and Woodcock (2004:3) identify three main function of this measure of organisational communication, namely:

- Improved coordination and integration within the organisation
- Alignment of organisational missions, goals and visions to employee perceptions
- Validation of employee worth to the organisation

Although not discussed in detail above, the adaptations of the communication audit are mentioned briefly in order to provide an indicative picture of just how seriously organisational communication has been taken by researchers over the past 50 years. The original communication audit has been modified numerous times in what is clearly an interesting and relevant field of study that has come to the rescue of modern-day organisations.

The International Communication Audit is retained for use in this study because of its validity and reliability that has been proved for over 50 years. According to Sincoff and Goyer (1977), the ICA audit was subject to numerous adaptations, such that if the process of continuously modifying the ICA audit instrument did not stop, there was a danger of losing the very principle upon which the idea of measuring organisational communication had been built upon. Significant portions of the various forms of the communication described above clearly demonstrate that the ICA audit is still very much the major component of the adaptations of the communication audit that ensued. In addition, due to the fact that this study is the first of its kind in the 40 local authorities as well as in public sector in Malawi, it is hoped that a data bank will be set up and can be used in phased applications of the communication audit approach in future in a similar manner as that created by the ICA audit.

## **2.7 The International Communications Audit**

The International Communication Audit was developed by a team of researchers under the auspices of the ICA in 1971 in response to the absence of a standard and validated instrument for measuring organisational communication. Despite numerous variations of the communication that developed as a result of more scrutiny, Neher (1997:326) maintains that the International Communication Audit has stood the test of time and has been in use in a record number of settings and organisations for over 50 years. The implication of this observation is that the ICA instruments for assessing organisational communication have been tested, tried and used to produce normed data banks that can be quite useful in comparing organisational communication in other organisations.

For organisation such as public organisations that are new to communication audits, this data is useful in gathering baseline data that can be used in regular and phased assessments. The ICA audit comprises of techniques that enable an organisation to observe, gather data on internal communication and analyse it according to principles of social and behavioural

sciences. Hence data is collected and quantified through the interview process, survey questionnaire, network analysis, critical incidents and communication diaries (Neher, 1997:329).

The questionnaire measures data on two levels, namely the actual amount of information needed to carry out tasks effectively and the perceived amount of information needed through the use of a Likert scale. In other words, this measurement enables an organisation to assess the status quo as a type of baseline study in comparison with the perceived levels of information in the various communication areas (Neher, 1997:329).

The ICA audit employs both the functionalist and the interpretivist approaches to analysing organisational communication. These two approaches can be found by analysing the ICA audit standard instruments and procedures, namely:

- Questionnaire
- Interview
- Communication experience form
- Diary
- Network analysis

### ***2.7.1 An overview - International Communication Association (ICA)***

The ICA has been in existence for over 50 years and is an academic association made up of scholars interested in human and mediated communication. Since 2003, the ICA is recognised by and associated with the United Nations as a non-governmental association. With a membership of a handful of US researchers 50 years ago, the ICA has grown tremendously to a presence in 70 countries and totals a membership of 4 300.

There has been a marked growth in the field of organisational communication research through quality research all over the world. The ICA (2006:1) qualifies this growth as reflecting a growing need to find solutions to urgent problems of the world, including social problems that involve communication in the following areas:

- Health
- Inequality
- Digital divides
- Workplace interactions

- Cultural development and preservation
- Respect for diversity
- Relations among nations

Ongoing research has revolved around questioning theories, processes, structures, methods and various aspects of communication resulting in a wide range of solutions, including policy-related solutions to problems (ICA, 2006:1). These efforts by the ICA as well as other researchers from other institutions have contributed to what we recognise today as the process of assessing organisational communication through the instrument called a communication audit.

The ICA made the following contribution to the development of the communication audit process:

- Initiation of the International Communications Audit Survey
- Introduction of a standardised measurement for organisational communication
- Creation of standard instruments and procedures
- Drafting of key objectives to facilitate the implementation of communication audits
- Establishment of a data bank for the identification of norms (see Shelby, 1996, cited in Carter, 2005)

Efforts of the ICA culminated in the development of a tool for assessing organisational communication practices comprising 122 items covering 8 domain areas of internal communication (Hargie & Tourish, 2002:49). These domains are:

- Amount of information received about various topics versus the amount desired
- Amount of information sent about various topics versus the amount desired
- Amount of follow-up versus the amount desired
- Amount of information received from various sources versus the amount desired
- Amount of information received from various channels versus the amount desired
- Timeliness of information
- Organisational relationships
- Satisfaction with organisational outcomes

### **2.7.2 A critique of the communication audit**

Designed to provide management with a reliable set of factual data about internal communication (Sampson 2005:1), the communication audit is useful in enabling the organisation to answer the following valuable questions (Hargie & Tourish, 1993):

- Who the organisation should communicate with
- Who the organisation actually communicates with
- Who the organisation should be communicating
- Who the organisation should communicate
- How the organisation actually does communicate

The widely documented strength of the communication audit lies in the concerted effort, time, expertise and care that has been invested in creating a valid set of instruments and procedures for over 50 years since its development in 1971–1976 (Sampson, 2005:1). Organisations that fail to follow up results of communication audits defeat the purpose of the assessment process and are better off not carrying out the assessment in the first place. This makes follow-up a vital part of the assessment process. It is only through analysing the strengths and weaknesses in relation to desired goals and objectives that an organisation can fully benefit from the communication audit process. Problems identified in previous audits include the following (Hargie et al., 2004):

- A marked lack of information
- Undue power of the grapevine
- Lack of timeliness of information
- Poor upwards communication
- Faulty channels of communication
- Lack of visibility of senior managers and unproductive meetings

### **2.7.3 Anticipated findings of communication audits**

In order to illustrate the effectiveness of the International Communications Audit Du Plooy (2001:317) provides a summary of an overview of findings of ICA Audits conducted in the USA (Kreps 1990:215-216; Goldhaber (1990:365) as follows:

1. Employees have a need for different procedures during meetings and better upward communication to enable them to make inputs without feeling threatened.

2. Employees need clearer communication of the organisation's goals, objectives and policies, especially if these affect their work.
3. Employees need more information about future career opportunities.
4. Employees in certain sections feel that middle and top management are ineffective managers of people and need training in communication and managerial skills.
5. Employees generally feel a need to receive more information (about work-related matters) than to send information.
6. Employees feel a need for more frequent interpersonal communication with top management.
7. No correlations are generally found between communication variables and demographic characteristics.

In some instances, the greater the distance between the sources and the recipients of communication, the less information is received, the fewer the opportunities to receive more information, the fewer the follow-up action, the greater the use of the grapevine, the poorer the quality of information and the poorer the interpersonal relations.

Therefore, organisations can collect important information from a communication audit and use it meaningfully to interpret the results and apply them for assured organisational effectiveness. The specialty of the communication audit is that knowledge of what is actually happening in reality comes to the surface, rather than what managers and leaders and employees think is happening (Hurst, 1990, in Quinn & Hargie, 2004:3).

Quinn and Hargie (2004:5) argue that the communication audit is the most widely known approach used to measure internal communication (Sincoff & Goyer, 1977:1). This is evidenced by continuous research efforts by scholars such as Hargie and Tourish on communication audits throughout the 1990s to date. However, Hargie and Tourish (2002:8) are quick to caution that a communication audit done for the mere fact of the exercise is better off not carried out. In this respect, communication audits need to be understood as means in themselves rather than ends. Hargie and Tourish (2002:1) argue that a communication audit carried out as a once-off exercise of which the impact is left unmeasured, promotes communication audits as ends in themselves – something which they are not. Hargie and Tourish (2002:1) lament the current lack of follow-up studies on communication audits.

On the other hand, communication audits are not without limitations. The main criteria of limitation has been formed by various scholars and they centre on the following three statements (Sincoff & Goyer, 1977:2):

1. Communication audits tend to be effective in data gathering without further meaningful application.
2. Communication audits act as diagnostic tool and do not provide a cure for the problems discovered.
3. Communication audits compete with other needs analysis approaches such as training and budgeting used by organisations and poses the danger of being over-commended.

The awareness of other approaches seems lacking in the practice of applying communication audits. Similar to the above categorisation, Robertson (2005:3) stresses a lack of a clear understanding of how communication audits fit into a holistic model of communication due to the generalistic nature of the tool. In addition, this type of audit sometimes lacks expertise and resources that are required to produce a skilful evaluation during a communication audit (Garnett & Kouzmin, 2000:62; Sincoff & Goyer, 1977:1).

## **2.8 Summary**

Brunetto & Wharton (2006:51) assert that local government systems operate in complex and interconnected environments and, in light of the combination of elected officials and public officials that is prevalent in local authorities, challenges arise that may compromise organisational processes, including communication management. In analysing service delivery by local government employees, the authors produced abundant evidence suggesting that factors such as communication frequency, mode and content have the potential of affecting organisational communication within local government settings. These factors can hinder employees from seeking clarification from supervisors about issues related to service delivery and other issues in the organisation. Ostroff and Bowen (2000) (as cited in Brunetto & Wharton, 2006:51) confirm research results indicating that employees are unlikely to deliver organisational outcomes (high-quality service delivery) if they are unhappy with the quality of organisational processes.

In order to understand organisational communication it is necessary to envision the environment in which organisations thrive in and consider the impact of developments such as globalisation and technological advancements. No human being or organisation can exist in

a vacuum or in solitude without being affected by the environment in which it operates. For instance, our own cultures have a bearing on how we receive information, how we send information, whether we send information at all and how we interact with other members of our own cultures as well as members of other cultures. Some cultures are more open than others and by recruiting employees with a diverse background, an organisation needs a strategy of managing these cultures if the organisation is to survive.

In addition to culture, advancement in technologies has made it impossible for organisations or personal lives not to adapt their way to incorporate the dizzying pace at which information and meanings can now be transferred or shared. Furthermore, our history as individuals, societies, organisations and countries has a large bearing on our personalities, attitudes, values, norms, beliefs and behaviours. Employees are recruited into organisations laden with pre-existing frames of references, which are later modified through the induction processes in organisations.

Organisations are shaped and formed through the communication process, as evidenced by the existence of different organisational cultures and different ways in which organisations interact internally and externally, either among its own employees or among other organisations whom they cooperate with. According to Neher (1997:29), communication activities with organisations are broadly studied with respect to messages (such as content), methods and modalities of communication (such as channels, media and technologies) and communication activities (such as organising, coordinating, controlling, conflict management). An organisation that does not adapt or make the above considerations risks non-survival in today's ever-changing complex and interconnected environment (Calabrese, 2004:47). Globalisation has swept across the world and makes it imperative for organisations and people to exist in a context characterised by complexity. These developments have resulted in increased flows of information and communication in order to cope (Calabrese, 2004:47).

The success of an organisation rests on effective internal communication and broad organisational communication that is driven by leaders and managers (Robertson, 2005:4). Leadership, good internal communications and team performance are three inseparable variables that can be managed strategically to improve service delivery (Anonymous, 1988). Modern-day organisational life is laden with problems woven by an aggressive environment with technological advances and globalisation set to impact organisational structures and

specifically the way organisations communicate internally. An operational mode of ‘business as usual’ is no longer sufficient to take organisations to desired high-quality service delivery (Robertson, 2005:5).

It is only through a lens that views organisational communication through the systems approach that allows an organisation to ‘talk to its employees’ about its business through sound internal communication systems that not only consider processes that send instructions down to employees but listens carefully and offers solutions to problems of its employees in a quest to be inward-looking, thereby better positioning the organisation for effective and efficient service delivery.

Perceptions and behaviours of employees play a crucial role in the assessment of organisational communication. Sending and receiving information remain a main focus in communication systems as well as channels of communication. Considerations such as quality of information, sources of information, satisfaction with communication and work satisfaction are playing an increasing role in enabling organisational communication to be measured.

According to Du Plooy (2001:83), a research process appropriately selects a qualitative design if its intention is to examine aspects that distinguish organisations. This study used questioning and based questions on assumptions, and ended with a summarisation and interpretation of responses received from employees of the Lilongwe City Assembly, the unit of analysis for the study. The following chapter provides a more succinct account of the research design and methodologies applied to the study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 on research design and methodology transports the research process from the desk to the field. Mouton (2006:98) uses the term fieldwork to describe the current stage of the research process whereby the research enters the 'field', and calls the phase the 'doing' phase of empirical field research. According to Mouton (2006), the research design dictates the type of 'field' a researcher enters, for instance a laboratory, natural settings or archive and many others depending on the goal and objectives of the study. The previous two chapters involved a desk study of the concepts organisational communication, internal organisational communication and the linkages to service delivery. An extensive literature review was done in Chapter 2, covering fundamental concepts of the study and the relevant theories and approaches to the study of organisational communication. The current chapter represents the 'doing' stage of the research process, or the actual field research.

The study focused on internal organisational communication and argued that the nature and quality of internal communication within any organisation play a vital role in improving service delivery. Therefore, assessment of internal organisational communication is vital to the success of the organisation in meeting its goals and objectives. Communication is often taken for granted and defined in many ways that do not promote the transfer of information. The study therefore selects to clarify that the act of communication refers to the exchange of messages and meanings in a two-way process that includes feedback and shared meanings. In other words, communication does not merely involve sending messages without follow-up to ensure that the audience have been able to receive the message as it was intended. Sincoff and Goyer (1977:61) clarify that communication is not the same as information or message and dismiss the notion that simply receiving a message guarantees communication. In other words it is possible for communication to be communicated with no communication occurring.

### **3.2 Research design**

Research design refers to the plan according to which a research process collects data. The literature review on the topic of study revealed the existence of a broad classification of research designs into quantitative or qualitative research designs. As indicated in the summary of the previous chapter, the study concerned itself with a qualitative research design.

Qualitative designs are characterised by data-collection methods and techniques such as surveys, open-ended questions in questionnaires and interview schedules (Du Plooy, 2001:84). Data analysis of qualitative designs is usually characterised by content analysis whereby written or verbal responses are systematically analysed after being collected.

The study involved collecting data from employees of the Lilongwe City Assembly using three data-collection methods, namely interviews, a questionnaire survey and communication experience forms. The study can therefore be described as an empirical study of an exploratory-descriptive nature that is based on a cross-sectional survey. The study employed both quantitative (through the use of a survey questionnaire) and qualitative (personal interviews and communication experience forms) research methodologies in a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'triangulation'. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one research method in a research process and contributes to making a research more valid (MIE, 2006:70). The study combined personal interviews and communication experience forms to verify data collected through the questionnaire survey.

Cloete (2005:11) cites Pancer and Westhues (1989:60) and Van Sant (1989:257) in positively supporting triangulation when he argues that in order to maximise the validity of the evaluation results, a feasible combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and data should be used. However, Cloete (2005:10) is quick to caution that due to the fact that evaluation or assessment efforts are integral to the public policy life cycle, it is often characterised by high levels of politicisation.

This cautionary note is relevant to the study because the study focused on a local authority embedded in a complex network of governmental structures and infrastructure, most of it highly politicised, thereby making information a sensitive commodity. As clarified in Chapter 1, the Lilongwe City Assembly is comprised of one body of politically appointed councillors through local government elections in addition to the assembly secretariat comprising of civil servants or public officials who execute decisions made by the assembly of councillors.

The communication interplay between the assembly of councillors and assembly secretariat is crucial to the full functioning of the Lilongwe City Assembly. However, at the time of the study, no local government elections had been held resulting in the Lilongwe City Assembly operating without the input of the assembly of councillors. It was expected that local elections would be held in the near future and hence restore the assembly of councillors. It is expected

that the organisational communication climate will significantly alter the dynamics of local assemblies once the assembly of councillors rejoin the system.

According to Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2007:188), qualitative field research encompasses interpretive techniques that “describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”. Furthermore, Welman et al. (2007) argue that this type of approach to research is well suited to the description of organisations as well as groups and small communities. Welman et al.’s assertion supported the objective of the study to examine the needs and opinions of the employees of the Lilongwe City Assembly with an objective of exploring and describing the perceptions held by employees on communication activities, channels, media and manager-led meetings and events within the Assembly. This is done through measuring the current situation versus the ideal situation pertaining to the internal communication system that exists within the Lilongwe City Assembly as perceived by employees and management.

It is often the case that management’s perceptions are different from employees’ perceptions by the nature of the communication process itself. This measurement allowed an objective assessment and presented the researched organisation with an opportunity to identify and fix potential problem areas. The status of the internal communication system of the local authority was unknown to the researcher, hence the objective of the qualitative design to explore and describe the findings.

As a result of the qualitative research design selected above, an inductive method of reasoning accompanied the research process. The researcher used the self-administered questionnaire as a method of questioning and recorded the findings accordingly, and supported the process with written descriptions of how the responses were interpreted. Chapter 4 of the study was set aside for the presentation and summarisation of the results, while Chapter 5 concluded the study and provided recommendations for consideration by the top management of the Lilongwe City Assembly based on the responses received.

### **3.2.1 Population**

In any research process the target population refers to the actual population that a researcher aims to study or analyse. Consequently, the researcher would generalise his or her findings to this group. However, due to practical constraints it is not always possible for researchers to reach all members of a population due to reasons such as lack of time and funding. These

constraints led the researcher to draw samples that are representative of the target population, namely the accessible population. A clear distinction must therefore be made between the target population and what is referred to as the accessible population.

The accessible population refers to the part of the target population that the researcher is able to reach. This population has to be representative of the target population if the findings of the researcher are to be generalised to the whole population group. The accessible population must be defined carefully, as narrowly defining it can negatively impact the research process, in order not to impose any limitations on the findings and how they will be generalised.

The Lilongwe City Assembly comprises of two bodies of employees (Figure 1.1). Firstly, there is the administrative body called the assembly secretariat, comprising of public officials. The public officials are divided into six directorates, namely Administration, Commerce and Industry, National Parks, Health Services, Planning and Development and Engineering Services. The second body of employees is referred to as the assembly of councillors. The assembly is made up of political appointees elected into office through local government elections that occur every five years. However, at the time of the study the assembly of councillors was not in place due to a delay in local government elections in 2004 to date. Therefore, the population under study comprises of assembly secretariat employees namely public officials only.

The population being researched consisted of middle and top management, subordinates and co-workers. It consisted of employees who joined the Assembly since the establishment of the local government system in Malawi in 1998 as well as other employees who joined the organisation before 1998. The organisation is male dominated with women occupying mostly cleaner and labourer positions and a few in secretarial and clerical positions. All the employees are of Malawian nationality and speak interchangeably the local dialect Chichewa and English.

### **3.2.2 Sampling**

In the context of the study the target population refers to the total number of employees working for the Lilongwe City Assembly. Due to the constraint of limited resources such as funding, time, human resources and submission requirements of the study report, the researcher elected to research a sample of 186 employees as the accessible population. A

response rate of 52% was obtained from 97 employees who were able to complete the questionnaire and take part in the interviews.

Due to the unavailability of a sampling frame of the organisation, a judgemental and purposive sample was decided upon in close consultation with the Director of Administration. The Director was the key entry point to all access to information about the Assembly and its employees. The researcher analysed and investigated 186 employees of the Lilongwe City Assembly out of an estimated total number of 1 860. A percentage of 10% of the total population was decided upon due to reasons of financial, time and human resource constraints facing the researcher.

Employees were divided into six groups and the questionnaire was completed in groups of 30 respondents per group. The respondents could not use the internet or e-mail, therefore eliminating the option of the web-administered version of the communication questionnaire. The organisation was still to introduce these technologies. In view of reported low response rates of surveys in general the researcher chose the option of group administration of the questionnaire in order ensure sufficient responses to be generated. The respondents were enthusiastic, welcoming and friendly and seemed eager to participate in an exercise that most labelled beneficial.

The study faced a limitation of extensive absenteeism, which was prevalent in the Assembly, such that the collection process was confined to a certain extent to those employees who could be found in the offices. One directorate opted for a self-administered questionnaire process and requested to distribute the questionnaires for self-completion to selected officials. The responses from this directorate was limited to a few officials who could be found in the office. The rest of the respondents could not be traced or when found needed additional time to complete the questionnaire.

The researcher travelled to the various offices of the Lilongwe City Assembly to meet the employees and distribute and collect the questionnaire. The unit of analysis was therefore the individual men and women working for the Lilongwe City Assembly in various capacities. The level of education of the target population ranged from low to well educated, with employees holding from high school certificates up to master's and PhD degrees. Most of the employees were longstanding employees who joined the organisation at least five years ago.

### **3.2.3 External validity**

This study was carried out over a few months using an existing organisation, the Lilongwe City Assembly, which is in full existence and running its day-to-day operations as normal and prior to the existence of the research process. Out of a population of 1 860 a minimum of 186 employees were researched, that is 10% of the population. The research process was carried out at one point with employees being confronted once with a questionnaire. Interviews were held with a different set of respondents in order to avoid exposing the same group in the survey questionnaire to the interview process.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

As indicated in Section 1.1 of Chapter 1, the assessment of organisational communication is not an easy process for reasons cited by scholars such as Antonis (2005), who argue that the benefits of communication are intangible, thereby making organisational communication difficult to assess.

The study intended to evaluate the current situation pertaining to the internal communication system that existed within the Lilongwe City Assembly as an organisation and compare it with the ideal situation perceived as needed by the employees themselves. The status of the internal communication system was unknown to the researcher, hence the objective of this qualitative design was to explore and describe the findings.

Mouton (2006:153) describes structured questionnaires as one of available sources of data available to a survey research design. The methodology for this study was initially used by the ICA in the 1970s and later adapted into various forms of what is commonly referred to as the communication audit. A self-administered (structured) questionnaire, communication experience form and personal interviews were applied in the study.

The abovementioned questionnaire used a nominal level of measurement. Each of the eight sections of the questionnaire made use of a five-point scale in accordance with the rule of correspondence by assigning numerals as follows:

- None 1
- Little 2
- Average 3
- More than average 4

- Enough 5

The sections of the questionnaire quoted above that are marked (\*) comprise of two Likert scales for every item. On a scale from none (1) to enough (5), respondents were asked to make two judgments on each item in the questionnaire. This was done through rating each item based on the way respondents perceived the situation currently, and next to it respondents could rate the same item based on the way respondents perceived the ideal situation concerning each item.

This allowed the questionnaire to measure the respondents' perception of the ideal or the needed against respondents' perceptions of the reality they were experiencing in their day-to-day work activities. Therefore, respondents were able to gauge the topic areas on a five-point scale from none to enough labels. The two scales provided the study with the possibility to measure the ideal versus the real situation. Large discrepancies were identified between the real and the ideal, thereby providing an indication of problems that the Lilongwe City Assembly need to address.

A stratified random sample was taken to enable all the units of analysis to have an equal chance to be selected for purposes of drawing a sample that is representative, to allow the inclusion of subgroups such as gender as strata in the sample and to open up the research to inclusion of further analysis of the gender subgroup according to level of education. The study aimed at analysing the perceptions, elements, behaviour and processes of organisational communication.

The respondents were approached in a very professional manner at their places of work. Prior consultative meetings were held with the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Administration, who granted permission to the researcher to access the employees by telephone and in person.

### **3.4 Limitations/Constraints**

Some of the constraints experienced by the researcher included lack of widespread use of internet and e-mail facilities in the organisation being researched. During the period of study it was observed by the researcher that information was only available through the Director of Administration. When approached, employees referred all questions to the Director and indicated that he was the only person able to release information.

### **3.5 Time dimensions**

A cross-sectional design time dimension was used in this study, as the research was conducted at a specific time over a few months.

### **3.6 Data-collection procedures followed/techniques applied**

A self-administered questionnaire was employed by the researcher to collect data for purposes of this study. The self-administered questionnaire comprised of eight domains stipulated by the ICA audit methodology implemented in the study. The following domains were researched:

- Receiving information from others
- Sending information to others
- Action information sent to them
- Sources of information
- Timeliness of information received from key sources
- Communication relationships
- Communication and work satisfaction
- Communication channels (Du Plooy, 2001:314)

The questionnaire design made use of the nominal level of measurement. Each topic area under each of the eight sections was measured on a five-point scale in accordance with the rule of correspondence by assigning numerals as follows:

- None 1
- Little 2
- Average 3
- More than average 4
- Enough 5

### **3.7 Measurement scaling**

This study aimed at investigating current perceptions, elements, behaviour and processes of organisational communication versus the ideal or what was needed in the eight fundamental areas that are usually included in an organisational communication audit:

This process called for counting and comparing frequencies of occurrence of variables. The research made use of the Likert scale, which required the respondents to the questionnaire to gauge the topic areas on a five-point scale from labels of none to enough, which is representative of the measure (Du Plooy, 2001:128–129). The Likert scale enabled the study to quantify how much information employees received at the present moment versus the quantity of information they thought they needed to receive in order to do their work effectively.

### **3.8 Reliability and validity tests applied**

#### **3.8.1 Test-retest reliability**

The researcher applied the test-retest reliability method by disseminating the questionnaire to the Director of Administration and to friends and family members who were used in the first place to make the first round of comments on the questionnaire.

Due to heavy workloads and cases of absenteeism the researcher had limited access to the employees and consequently it was not easy to get reliable responses to test the validity of the measurement. A pre-test group comprising of family, colleagues and friends was used to test the reliability of the measurement. The majority of the family and friends group expressed concern that the questionnaire was lengthy.

#### **3.8.2 Measurement validity**

The study noted the difference between measurement validity and the internal and external validity of a research design. The measurement validity aims at determining to what extent the self-administered questionnaire used for this study actually measures that what it intends to measure. Validity and reliability in this context are interlinked and complement each other. Measurement validity provides external proof that the measurement does indeed measure its intended targets.

#### **3.8.3 Face validity and expert-jury validity**

A content analysis of the self-administered questionnaire was done by the researcher with the assistance of the members of the pre-test group. This was done in an attempt to determine the extent to which the items measured the intended variables used in the four sections of the questionnaire.

In order to determine whether the measurement really measured the various topic areas it became difficult to demarcate between face validity and expert-jury validity, since the researcher sought an opinion, and this turned the face validity into an expert-jury validity method. The self-administered questionnaire was e-mailed to a friend who is employed in London, United Kingdom, as an anthropologist by a leading hospital. Her work involves generating questionnaires for research purposes for the hospital and based on this background the researcher sought her expert opinion on the first and second draft of the questionnaire. Upon analysing it the anthropologist circulated it to a few colleagues and the researcher received comments to the questionnaire. For purposes of this study it was generally agreed that it was a reasonable measurement instrument and was valid and reliable.

### **3.9 Summary**

In order to reach the exploratory and descriptive objectives of the study, a literature review was conducted culminating in Chapter 2, where the underpinnings of the study's theoretical framework were elaborated. Chapter 3 provided the next logical step and the actual fieldwork that translates the theory into 'action' within the research process for the study. Organisational communication formed the contextual background of the study with a specific concentrated focus on internal communication only. In addition, the functions of internal communication were explored thereby influencing the decision on the selection of a qualitative research design and a triangulation methodology in Chapter 3.

The research results obtained from the application of the methodology and design outlined in Chapter 3 were set to ensure that the measuring instrument measured items and areas that were discussed in Chapter 2 as well as to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 of the study. The implications of such assessments point towards inadequacies of the organisation under analysis. The communication methodology involves both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection as evidenced by the selection of the use of a questionnaire, interviews and communication experience forms outlined above. The questionnaire is a quantitative method and is reinforced by the interview process as well as by the communication experience forms, which are both qualitative methods.

This study was the first attempt by any means to undertake an in-depth analysis of organisational communication of the Lilongwe City Assembly. As a result the triangulation methodology was selected and served well to ensure that the findings were reasonable and

that they were consistent, as well as to obtain maximum data to be able to make acceptable conclusions. The questionnaire, communication experience forms and the interviews were all reputable tools for data collection that are proven and tested.

The next chapter presents and interprets the research results from this study through depiction bar charts and pie charts. Chapter 4 details the results obtained from the study as a result of the employment of the selected research design and methodology outlined in the current chapter. The main finding drawn from the respondents who are employees involved at the frontline of service delivery within the Lilongwe City Assembly indicated strongly towards a greater need for more information on a variety of critical areas.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The International Communication Audit (ICA) methodology that was applied in the data-collection process for the study included the use of three tools, namely face-to-face interviews, a survey questionnaire and critical incident analysis. This chapter will present the results obtained from the data-collection process outlined in Chapter 3 of this study. The interview results will be presented first, followed by the questionnaire results and lastly the results of the critical incident analysis.

All statistical processing of research results was done using MoonStats, a statistical processing software program. Results are presented and interpreted through descriptive statistics, namely frequencies, percentages and mean scores, with the assistance of the statistical processing software.

A few employees have the privilege of using computers for their daily work. The transmission of messages occurs through face-to-face meetings (both individual and group) and mainly through written memoranda. A messenger system is in place to transport the memoranda to the six directorates located in various areas within the geographical area of the Lilongwe City Assembly.

### **4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Sixteen interviews were carried out with key personnel in the Lilongwe City Assembly and notes were taken from which write-ups were drawn up by the researcher (Appendix 3). A content analysis of these write-ups resulted in the identification of six categories covering employee perception about communication aspects within the assembly. Discussions lasted approximately between half an hour to an hour each. A semi-structured interview format which comprised of open-ended questions in the form of an interview guide was used (Appendix 2).

One hundred per cent of the respondents expressed concern over a working environment in which there is lack of motivation, negative attitudes towards work, lack of will on the part of management to improve and a perceived concentration on high-ranking officials in terms of

salaries and benefits. The write-ups were coded following guidelines found in Welman et al. (2005:214–218), as illustrated in Table 4.1 below:

**Table 4.1: Coding list of semi-structured interviews with key Assembly personnel**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Definition</i>
A	Attitudes	Mental positions taken by
NA	Negative attitudes	employees towards assembly work
PA	Positive attitudes	
RIC	Responsibility for internal communication	In charge of internal communication
PIC	Perceptions of internal communication	various views held by employees of internal communication
FOIC	Functions of internal communication	
COC	Channels of communication	transportation methods of communication

Based on Table 4.2 which provides an excerpt of the coded interview the researcher followed the coding procedure by constructing a frequency table of themes identified in this process (Table 4.3 below).

**Table 4.2: Excerpt of the coded interview**

Researcher (interviewer):	With whom does the role of internal communication rest?
Director X: RIC  NA NA FOIC	(sigh and hint of smile) None for internal communication. We used to have a Public Relations Officer and when he resigned no replacement was made. That was in 2005, I think. As of now, the Director of Administration is responsible for all communications but not as a main role. Also, there are no communication guidelines in the Assembly. The other thing is that it is difficult for the Director of Administration to reach everyone so that information can trickle down to the bottom level. Some come and leave early because they have nothing to do and these maybe do not get information. At other times there are reports of drivers misplacing mail so it's not sure whether memoranda reach everyone.

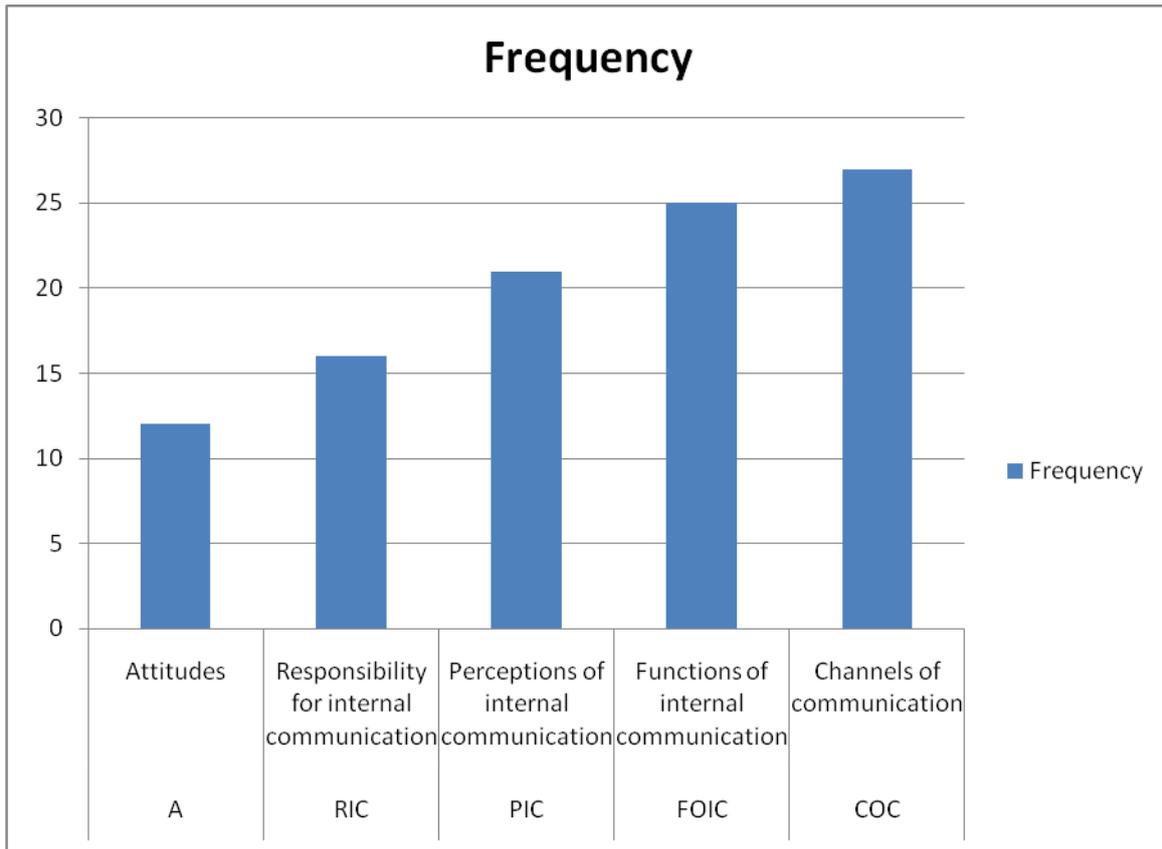
Researcher (interviewer):	What systems of communication are in place within the Assembly at the moment?
Head of Section: COC COC PIC	Uhm ... Not very much. The written memoranda and the messenger system for delivery to all offices and of course the basic telephone and fax. We have no e-mail and internet except personal ones.  (slight laugh) The previous management was reluctant to introduce e-mail and internet because they said people will spend too much time playing and doing private work on the computers.

**Table 4.3: Frequency of themes**

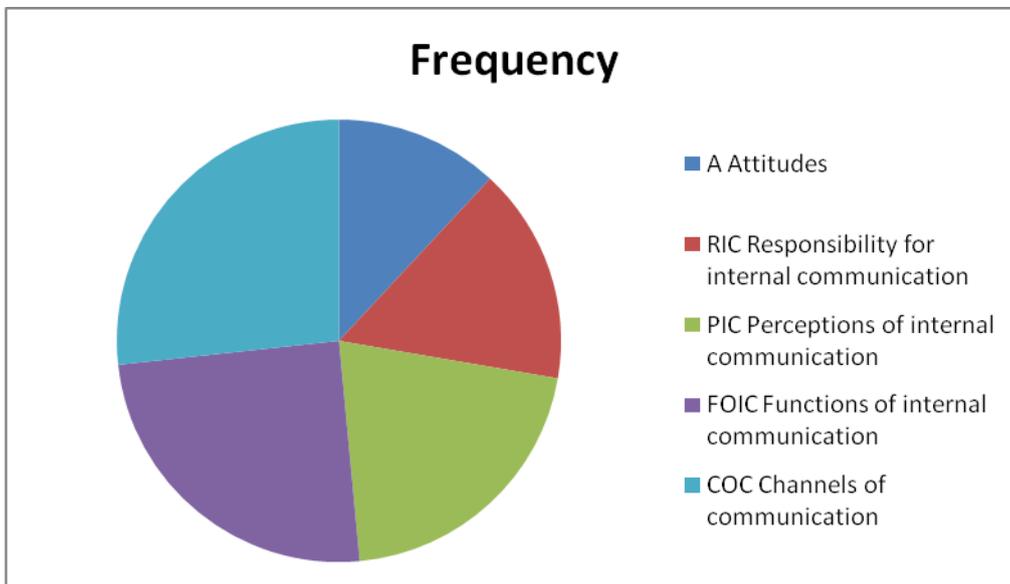
<i>Code</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
A	Attitudes	12
RIC	Responsibility for internal communication	16
PIC	Perceptions of internal communication	21
FOIC	Functions of internal communication	25
COC	Channels of communication	27

**Table 4.4: Matrix of importance attributed to each theme as indicated by frequency**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Importance of themes</b>				
	<b>None</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Extremely</b>
Attitudes			X		
Responsibility for internal communication				X	
Perceptions of internal communication					X
Functions of internal communication					X
Channels of communication					X



**Figure 4.1: Frequencies of the themes represented in a bar chart**



**Figure 4.2: Frequencies of the themes represented in a pie chart**

### 4.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire utilised 116 items measured using a five-point Likert scale, and these were classified into sections representing eight fundamental areas of communication. Section 1:

*Receiving information from others* covered 20 items; Section 2: *Sending information to others* covered 10 items; Section 3: *Action on information sent* covered 10 items; Section 4: *Sources of information* covered 20 items; Section 5: *Timeliness of information received from key sources*, Section 6: *Communication relationships* covered 10 items and Section 7: *Communication and work satisfaction* covered 10 items and Section 8: *Sources of information* covered 18 items. The results obtained from the questionnaire were classified into the same eight sections as applied in the questionnaire.

#### **4.3.1 Section 1: Receiving information from others**

Hargie et al. (2004:4) argue that there is a frequently expressed desire by employees for more information, and that this is a communication metamyth. The findings of this section of the study reflected this notion well. In total, 1.63% respondents need “no” information, 4.18% need “little” information, 16.11% need “average” information, 24.46% need “more than average information” while 53.62% require enough information. According to Du Plooy (2001:79), scores for options 1 and 2 and for options 4 and 5 can be combined to give an overall picture for the section as follows.

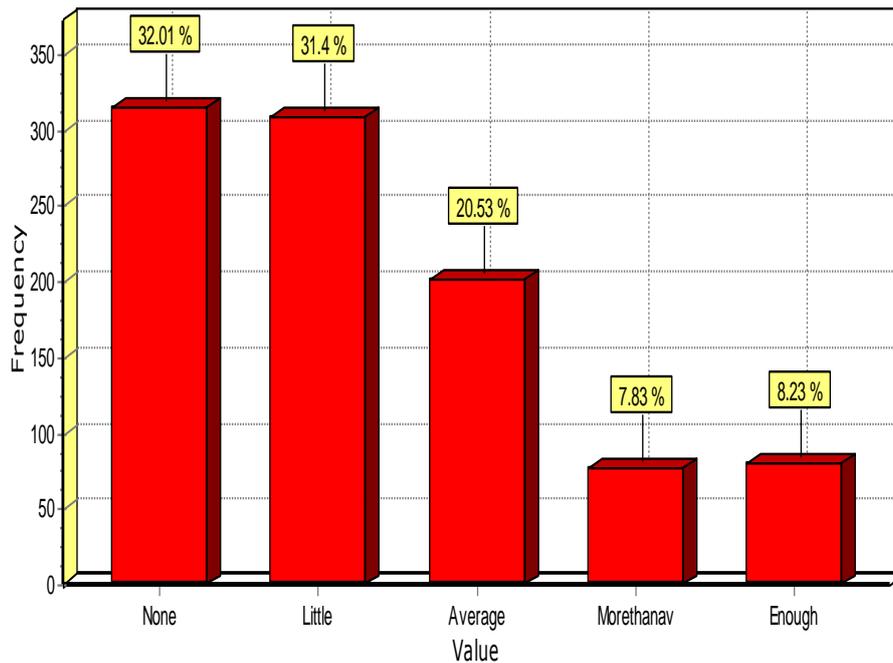
To enable employees to do their work efficiently and effectively, 5.81% of the respondents need “none” or “little” information, while 78.08% require “more than average” and “enough” information to carry out their functions within the organisation. Therefore, the results indicate a large discrepancy between the current situation and what respondents need.

The mean total scores for information received and information needed were 2.29 and 4.24 respectively. With reference to information received now the median was 2, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 2 was none or no information received, whose assigned numeral was 1. In the case of information needed the median was 5, indicating that most values were larger than the mean. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for information within the Assembly. The areas where shortfalls were highlighted related to the following:

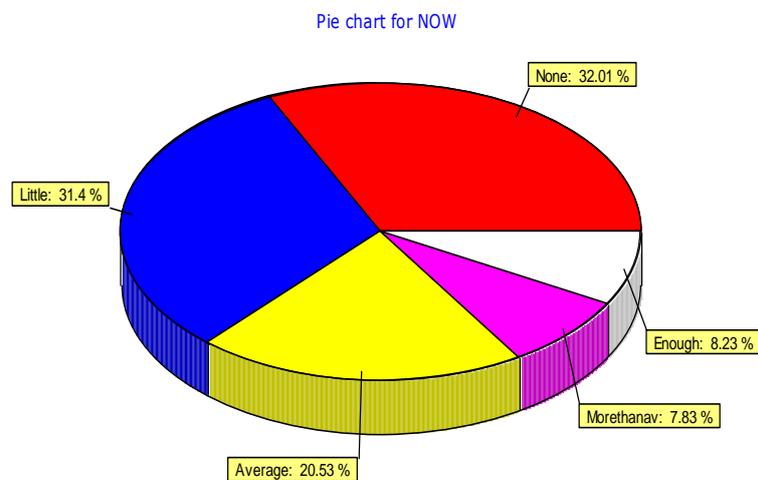
- About how well I am doing my work in my section
- About my work duties (functions)
- About Assembly policies
- About salary and benefits
- About how technological changes in the Assembly affect my work

- About mistakes and failures
- About how I am being judged as an individual
- About how my work-related problems are being handled in the Assembly
- About how decisions are made that affect my work

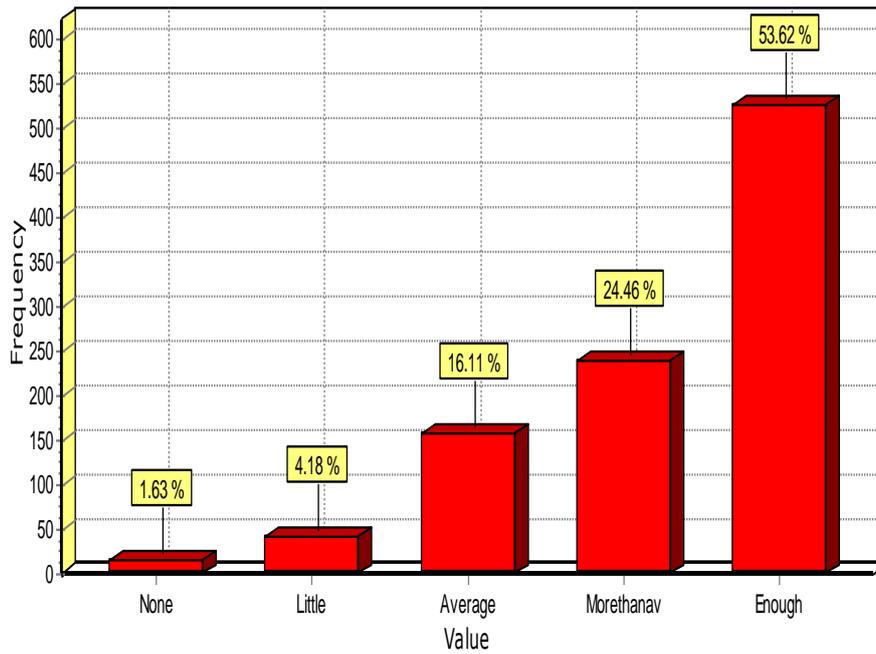
Figures 4.3 to 4.6 depict the results in the form of bar charts and pie charts for the current situation (NOW) and for the perceived situation (IDEAL).



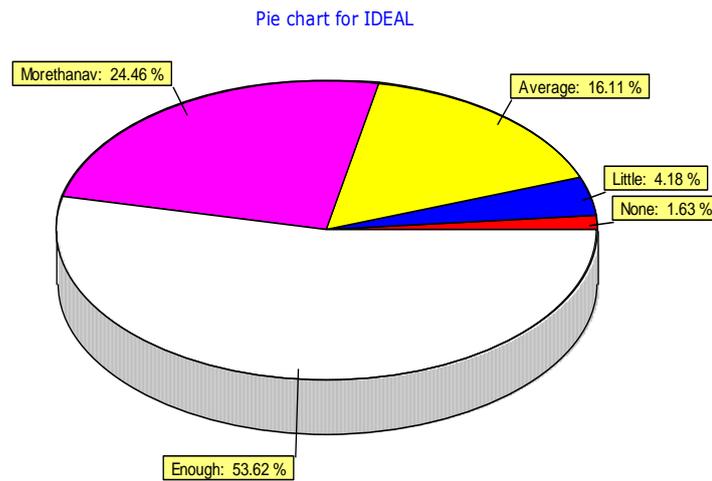
**Figure 4.3: Bar chart for current situation (receiving information)**



**Figure 4.4: Pie chart for current situation (receiving information)**



**Figure 4.5: Bar chart for ideal situation (receiving information)**



**Figure 4.6: Pie chart for ideal situation (receiving information)**

### **4.3.2 Section 2: Sending information to others**

Information is sent to employees on various topics ranging from personal to organisation-wide information. This information includes performance-related information, information on policies, programmes, salaries and benefits, technological changes and decision-making processes sent to employees usually by management. In addition to receiving information from others, employees also play an active role in sending information to others. There are topics on which each employee can disseminate information to others. There is a minimum amount of information that every employee needs to send out to others, including reporting to

superiors about what they are doing in their work, what they think their work requires of them, about reporting work-related problems, complaints regarding work conditions, requesting information to carry out tasks and activities, about evaluating others, including superiors (360 degree evaluation) and seeking clarification on instructions.

The results obtained from the questionnaire survey revealed that 15.76% of the respondents send no information, 22.97% of the respondents send little information, 28.13% send an average amount of information while 13.84% send more than average and 19.29% send enough information to others within the Assembly.

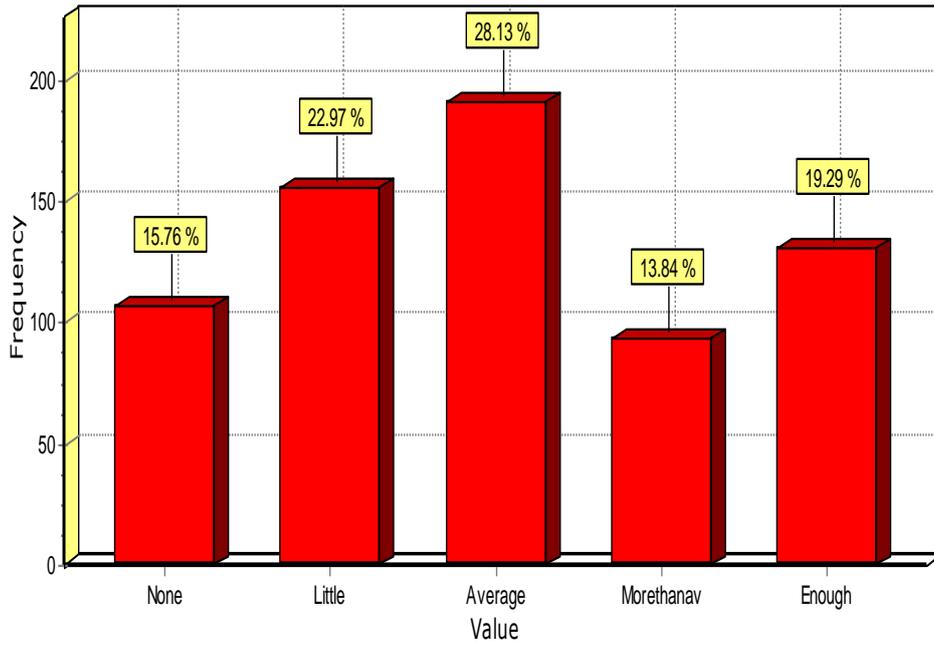
The respondents who perceived no need to send information constituted 0.15%, 2.5% need to send little information, 15.76% need to send an average amount of information while 24.74% need to send more than average information and 56.85% need to send enough information. Overall, 2.65% of the respondents perceived the need to send no or little amount of information while 81.59% perceived the need to send more than average and enough information.

The mean total scores for information received and information needed were 2.98 and 4.34 respectively. With reference to information received now the median was 3, which is greater than the mean, indicating that most values were greater than the mean. The values above the mean of 2.98 were 4 and 5, indicating more than average and enough information sent. In the case of the perceived need to send information to others, the median was 5, indicating that most values were larger than the mean.

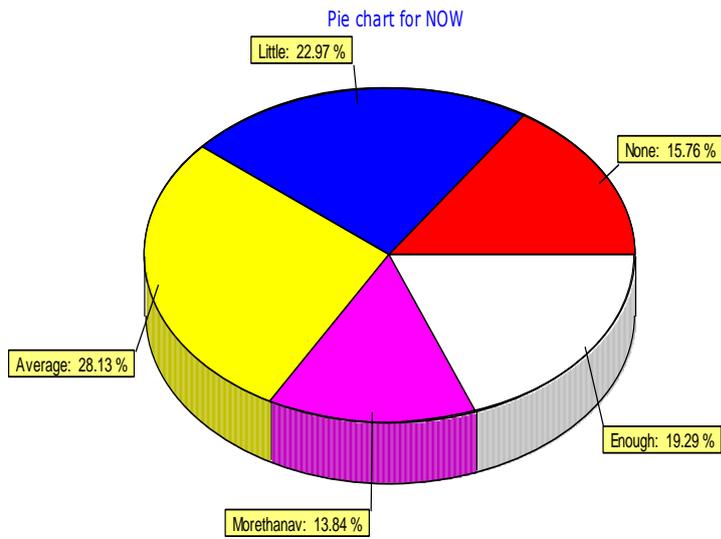
Respondents therefore expressed a great need for sending information within the Assembly. The areas where shortfalls were highlighted related to the following:

- About reporting what I think my worker requires of me
- About reporting my work-related problems
- About my requesting information necessary to do my work

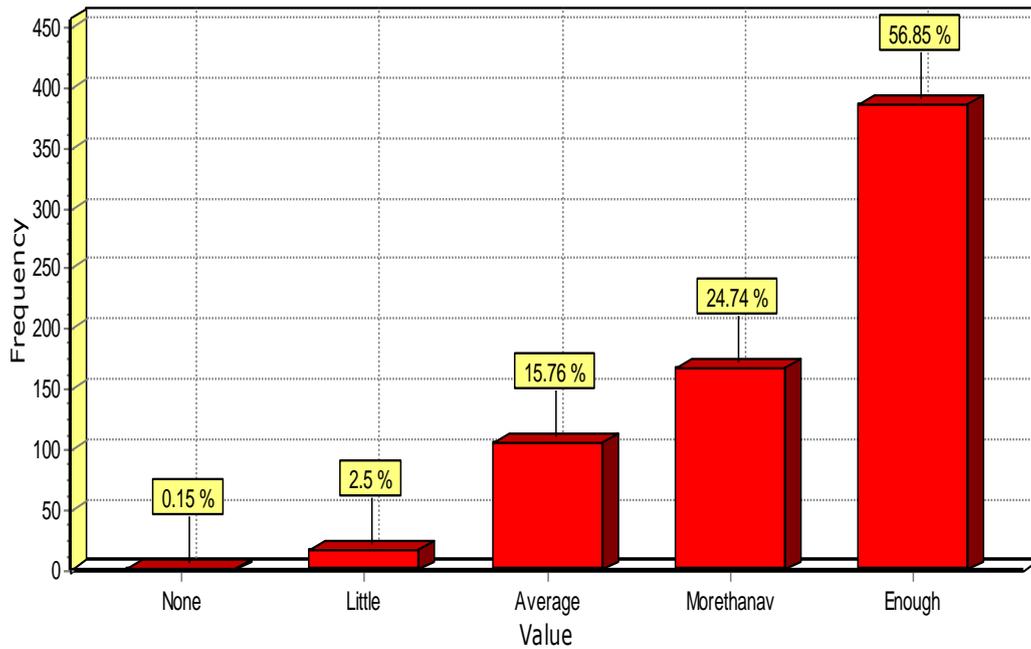
Figure 4.7 to 4.10 below depict the results obtained for this section in the form of a bar chart and a pie chart for the current situation (NOW) and for the perceived need (IDEAL) to send information to others.



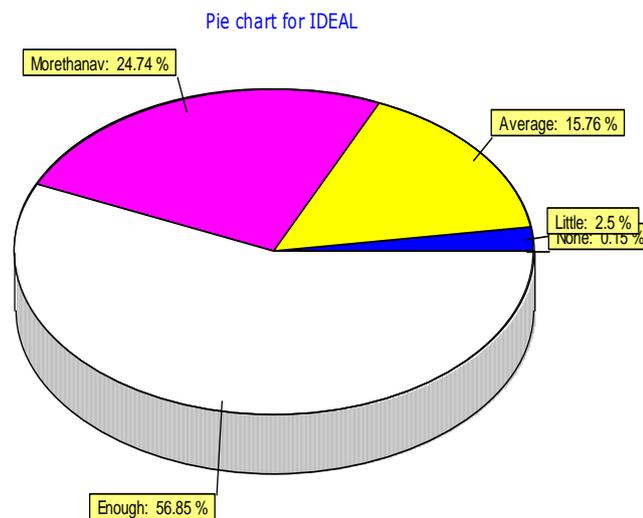
**Figure 4.7: Bar chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.8: Pie chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.9: Bar chart for ideal situation**



**Figure 4.10: Pie chart for ideal situation**

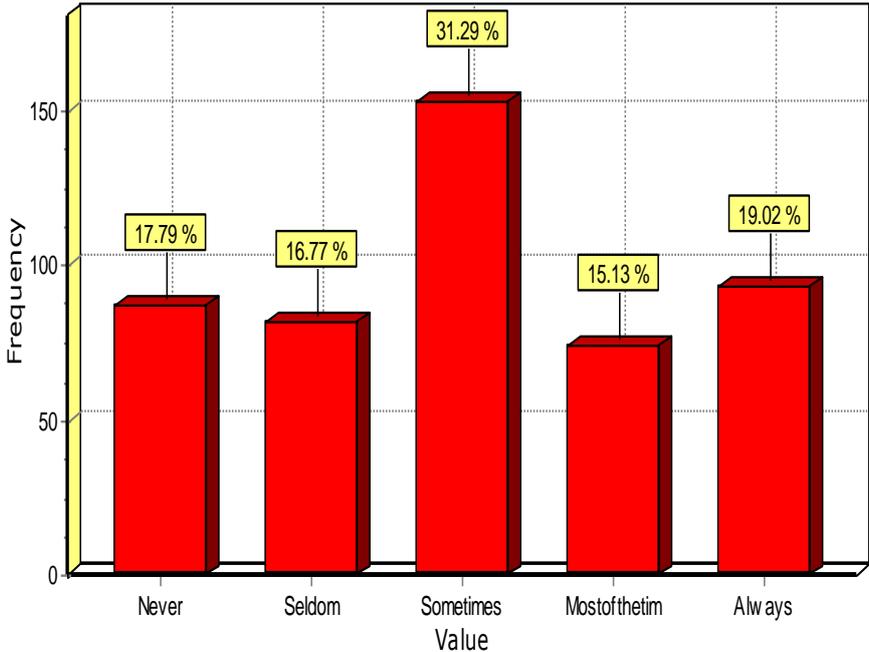
### **4.3.3 Section 3: Action on information sent**

With respect to the situation currently experienced in the organisation, results indicate 17.79% for never taking action on information sent; 16.77% for seldom taking action on information sent; 31.29% for sometimes taking action on information sent; 15.13% for taking action most of the time on information sent and 19.02% for taking enough action on information sent. Overall, 34.56% of the respondents indicated taking none or little action on information sent while 34.15% indicated taking more than average and enough action on information sent.

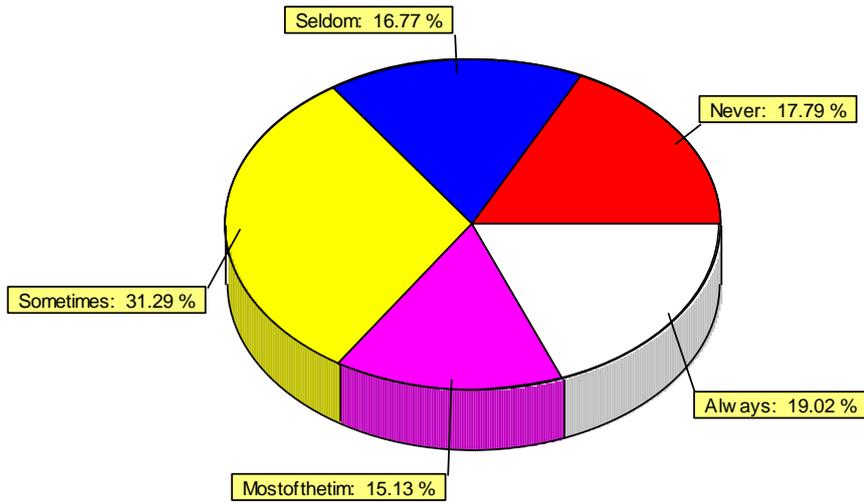
On the other hand, the perceived amount of action needed yielded the following results: 0.2% for no action needed to be taken on information sent by respondents to various people including subordinates, co-workers, heads of section and others. A total of 3.47% indicated a perceived need to seldom take action on information sent, 9.8% of the respondents indicated sometimes taking action while 19.17% indicated taking action most of the time and 67.35% taking enough action. Therefore, in total 3.67% indicated never taking action and seldom taking action on information sent while 86.53% indicated the need to take action on information sent.

The mean total scores for action taken on information sent and the needed amount of action on information sent were 3.01 and 4.5 respectively. With reference to action taken now the median was 3, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 3 was never and seldom taking action. In the case of action needed the median was 5, indicating that most values were larger than the mean. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for taking action on information sent within the Assembly. The areas where shortfalls were highlighted related to action on information sent to Assembly management, heads of directorates and heads of sections.

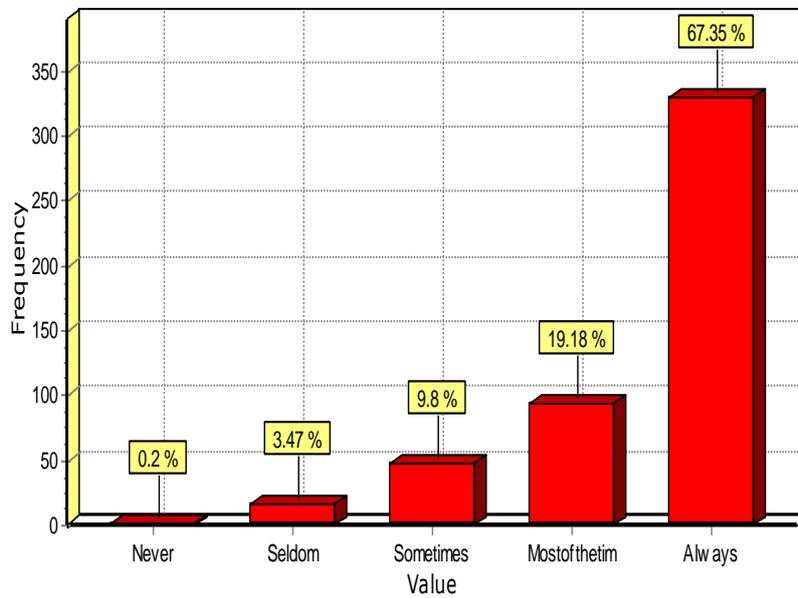
Figures 4.11 to 4.14 below depict the results for this section in the form of a bar chart and a pie chart for both the current situation (NOW) and the perceived need (IDEAL).



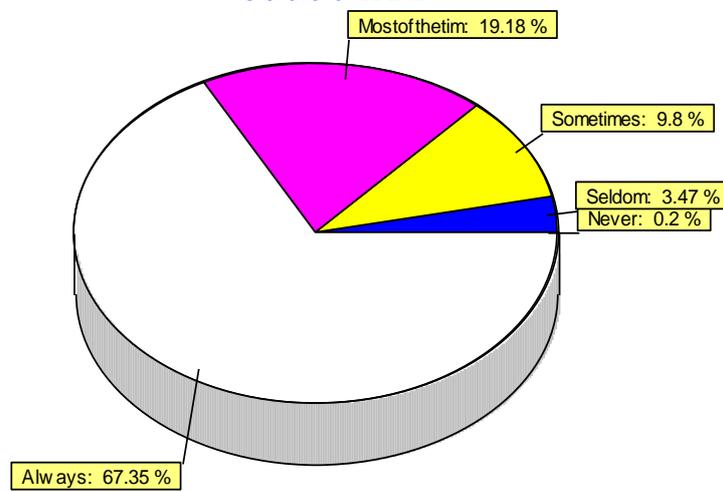
**Figure 4.11: Bar chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.12: Pie chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.13: Bar chart for ideal situation**



**Figure 4.14: Pie chart for ideal situation**

#### **4.3.4 Section 4: Sources of information**

Information circulating within an organisation originates from several sources, including subordinates, co-workers, individuals in other directorates, heads of sections, head of directorates, management, meetings with other sections, unit and departments, meetings between directorates, formal management presentations and the grapevine.

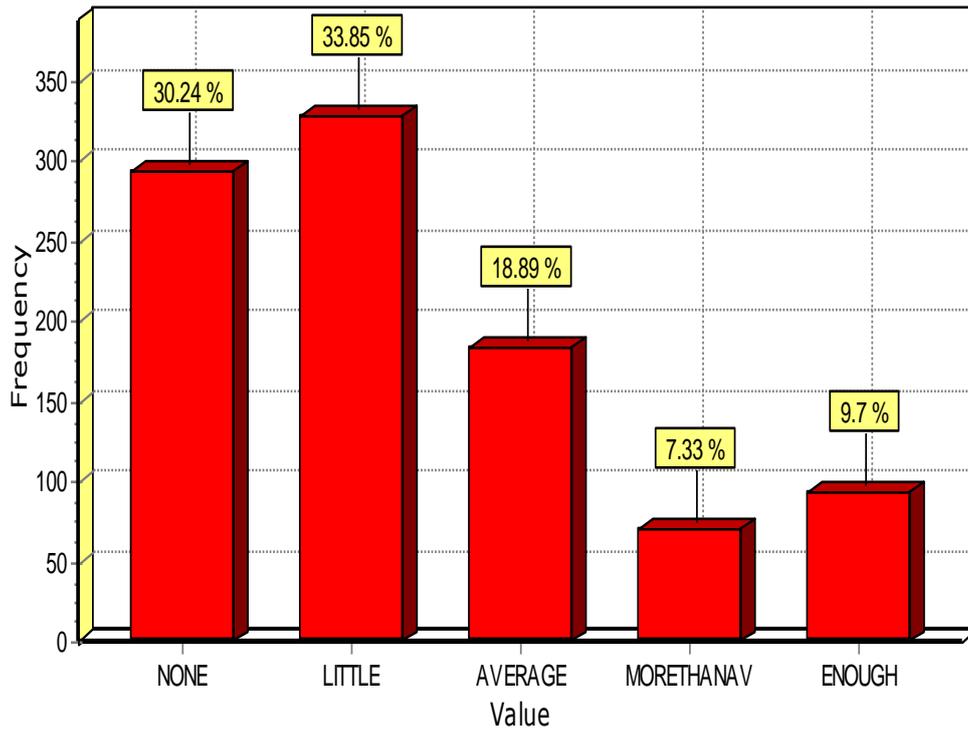
The results for this section of the questionnaire yielded the following percentage scores (figures 4.15 to 4.18):

- 30.24% respondents indicated receiving no information from the key sources
- 33.85% indicated receiving little information from the key sources
- 18.89% indicated receiving average information from the key sources
- 7.33% indicated receiving more than average information from the key sources
- 9.7% indicated receiving enough information from the key sources

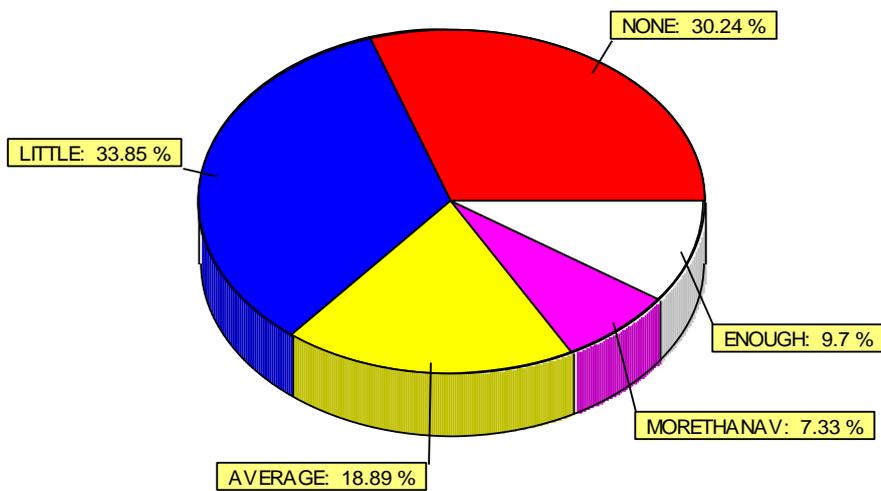
The measurement of the perceived amount of information needed to be received yielded the following results:

- 2.06% respondents needed to receive no information
- 4.64% respondents needed to receive little information
- 16.8% respondents needed to receive average information
- 22.16% respondents needed to receive more than average information
- 54.33% respondents needed to receive enough information

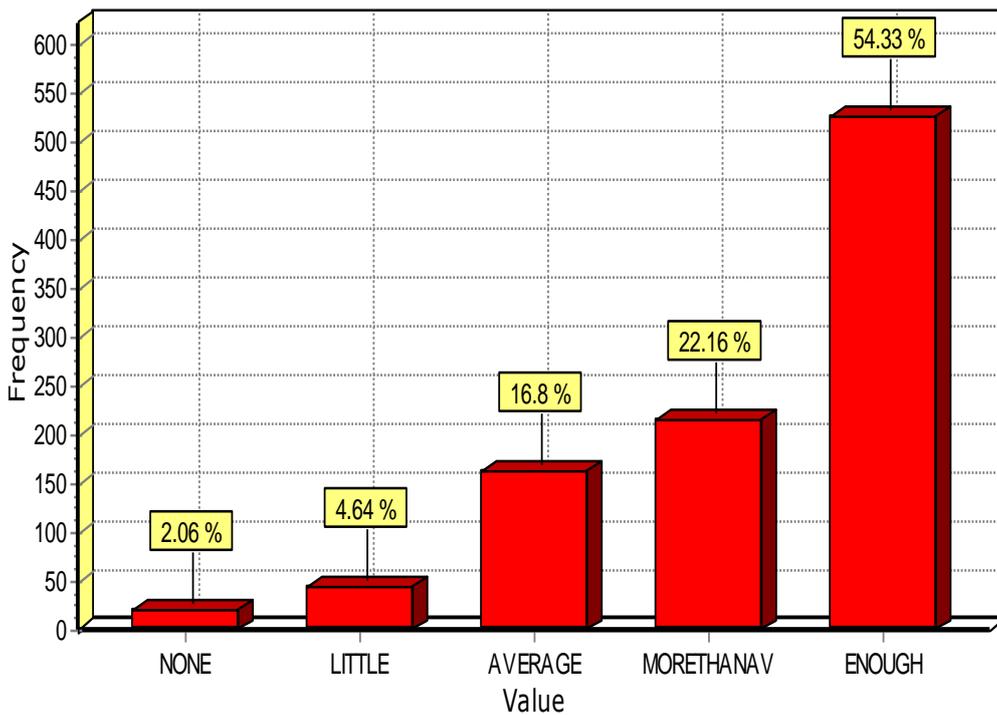
The mean total scores for the amount of information received from key sources and the amount of information needed to be received were 2.32 and 4.25 respectively. With reference to information received now the median was 2, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 2.32 were none and little information received. In the case of amount of information needed to be received the median was 5, indicating that most values were larger than the mean. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for receiving information from key sources within the Assembly. The areas where shortfalls were highlighted related to sources included Assembly managements and formal management presentations.



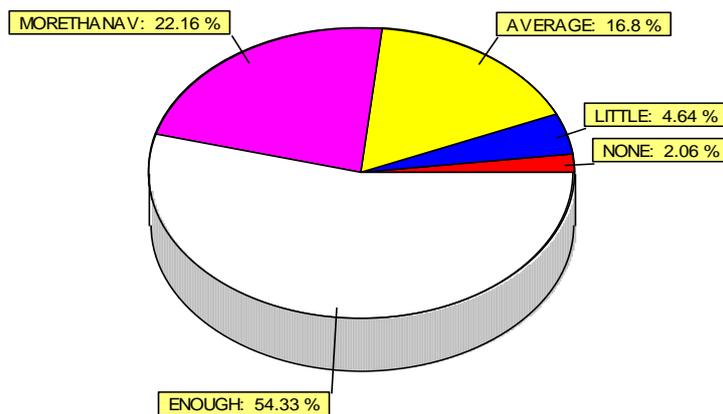
**Figure 4.15: Bar chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.16: Pie chart for current situation**



**Figure 4.17: Bar chart for ideal situation**



**Figure 4.18: Pie chart for ideal situation**

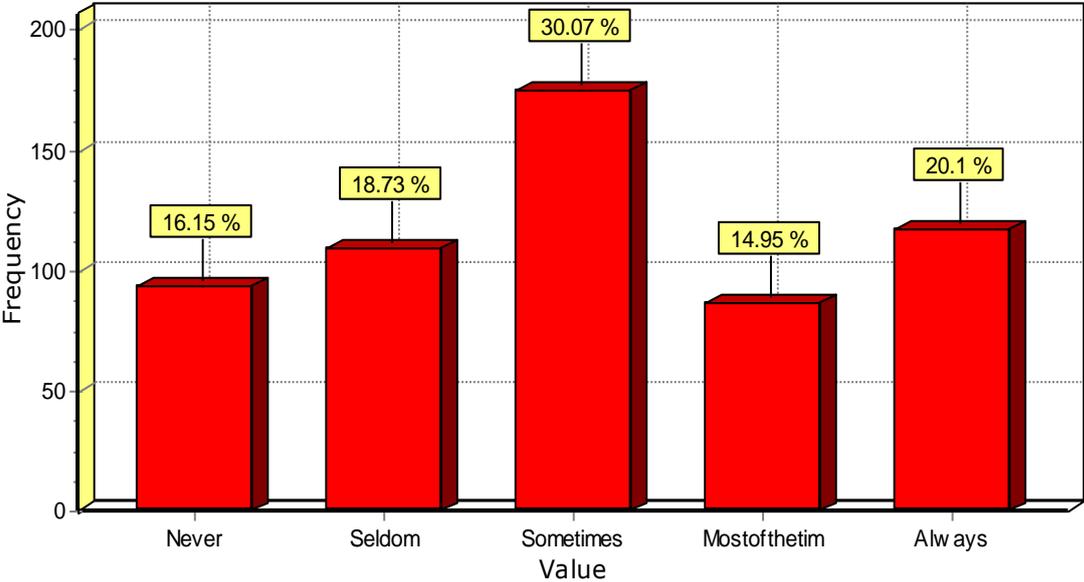
#### **4.3.5 Section 5: Timeliness of information received from key sources**

This section measured the timeliness of information received from key sources as a build-up to previous sections that measured the amount information received, sent, action on information sent and the sources of information circulating within the Lilongwe City Assembly. In other words, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which information received from listed sources was usually timely on a scale of never, seldom, sometimes, most of the time and always.

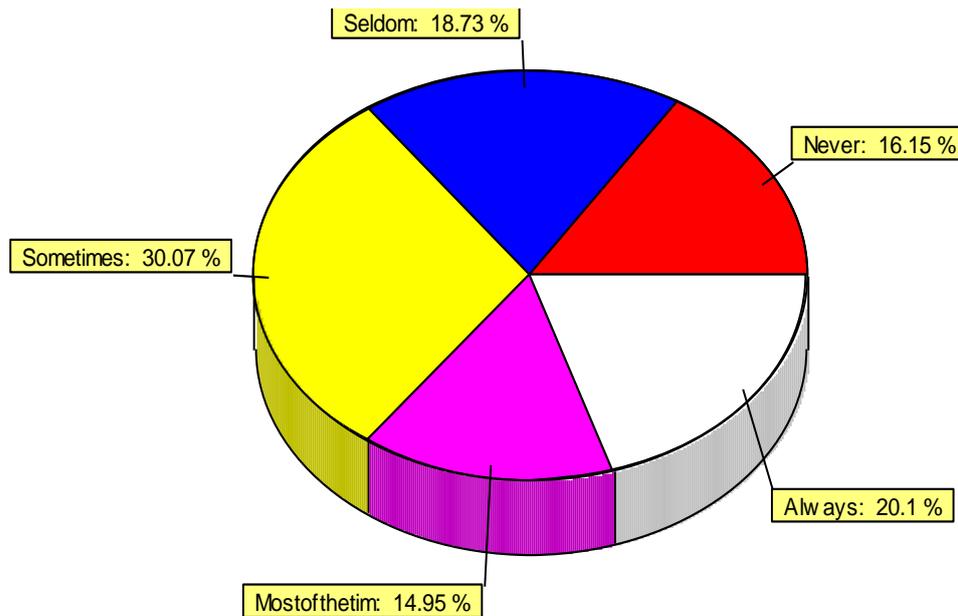
Respondents were provided with a list of sources that included subordinates, co-workers, heads of section, heads of directorates, assembly management and the grapevine. The results obtained from this section of the questionnaire yielded 16.15% of the respondents indicating that information is usually never timely received from key sources. 18.73% of the respondents indicated that information is usually seldom timely from these sources, 30.07% indicated that sometimes information is timely with 14.95% and 20.1% indicating that information was most of the time timely and always timely respectively.

The mean total scores for the timeliness of information received from key sources was 3.04. The median was 3.00, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 3.04 were never and seldom with assigned numerals 1 and 2 respectively. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for receiving timely information from key sources within the Assembly. The areas where shortfalls were highlighted related to sources including Assembly management, heads of directorates, heads of sections, subordinates and co-workers.

The results for this section of the questionnaire yielded the following percentage scores (figures 4.19 to 4.20):



**Figure 4.19: Bar chart depicting timeliness of information received from key sources**



**Figure 4.20: Pie chart depicting timeliness of information received from key sources**

#### **4.3.6 Section 6: Communication relationships**

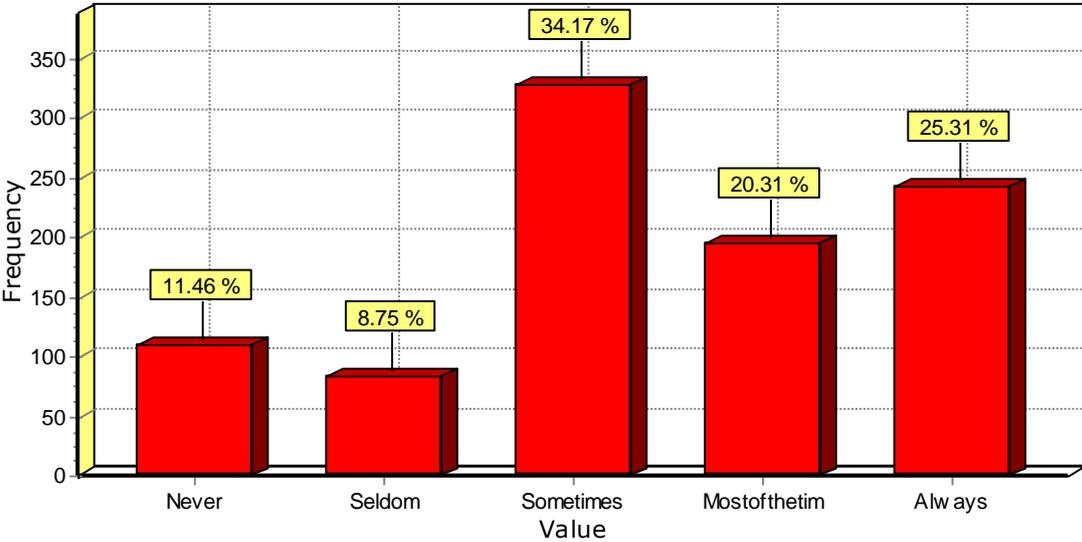
Perhaps one of the most important aspects of internal communication is the relationships that form between employees. These relationships represent a platform where trust forms an important element of the communication process and the organisation as a whole. The results obtained from this section reflected 11.46% of respondents who described their communication relationships as never satisfactory, 8.75% described relationships as seldom satisfactory, 34.17% described relationships as sometimes satisfying while 20.31% and 25.31% described the communication relationships as satisfying most of the time and always respectively.

The mean total scores for communication relationships was 3.39. The median was 3.00, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 3.39 were never and seldom with assigned numerals 1 and 2 and respectively. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for satisfactory communication relationships within the Assembly.

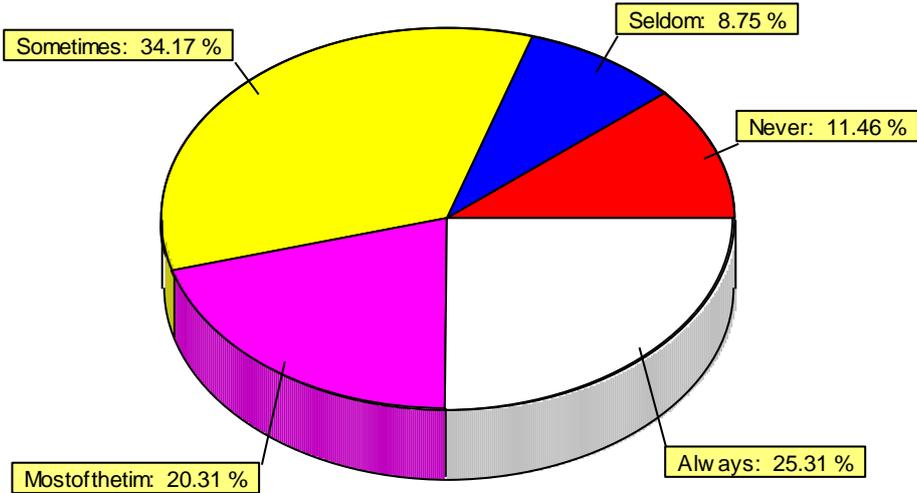
Respondents highlighted the following shortfalls within the communication relationships:

- Trusting co-workers, immediate supervisor and Assembly management
- Honesty, being listened to and being understood by the immediate supervisor
- The sincerity of Assembly management in its communicative efforts

The results for this section of the questionnaire yielded the following percentage scores (figures 4.21 to 4.22):



**Figure 4.21: Bar chart depicting communication relationships**



**Figure 4.22: Pie chart depicting communication relationships**

**4.3.7 Section 7: Communication and work satisfaction**

Employees spend eight to nine hours engaged in work activities related to the organisations they work for. It is therefore necessary that employees receive satisfaction from the work they do. Lack of satisfaction can lead to absenteeism, loss of motivation and other negative attributes that lead to low productivity and poor service delivery by the organisation. Employees receive different levels of satisfaction from the work, salaries, promotion

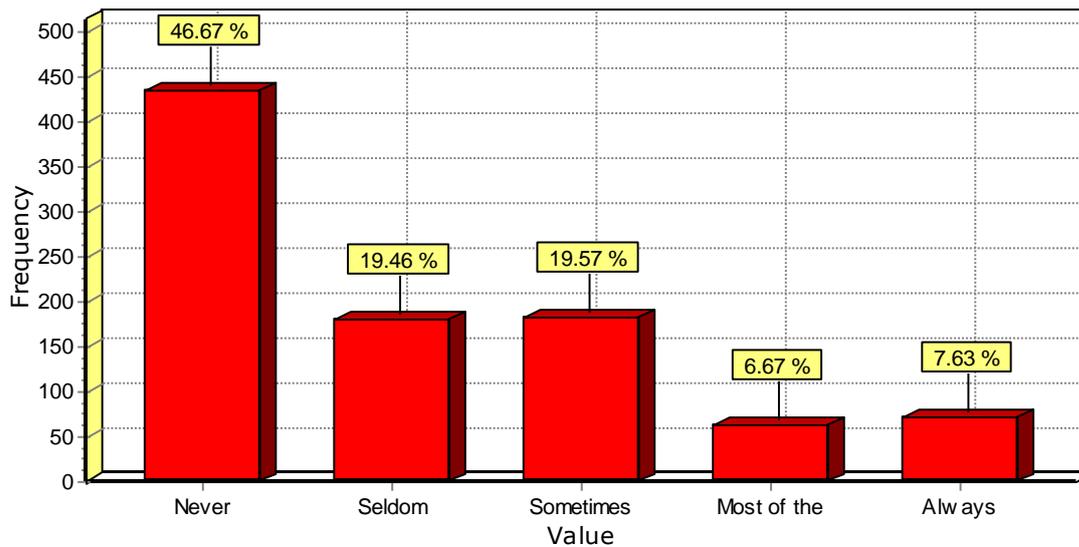
possibilities, contribution to the organisation's success, recognition of outstanding performance, working for the organisation and quality of service of the organisation.

Results yielded for this section on communication and work satisfaction indicated that 46.67% of the respondents scored never for their work satisfaction, 19.46% scored seldom, 19.57% scored sometimes for their work satisfaction, 6.67% scored most of the time while 7.63% of respondents scored always for their work satisfaction. 66.13% of respondents indicated being never satisfied and seldom being satisfied against 14.3% of respondents who are satisfied most of the time and always. This is a negative trend for the organisation with dissatisfaction highlighted in the following areas:

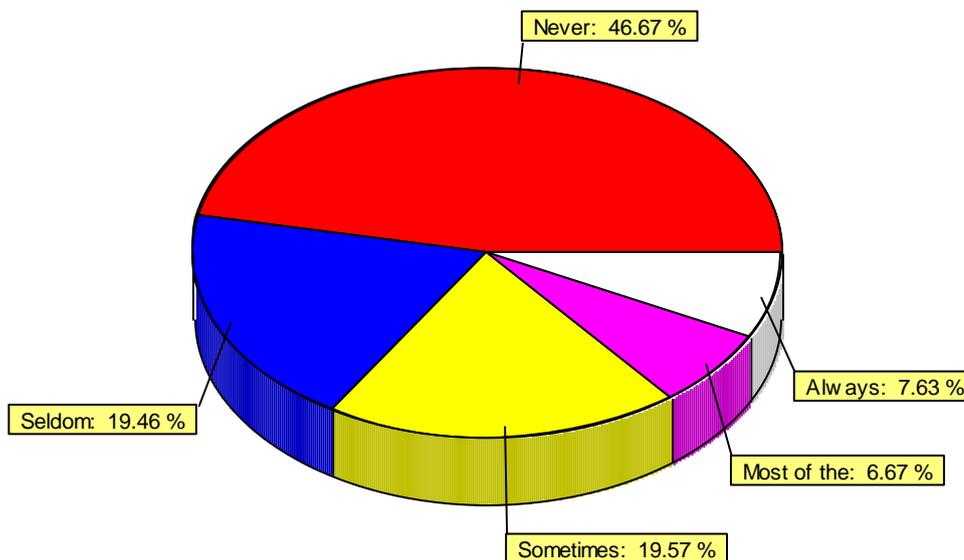
- Work
- Salary
- Promotion possibilities
- Opportunities available for contributing to the overall success of the Assembly
- The Assembly's recognition and reward for outstanding performance
- The Assembly concern for its personnel's welfare
- The Assembly's communicative efforts in general
- The Assembly's efficiency in general

The mean total score for communication and work satisfaction was 2.09. The median was 2.00, which is smaller than the mean, indicating that most values were smaller than the mean. The values below the mean of 2.09 were never and seldom with assigned numerals 1 and 2 respectively. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for work satisfaction within the Assembly.

Figures 4.23 and 4.24 below depict the results obtained for this section in the form of a bar chart and pie chart.



**Figure 4.23: Bar chart depicting communication and work satisfaction**



**Figure 4.24: Pie chart depicting communication and work satisfaction**

#### **4.3.8 Section 8: Channels of communication**

Organisations employ numerous channels when communicating with employees. These channels include face-to-face contact between two or more people, telephone, writing, bulletin boards, internal publications, internal e-mail, publications and external media (e.g. television, radio and newspapers).

The results for this section aimed at measuring the amount of information received through a list of channels. The first part of the section measured the amount of action currently being received and the second part measured the amount of information needed to be received (ideal). The results of the first part revealed that 39.81% of respondents reported receiving

none or no information, while 25.66% reported receiving little information from the list of channels measured. 17.2% of respondents reported receiving average information while 8.33% and 8.99% reported receiving more than average and enough information respectively. Therefore, in total 65.47% of the respondents reported currently receiving none or little information while 17.32% of the respondents reported receiving more than average and enough information.

The results obtained from the second part of the section revealed that 3.44% and 2.65% of the respondents reported needing none or little information from the list of channels; 13.49% reported an average perceived need for information, while 24.47% and 55.95% reported a need for more than average and enough amounts of information. Therefore, a total of 6.09% of respondents perceived a need for none or little amounts of information from the listed channels while 80.42% reported a perceived need for more than average and enough information from the listed channels.

The mean total scores for channels of communication were 2.21 and 4.27. The median for the situation as experienced now was 2 and for the ideal situation 5. This means that for the situation as experienced now by respondents, the median was smaller than the mean, therefore indicating that most values were smaller than the mean.

The values below the mean of 2.21 were none and little with assigned numerals 1 and 2 respectively. This confirmed that respondents currently received none or little amounts of information from the listed channels. On the other hand, the perceived need scored a median that was higher than the mean of 4.27, indicating that most values were above this value. This indicates that most of the values are larger than the mean of 4.27 and implies that most values had a score of 5, which represents enough amounts of information being needed by respondents. Respondents therefore expressed a great need for receiving a greater amount of information from the following list of channels within the Assembly:

- Face-to-face contact between two people
- Telephone
- Writing (memoranda, letters)
- Bulletin boards
- Internal publications
- External media

The results for this section of the questionnaire yielded the following percentage scores (figures 4.26 to 4.29):

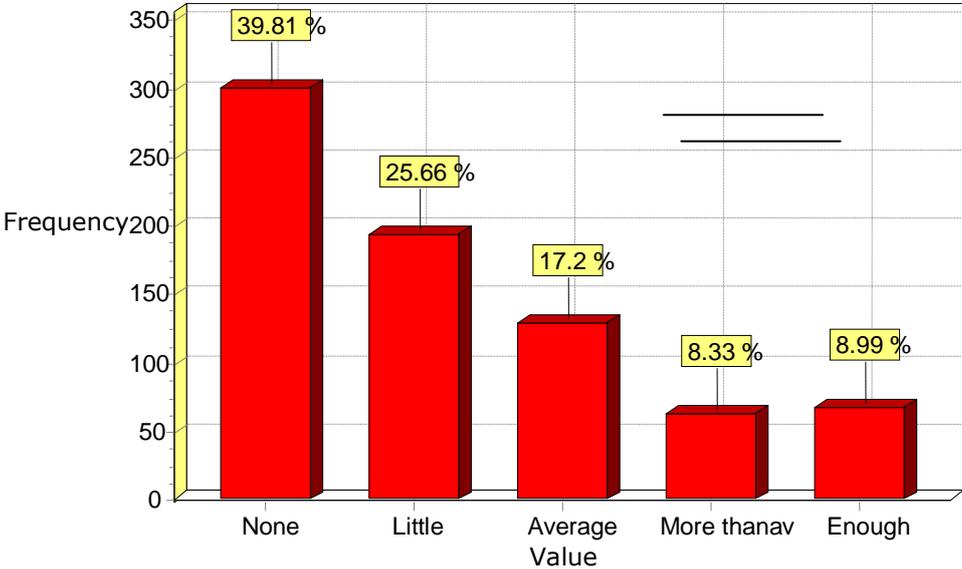


Figure 4.25: Bar chart depicting channels of communication

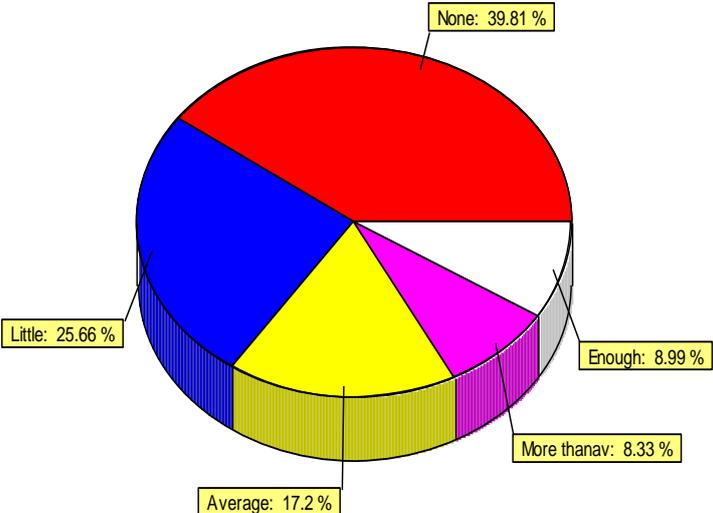
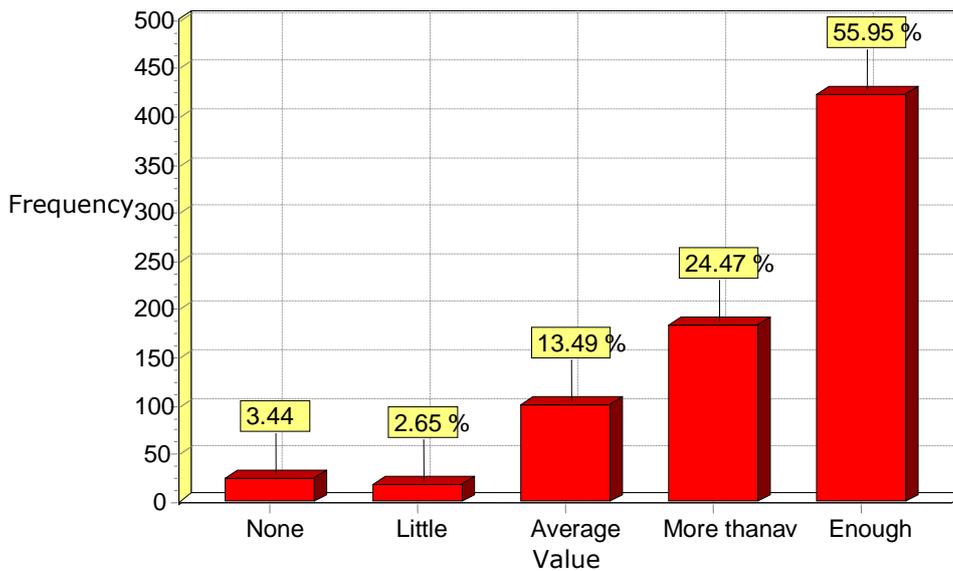
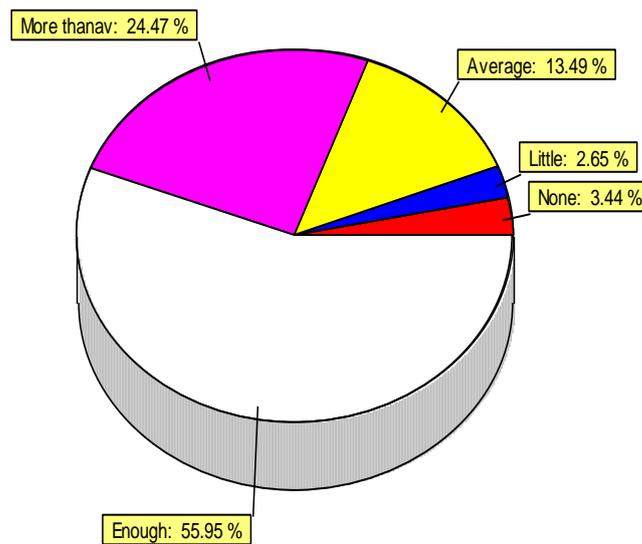


Figure 4.26: Pie chart depicting channels of communication



**Figure 4.27: Bar chart depicting ideal channels of communication**



**Figure 4.28: Bar chart depicting channels of communication**

#### 4.4 Communication experience forms

The questionnaire survey process included asking respondents to give account of a recent work-related experience that was particularly ineffective or effective within the Assembly. A total of 40% of the respondents completed this section of the questionnaire. Less than one-third of these respondents (28%) provided positive experiences related to co-workers, subordinates and the grapevine as a reliable source of information. Issues covered are summarised below:

1. Employees encouraging each other in their work
2. Feeling of worthiness after management recognised initiative by employees
3. Discussions involving everyone by management and implementation of salary increments for some employees
4. Willingness by management to hear, listen to and support employees appreciated
5. Intervention by management to solve co-worker problems
6. Good information sharing with other co-workers
7. Assisting each other through difficulties in the working environment
8. Swift action by management to replace faulty equipment
9. Weekly meetings effectively contributing to discussion of problems to improve working conditions
10. Provision of timely and clear information by management facilitates delivery of targets and prevention of crisis
11. Deliberate efforts by managements to improve communication improve the flow of information
12. Active and accurate grapevine as source of information
13. Whistle blowing by employees with no recriminations through short messages service (sms) and letters

Furthermore, two-thirds of respondents (62%) provided negative experiences mostly related to Assembly management on the following specific issues:

- a) **Huge discrepancies on salaries and benefits.** Employees are disgruntled about low salaries and benefits, including that temporary labourers do not benefit from the Assembly's death benefits. The distinction between permanent and temporary labourers was not clearly communicated to all. Policy was not communicated clearly to all employees leading to gross misunderstandings. For example, when the government raised salaries, the Assembly management denied employees this increment saying that the Assembly is not part of government, which leads to employees being demotivated and lacking the seriousness required to perform duties. Furthermore, highly qualified people are stagnating in the Assembly with no promotion opportunities.
- b) **Poor communication within the Assembly.** This can be attributed to a heavy reliance on the grapevine, delays in information reaching bottom level employees and a perceived lack of communication between management and workers. Communication flows

downwards most of the time and there is no feedback from management on critical issues affecting employees, and incorrect channels for airing grievances are used. Notices of meetings arrive long after meetings have taken place. Management of the Assembly rarely meet. Cases of messengers who misplace mail have been reported, resulting in the failure of some employees to attend crucial meetings. Management was called upon to publicise the work of the Assembly to let the public know what the Assembly is doing.

There was a reported lack of trust in employees by management. For instance, cases of senior managers who prefer to perform all tasks themselves were reported. This resulted in employees coming to the office to sit and do nothing. Very little communication ever reaches them. The human resources office was approached but failed to resolve the problem.

- c) **Lack of coordination with other departments.** There were some comments indicating towards some directors who work as “islands”. The work within the Assembly is of an interdepartmental nature. In general, management has not put in place mechanisms to boost relationships or communication between departments.
- d) **Lack of training.** There were strong comments recorded requesting for training in skills required to carry out day-to-day work by employees. Many institutions are available to offer training but employees feel that there are no chances of being trained in the Assembly.
- e) There were recorded comments that the Chief Executive Officer does not attend to the people who work in the Assembly.
- f) Some employees perceived communication as problematic and attribute this to a low level of education within the Assembly.
- g) Management was perceived to be ineffective at solving problems in the Assembly,
- h) Lack of up-to-date technological advances such as computers, email and the internet was cited by employees as hindering the Assembly’s ability to deliver required services. At present there is a heavy reliance on memoranda and the messenger system to deliver key information to all geographical locations of offices of the Assembly in a timely manner.

- i) Some employees cited the lack of knowledge of English as causing communication problems and other work problems. Employees reported being overworked and involved in other duties such that there is no time to fulfil required duties. In the meantime a mediator has been identified and the situation has eased.
- j) The general perception of respondents is that Assembly management do not consult anyone when making decisions. Employees feel like they are not listened to and that their work-related problems are ignored. As a result, most of the employees are demotivated and prefer to do personal work during working hours.
- k) Lack of vital equipment such as gloves, shoes and communication means to enable employees with sensitive jobs to do their work properly. For instance, employees in the Health Directorate who are involved in refuse collection and cleaning streets and the market area expressed an urgent need for a redress of this situation.
- l) Workshop and mechanical reports are not being done because the mechanical engineer insists that he needs a computer to produce reports. This is a problem that needs a solution.
- m) Most employees have no sense of belonging to the organisation and feel that they get nothing out of working for the Assembly.
- n) Some heads of section and heads of directorates may be effective, but it does not help because top management does not respond to employee problems.
- o) Some managers felt that employees neither follow instructions issued by management nor do they respect management.
- p) When complaints are routed to management no reply is received, according to most employees “they just keep quiet”.
- q) There is a lack of clear goals and instructions on what should be done, and the leadership of senior management is being sought by employees.
- r) The reluctance by senior management to computerise the accounting system, human resources, and many vital areas of the organisation is perceived by employees as leading to gross inefficiencies on the part of the Assembly.

- s) There is a high staff turnover in the Assembly and many directorates are understaffed.
- t) Assembly policies and regulations are formulated but never communicated to employees adequately. Employees feel that they are not well informed in order to make proper decisions.
- u) There is a lack of proper filing systems leading to difficulties in final accounts preparations.
- v) The outcomes of the directors' meetings are never communicated to employees in directorates.
- w) Political influences impact Assembly management's work negatively as a result of the context of Malawi's local government system in which the Assembly is immersed.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The research results yielded from interviews, questionnaire and communication experience forms indicated a negative perception of internal communication within the Lilongwe City Assembly. An ineffective internal communication system was highlighted, with all areas of communication researched highlighting major gaps between what is perceived currently and what the ideal situation should be. The potential of an assessment of organisational communication can be seen through these results, as issues of grave concern surfaced through the research results. The Assembly management may be aware of some of these issues but obviously do not comprehend the gravity of the situation. Reportedly, communication audits bring to light issues such as strike actions and dissatisfaction in key areas that affect the smooth operation of organisational activities. The end result is that employees are unable to perform their functions fully due to a perceived disinterest in employees by management and a notable lack of information to employees and others. For instance, the research results provided data indicating that management rarely responds to employee needs or requests such as for protective wear, salary increases and benefits.

Organisational communication is the broad context in which internal communication is situated in close liaison with external communication. Motivated and satisfied employees are usually those who are well informed and who participate in organisational activities meaningfully – fundamental of organisational communication when applied effectively. For instance, Byrne and Lemay (2006) found that employees expressed high levels of satisfaction

when they received sufficient levels of information about their job through channels such as face-to-face meetings with superiors. Importance was attached to information received from face-to-face contact.

The research results clearly indicate towards the importance of internal communication as evidenced by the emergence of critical issues that are facing the Lilongwe City Assembly. The organisation is susceptible to possible strike action by its employees given the levels of discontent and the greatly expressed lack of action by management. Although numerous surveys cite fear of recrimination by subordinates in expressing their opinions to superiors within the organisation, respondents in the survey were bold enough to underscore key issues that need attention.

According to Steinberg (1995:162), employees often fear expressing their thoughts and feelings honestly for fear of getting into trouble with management. Survey studies such as this one are in danger of capturing “favourable” perceptions or statements by employees believed to be favoured by superiors.

Means and ways should be identified within organisations to provide a variety of channels that enable downward and vertical communication to ensure that employees express themselves freely. In this instance, the only way of expressing disgruntlement is through one’s supervisor, who will in turn take the matter up the hierarchy. Respondents in this study were assured of complete anonymity as no personal information such as names and demographic information were requested by the researcher. A box was placed in the room and after explaining the different sections of the questionnaire, respondents were given ample privacy to complete the questionnaire. The researcher remained in the vicinity to answer individual questionnaires but when respondents placed the completed questionnaires in the box the researcher ensured sufficient distance to give respondents the comfort of knowing that during analysis the researcher will not know who has filled in which questionnaire.

The study was the first of its kind and the first opportunity for employees to be asked about their perceptions. Ideally, communication audits such as the one carried out in this study ought to be carried out on an ongoing basis at regular intervals to enable the organisation to learn from the experience. Issues of trust and welfare surface as a result of such a study. Organisations should emphasise greater flows of information continuously. The study was also introduced to the host organisation as an academic exercise rather than an exercise

decided upon by the Lilongwe City Assembly. It is believed that host organisations in this type of audits demonstrate higher levels of participation if they are the ones who have initiated the audit. In addition, consultants undertaking communication audits can work with the host organisation to ensure the implementation of recommendations rather than collecting data for the sake of research.

The study commanded sufficient levels of participation and great interest from the respondents who took part in the study. As a result the host organisation may wish to use the findings of this study in improving the current situation. Communication audits are a useful research tool available to organisations to address critical issues to organisational effectiveness (Hargie et al., 2002:1).

In conclusion to this chapter, a comparison of the actual findings from the study is made with the anticipated findings outlined in of Chapter 2 in order to provide a holistic summary. The actual findings of the study matched the anticipated findings identified by Du Plooy, as respondents emphasised the need for improved upward and downward communication and frustrations with the lack of competitive salaries and benefits, promotion opportunities, a remarkable perception that top management were ineffective and a need for English language proficiency. The organisation by nature was bureaucratic, underscoring the large distance between sources and recipients of information resulting in insufficient amounts of information flows, reduced follow-up action, a greater use of the grapevine, a poorer quality of information and the interpersonal relations.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Public administration and development management studies have risen to prominence in response to increasing calls for the improvement of public service delivery by public sector institutions. The challenges facing public sector organisations are many. Joint efforts are being carried out by public officials and political office bearers, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, regional organisations and scholars. They all share the dream of a new generation of effective and efficient public sector organisations in Africa. Effective communicators are therefore sought after, especially in line management functions in public sector institutions. This conviction reiterates the context of organisational communication at the heart of organisational effectiveness. The findings of this study have indicated a need by employees for visibility of leaders in the internal communication of the organisation in many key areas. This study argues in favour of effective internal organisational communication as a means of increasing the capability of local authorities and indeed public sector organisations in a broader context to deliver improved services.

As illustrated in the literature review, internal organisational communication is an important aspect of organisational life and goes as far as influencing the effectiveness of the organisation and determining the success or failure of the organisation. Internal communication plays an important role in improving public service delivery within organisations. Communication can be used to effectively change negative perceptions that many citizens have about the quality of service received from public sector institutions. At the heart of any organisation or institution are its people. When information is communicated throughout an institution, people are involved. It is therefore imperative for organisations to stop and analyse this particular group of people in order to foster an effective internal communication system within the organisation.

Internal communication and external communication is a tool that assemblies can use to fulfil the abovementioned roles of internal communication in addition to the following:

1. Informing, persuading and convincing employees and the public that it is capable of services of high quality, of value and of an indispensable nature.

2. Increasing awareness among employees that they are indeed ambassadors of service delivery. Employees must portray themselves as friendly, professional and helpful to the public and as a result have to be motivated through employment of communication strategies that are effective, free and open and promote honest dialogue between managers, employees and clients at all levels.

A good communication strategy is a necessity for local authorities in order to ensure that both employees and the public is fully informed and aware of what the Lilongwe City Assembly does. This makes local authorities transparent and accountable and sets a good example among the institutions established by the government of the Republic of Malawi. Public relations personnel play a critical role in local authorities.

The study aimed at motivating that government institutions too are providing a unique service and have the ability to raise the standards of their service delivery and improve the quality of their people. Although government institutions are not profit-making, their profit is realised by the provision of services that alleviate the poor standards of living of their people. Therefore, adopting the idea of creating a strong internal communication systems should be of utmost importance for political office bearers and public officials employed by local authorities in Malawi, considering the potential benefits to poverty reduction. Top management should be concerned with continuous efforts to improve the way employees are treated, the way employees relate to each other and the way employees communicate with each other within the organisation.

Efforts in this regard should be harnessed towards the establishment of an effective internal communication system that promotes free, open and honest dialogue between managers, employees as well as the public whom the Assembly serves. Through this an effective internal communication systems can be used by public sector organisations to improve service delivery. Internal communications systems are comprised of tools that can help to ensure that management exchange meaningful messages with employees and opens up an exchange platform with the public.

Feedback constitutes an important aspect that enables management to know whether they are meeting the expectations of the employees and the public they serve.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study was carried out at an opportune time and takes cognisance that a new management team is currently being formulated. No doubt new changes will take place within the Lilongwe City Assembly. The past seven years have presented challenges for all employees of the Assembly at all levels, including the directors of directorates. This study therefore goes a long way towards providing the incoming management team with an opportunity to view how employees perceive the organisation, and perhaps this could be a starting point to rectify some inherent areas of concern for all concerned. The following recommendations are made in the spirit of improving the service quality of the Assembly by fulfilling the saying “charity begins at home”.

### Recommendation 1

**Institute frequent and regular fixed management meetings of which the minutes are disseminated to all employees:** This recommendation has the potential of making Assembly management visible and transparent and defeats the notion of holding information as a commodity. According to findings from this study, respondents expressed a greater need to engage with the Assembly management and clarify critical points that affect the morale of staff, thereby reducing their ability to deliver services to the Malawian citizen at a high level. For instance, in the summary of communication experience forms responses the majority of respondents who expressed failure by management to respond to issues passed on from employees to heads of sections and to heads of directorates and eventually to the Chief Executive Officers received no response. These issues include death benefits, salaries and benefits, appointments and requests for protective wear for employees in specialised jobs such as refuse collection or street cleaning.

### Recommendation 2

**Review the hiring and recruitment process of the Assembly:** Several key positions are vacant within the Assembly, making the flow of communication difficult, as these key positions form part of the channels fixed by the organisation to transmit information. In addition, the position of Public Relations Officer has been vacant for close to three years. This position is viewed by the study as the key to the success of Lilongwe City Assembly’s organisational communication efforts (please see Recommendation 3 below).

In addition, one of the options being recommended is to expedite the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer and confer the necessary authority to enable smooth decision making, as expressed by respondents in this study. As indicated in the literature review of this study, Robertson (2004:5) argues that leaders are to be placed at the heart of organisational communication.

Indeed in public sector organisations line managers are key to the survival of these organisations and the search for leaders should place an emphasis on seeking effective communicators. The majority of respondents expressed that the current acting Assembly management may not have the authority needed to overturn the deteriorating situation among employees of the Assembly. Respondents also expressed the feeling that Assembly management is unsure of how to act on key issues such as salaries and benefits. For instance, the answer to the question whether Assembly employees are part of government or not has remained unanswered for at least two documented salary increments. The answer to this question is relevant for Assembly employees because when government announces increments Assembly employees do not benefit. Employees expressed unhappiness about this and some respondents quoted previous cases of strike actions that have taken place in the Assembly.

### **Recommendation 3**

Establish a specific role and responsibility profile for the function of internal communication within the Lilongwe City Assembly: The reason for this is that it would give management a way of coordinating all communications in the present and the future. This may be done by dedicating a small budget and setting up a small team comprising of a communications officer/specialist and two support positions such as a secretary and a driver. This would alleviate the burden on the Director of Administration, who is currently handling communications for the whole organisation. An option available to the Assembly is to hire a communications specialist in order to strengthen the internal communication within the organisation. Alternatively, a communication task force should be established in order to enable the Lilongwe City Assembly to effectively manage all communications. The proposed communications specialist could work hand in hand with the computer manager on projects that can include creation of a newsletter (in both English and Chichewa) and a website, in order to make management more visible. In addition, the task force could become a vehicle for disseminating information to all parts of the organisations.

There is need for the Assembly to ensure that messages are delivered to all employees. The existing internal communication is weakened by various internal and external factors. As the Assembly is looking to receiving the councillors in the near future, there is a need to have this taskforce in place to ensure smooth running of the day-to-day operations of the office.

### **Challenges for recommendation 3**

At the time of carrying out the study, plans to computerise the Assembly were in an advanced stage, and if the timeframe for this to be executed could be shortened it would benefit Recommendation 3. The findings revealed that previous Assembly management were reluctant to introduce computer technology. Technological advances need to be embraced to every extent possible, especially in local authorities where its advantages can be exploited in areas such as the following:

The **computerisation of the human resource management process** would greatly increase efficiency and effectiveness of the Assembly's resources. Access to information that is swift and useful in decision making by Assembly management is one of the many advantages that could be considered by management. The condition for the storage of information is of importance for organisation communication. Despite its advantages, a manual information system faces the challenge that locating information and disseminating it is slower. This has a potential problem of hampering the Assembly to deliver timely and efficient services to the public. On the other hand, a computerised system increases the speed with which information can be located and transmitted as well as accuracy with which this is done, in addition to presenting alternatives to the way that information can be presented in different reports to facilitate management decisions.

**Computerisation of the accounting system.** Despite the negative findings by this study, the Assembly is doing well in securing a sound resource base through revenue collection in various areas as well as other initiatives. This is currently being done through a manual system.

The number of revenues that is being lost through a manual system is enormous, and if captured, this can boost the operations of the Assembly in a way that can enable it to secure employee packages and draw more employees to the organisation. The communications taskforce could be represented by all directorates to ensure full representation and ensure that events and information are fed into the communication strategies. A simple newsletter could

be used initially to enforce the commitment of management to address current problems and restating the mission and vision of the management for its employees.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Assembly management should schedule directorate face-to-face meetings with all employees irrespective of grade to reaffirm that the Assembly is interested in all employees and that efforts are being made to address grievances. This has the potential to help Assembly management to break the perceived silence that has been reported in the results of this study. Employees expressed a greater need for response from management. The top-down movement of communication is working only to disseminate information one way, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure the carrying of feedback to management as well as to employees.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**Develop a communication strategy and plan for the Assembly.** These can also be used by other assemblies if the process is consultative. An option that the Assembly management may wish to consider is to partner with an information and communication technology company when developing a communication strategy and a communication plan. This is in order to take advantages of technologies such as setting up meetings through the internet and Microsoft Outlook and disseminating notices of meetings direct to employees' inboxes.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Updating the training plan of the organisation to include a basic English for business course for all employees as well as activating training in order to equip employees with necessary skills to do their work effectively and efficiently. The lack of training emerged in the findings of this study as a critical point for the majority of respondents, who felt that opportunities for training ought to be availed to employees.

The recommendation to include an English course is made on the basis of the knowledge that the Republic of Malawi recognises Chichewa and English as its official languages. English is the official language for business and the use of Chichewa is dominant in the places of work. The use of Chichewa is advantageous in consideration of the reality that the client base of the local government system in Malawi speak Chichewa despite the recognition of English as an official language. There is an increasing diversification in the use of languages in Malawi.

English is emerging as a frequent language of interaction between the Assembly, non-governmental organisations and the international community. In addition, there is an increasing number of immigrants in the country who require services from the Assembly in English. According to respondents in this study, the inability to speak English of subordinates, co-workers and other levels of employees is hindering the communication processes of the Assembly.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire Survey

<b>Instructions</b>			Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
	Please select your answer by clicking on <b>ONE</b> of the five boxes provided to indicate your answer on the answer sheet below. For example						
	Work satisfaction						
	My salary	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please answer all questions/items since each is important for possibly improving the communication in your division and the Assembly in general. We appreciate your patience with this important survey.

**PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY IN ANSWER TO EACH QUESTION/ITEM**

*You may find the following definitions useful as you answer the questions in this survey:*

**Communication:** The exchange of information from one person to another (upward, downward or horizontally) in the hierarchy of a the Assembly as a whole

**Communication audit:** A large scale effort to determine the communication effectiveness of an organization (in this case the Assembly) and to diagnose possible communication problems within the Assembly

**Assembly policies:** Sets of guidelines determined by management of how things ought to be done in the Assembly

**Co-worker:** Person on the same level as yourself in the hierarchy of the Assembly

**Immediate supervisor:** Person higher up than yourself in the hierarchy of the Assembly.

**Assembly management:** The top structure of the Assembly for example the Chief Executive Officer

**Grapevine:** Informal communication structure not prescribed by the Assembly in general. Also used for the spreading of rumours

**SECTION 1: RECEIVING INFORMATION FROM OTHERS**

OFFICE USE ONLY

**Instructions for items 1 through 30**

You can receive information about various topics within the Assembly. For each topic listed below, tick the box that best indicates:

- (1) the amount of information you receive on that topic *now* and
- (2) the amount of information you *need* to receive on that topic, that is, the amount you *have to have* in order to do your work effectively.

Topic Area	THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION I RECEIVE NOW					
		None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough
About how well I am doing my work in my section	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About my work duties (functions)	3.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About Assembly policies	5.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About salary and benefits	7.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About how technological changes in the Assembly affect my work	9.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About mistakes and failures	11.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About how I am being judged as an individual	13.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About how my work-related problems are being handled in the Assembly	15.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About how decisions are made that affect my work	17.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About promotion opportunities	19.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About important new services or developments in the Assembly	21.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About how my work relates to the total operation of the Assembly	23.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About specific problems experienced by the Assembly	25.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About the role of the Assembly in the provision of quality service delivery	27.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About the importance of internal communication within the Assembly	29.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION I NEED TO RECEIVE						
	None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough	
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5-6				
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	7-8				
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9-10				
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	11-12				
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	13-14				
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	15-16				
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	17-18				
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	19-20				
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	21-22				
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	23-24				
22.	<input type="checkbox"/>	25-26				
24.	<input type="checkbox"/>	27-28				
26.	<input type="checkbox"/>	29-30				
28.	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-32				
30.	<input type="checkbox"/>	33-34				

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 1: RECEIVING INFORMATION FROM OTHERS)**

While you were filling out Section 1, the items (1-30) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below).

OFFICE  
 USE  
 ONLY

A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

Subordinate

Co-worker

Assembly Management

35

B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

Effective

Ineffective

36

C. To what item (1-30) in Section 1 does this experience primarily relate?.....

(Write in the item number)

D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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37-38

**SECTION 2: SENDING INFORMATION TO OTHERS:**

**Instructions for items 31 through 44**

In addition to receiving information, there are topics on which you can send information to others. For each topic listed below, tick the box that best indicates:

- (1) the amount of information you send on that topic *now* and
- (2) the amount of information you *need* to send on that topic in order to do your work effectively.

OFFICE  
USE  
ONLY

Topic Area	THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION I SEND NOW					
		None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough
About reporting what I am doing in my work	31.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About reporting what I think my work requires of me	33.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About reporting my work-related problems	35.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About my complaints regarding my work and/or working conditions	37.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About my requesting information necessary to do my work	39.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About my evaluating the work performance of my immediate supervisor	41.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
About my asking for clearer work instructions	43.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION I NEED TO SEND					
	None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough
32.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
34.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
36.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
38.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
40.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
42.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
44.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

39-40  
41-42  
43-44  
45-46  
47-48  
49-50  
51-52

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 2: SENDING INFORMATION TO OTHERS)**

While you were filling out Section 2, the items (27-40) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below).

- A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)
- Subordinate
  - Co-worker
  - Assembly Management

- B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

- Effective
- Ineffective

- C. To what item (27-40) in Section 2 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
 (Write in the item number)

- D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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 .....

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

53

54

55-56

**SECTION 3: ACTION ON INFORMATION SENT**

**Instructions for items 45 through 54**

Indicate the amount of action that *is* and *needs* to be taken on information you sent to the following people. For each person listed below, tick the box that best indicates:

- (1) the amount of action *now* and
- (2) the amount of action *needed*

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

People	THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NOW						THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NEEDED						
		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	Never	
By my subordinates	45.	<input type="checkbox"/>	46.	<input type="checkbox"/>	57-58								
By my co-workers	47.	<input type="checkbox"/>	48.	<input type="checkbox"/>	59-60								
By the head of my section	49.	<input type="checkbox"/>	50.	<input type="checkbox"/>	61-62								
By the head of my division	51.	<input type="checkbox"/>	52.	<input type="checkbox"/>	63-64								
By the Assembly Management	53.	<input type="checkbox"/>	54.	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-66								

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 3: ACTION ON INFORMATION SENT)**

While you were filling out Section 3, the items (45-54) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE  
USE  
ONLY**

A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Assembly Management

67

B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

- Effective
- Ineffective

68

C. To what item (45-54) in Section 3 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
(Write in the item number)

69-70

D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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**SECTION 4: SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

**Instructions for items 55 through 74**

You receive information from various topics within the Assembly, your directorate and/or section.  
For each source listed below, tick the box that best indicates:

- (1) the amount of information you receive from that source *now* and
- (2) the amount of information you *need* to receive from that source *now* in order to do your work effectively.

Information	THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NOW						THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NEEDED						
		None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough		None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough	
From my subordinates	55.	<input type="checkbox"/>	56.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5-6								
From my co-workers	57.	<input type="checkbox"/>	58.	<input type="checkbox"/>	7-8								
From individuals in other directorates of the Assembly	59.	<input type="checkbox"/>	60.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9-10								
From the head of my section	61.	<input type="checkbox"/>	62.	<input type="checkbox"/>	11-12								
From the Head of my Directorate	63.	<input type="checkbox"/>	64.	<input type="checkbox"/>	13-14								
From Assembly Management	65.	<input type="checkbox"/>	66.	<input type="checkbox"/>	15-16								
From meetings between sections	67.	<input type="checkbox"/>	68.	<input type="checkbox"/>	17-18								
From meetings between directorates	69.	<input type="checkbox"/>	70.	<input type="checkbox"/>	19-20								
From formal management presentations	71.	<input type="checkbox"/>	72.	<input type="checkbox"/>	21-22								
From the grapevine	73.	<input type="checkbox"/>	74.	<input type="checkbox"/>	23-24								

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 4: SOURCES OF INFORMATION)**

While you were filling out Section 4, the items (55-74) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Immediate supervisor
- Head of section
- Head of Directorate
- Assembly Management
- Grapevine

25

B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

- Effective
- Ineffective

26

27-28

C. To what item (55-74) in Section 4 does this experience primarily relate?.....

(Write in the item number)

D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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**SECTION 5: TIMELINESS OF INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM KEY SOURCES**

**Instructions for items 75 through 80**

Indicate the extent to which information from the following sources is usually *timely*.  
For each source listed below, tick the box that best indicates the timeliness of information received.

**OFFICE USE  
ONLY**

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	
From my subordinates	<b>75.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	29
From my co-workers	<b>76.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	30
From the head of my section	<b>77.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	31
From the Head of my Directorate	<b>78.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	32
From Assembly Management	<b>79.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	33
From the grapevine	<b>80.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	34

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**

**(SECTION 5: TIMELINESS OF INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM KEY SOURCES)**

While you were filling out Section 5, the items (75-80) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Immediate supervisor
- Head of section
- Head of Directorate
- Assembly Management

35

B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

- Effective
- Ineffective

37-38

C. To what item (75-80) in Section 5 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
(Write in the item number)

D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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**SECTION 6: COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS**

Instructions for items 81 through 102. A variety of communication relationships exist in the Assembly. Personnel exchange messages regularly with one another. Considering your relationship with others in Assembly tick the box that best describes the relationship in each item.

**OFFICE  
USE  
ONLY**

Relationship		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	
I trust my co-workers	<b>81.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39				
My co-workers get along with each other	<b>82.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	40				
My relationship with my co-workers is satisfactory	<b>83.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	41				
I trust my immediate supervisor	<b>84.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	42				
My immediate supervisor is honest with me	<b>85.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	43				
My immediate supervisor listens to me	<b>86.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	44				
I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor	<b>87.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	45				
I may tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong	<b>88.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	46				
My immediate supervisor acknowledges my good work	<b>89.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	47				
My immediate supervisor is friendly with his/her other subordinates	<b>90.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	48				
My immediate supervisor understands my work needs	<b>91.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	49				
My relationship with my immediate supervisor is satisfactory	<b>92.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	50				
I trust the Assembly management	<b>93.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51				
The Assembly management is sincere in its efforts to communicate with personnel	<b>94.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	52				
My relationship with the Assembly Management is satisfactory	<b>95.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	53				
I get along with personnel that belong to other cultural groups	<b>96.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	54				
Assembly management encourages differences of opinion	<b>97.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	55				
I have a say in decisions that affect my work	<b>98.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	56				
I influence operations in the section	<b>99.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	57				
I influence operations in my directorate	<b>100.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	58				
I influence operations in the Assembly	<b>101.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	59				
I contribute to the accomplishment of the Assembly's objectives	<b>102.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	60				

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 6: COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS)**

While you were filling out Section 6, the items (81-102) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE  
 USE ONLY**

A. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Immediate supervisor
- Head of section
- Head of Directorate
- Assembly Management

61

B. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

62

- Effective
- Ineffective

63-64

C. To what item (82-102) in Section 7 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
 (Write in the item number)

D. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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**SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION AND WORK SATISFACTION**

**Instructions for items 103 through 115**

Work satisfaction or lack thereof can relate to the work itself, one's co-workers, immediate supervisor, etcetera, or the Assembly as a whole. Tick the box that best indicates the extent to which you are satisfied with:

**OFFICE  
USE  
ONLY**

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always	
My work	<b>103.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	5
My salary	<b>104.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
My promotion possibilities in my directorate	<b>105.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	7
My promotion possibilities in the Assembly	<b>106.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	8
Opportunities available for my contributing to the overall success of the Assembly	<b>107.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	9
This Assembly's recognition and reward for outstanding performance	<b>108.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	10
This Assembly concern for its personnel's welfare	<b>109.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	11
This Assembly's communicative efforts in general	<b>110.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	12
Working in this Assembly	<b>111.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	13
This Assembly as compared to other libraries	<b>112.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	14
This Assembly's efficiency in general	<b>113.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	15
The quality of this Assembly's service in general	<b>114.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	16
This Assembly's achievement of its objective	<b>115.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	17

***YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE***  
**(SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION AND WORK SATISFACTION)**

While you were filling out Section 7, the items (103-115) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE USE  
ONLY**

E. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

61

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Immediate supervisor
- Head of section
- Head of Directorate
- Assembly Management

F. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

62

- Effective
- Ineffective

63-64

G. To what item (103-115) in Section 7 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
 (Write in the item number)

H. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

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SECTION 8: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

OFFICE  
USE  
ONLY

**Instructions for items 116 through 133**

The following is a list of channels through which information is transmitted to personnel. Tick the box that best indicates:

- (1) the amount of information you receive through that channel *now* and
- (2) the amount information you *need* to receive through that channel

Information	THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NOW					
		None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough
Face-to-face contact between two people	116.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Face-to-face contact among more than two people (groups)	118.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Telephone	120.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Written (memo's, letters)	122.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Bulletin Boards	124.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Internal publications	126.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Internal (Assembly) electronic mail	128.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Assembly publications (Bulletin, News)	130.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
External media (television, radio, newspapers)	132.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

THIS IS THE AMOUNT OF ACTION NEEDED						
	None	Little	Average	More than Average	Enough	
117.	<input type="checkbox"/>	23-24				
119.	<input type="checkbox"/>	25-26				
121.	<input type="checkbox"/>	27-28				
123.	<input type="checkbox"/>	29-30				
125.	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-32				
127.	<input type="checkbox"/>	33-34				
129.	<input type="checkbox"/>	35-36				
131.	<input type="checkbox"/>	37-38				
133.	<input type="checkbox"/>	39-40				

**YOUR COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE**  
**(SECTION 8: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION)**

While you were filling out Section 8, the items (116-133) may have brought to mind a recent work-related experience of yours in which *communication* was particularly ineffective or effective. Please answer the questions below and give a summary of that experience (in Section D below)

**OFFICE  
 USE ONLY**

E. To whom does this experience primarily related (tick one option)

- Subordinate
- Co-worker
- Immediate supervisor
- Head of section
- Head of Directorate
- Assembly Management
- Grapevine

41

F. Please rate the quality of communication described in the experience below (tick one option):

- Effective
- Ineffective

42

G. To what item (116-133) in Section 8 does this experience primarily relate?.....  
 (Write in the item number)

43-45

H. Describe the communication experience, the circumstances leading up to it, what the person did that made him/her an effective or ineffective communicator, and the results (outcome).

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Source: Questionnaire adopted directly from Du Plooy (2001: 322-340)

## **Appendix 2: Interview Guide**

### **Question 1**

Please tell me what your work involves within the Assembly?

### **Question 2**

With whom does the responsibility for internal communication lie within the organisation?

### **Question 3**

What do you think is the best way to inform employee about service delivery initiatives that management decide to introduce to improve service provision to the clients of the Assembly?

### **Question 4**

If you were the Chief Executive Officer how would you inform employees of a new communication plan?

### **Question 5**

What is the role of internal communication within the Assembly?

### **Question 6**

What systems of communication are in place within the Assembly?

### **Question 7**

Do you think internal communication is practiced as it is preached especially by management?

### **Question 8**

What are the reasons for the adoption of the current communication system in the Assembly?

### **Question 9**

What contribution do you think internal communication makes to the efforts of the Assembly towards improved service delivery?

### **Question 10**

There are many changes taking place within the Assembly. How does the Management inform employees about big changes?

### **Question 11**

Do you receive training to enable you to carry out your job?

**Question 12**

Is the Assembly involved in efforts to improve communication? If yes what are the efforts and how will they improve it?

**Question 13**

Service delivery is crucial to the upliftment of the Malawian citizen out of poverty. Local assemblies are the leading institutions in Malawi to do this. How would you assess the quality of service of the Lilongwe City Assembly?

### Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Title</b>
27/08/08	0730 hrs	Mr C Mbewe	Administration	Director
17/09//08	1100-1230 hrs	Mr A D Kwanjana	Environment Services	Deputy Director
18/09/08	1430-1545 hrs	Mr A.B. Phalula	Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services	Acting Director
19/09/08	0900-0930 hrs	Mr E.R.M. Chirambo	Commerce & Industry	Commercial Manager
19/09/08	1400-1430 hrs	Mr B Chipeta	Commerce & Industry	Markets Supervisor
19/09/08	1630-1645 hrs	Mrs Edda Ulaya	Commerce & Industry	Director
22/09/08	0730-0800 hrs	Mr Changaya	Administration	Head of Transport Section
22/09/08	0900-1000 hrs	Mr B Manda	Planning & Development	Director
22/09/08	1130-1230 hrs	Mr P Njele	Finance	Acting Director
22/09/08	1400-1430 hrs	Mrs Mirriam	Administration	Computer Manager
23/09/08	1000-1030 hrs	Employee A	Commerce & Industry	Clerical staff
23/09/08	1100 – 1130 hrs	Employee B	Engineering Services	Clerical staff
24/09/08	1400-1430 hrs	Employee C	Planning & Development	Clerical staff
24/09/08	1430 -1445 hrs	Employee D	Health Services	Clerical staff
24/09/08	1000-1030 hrs	Employee E	Administration	Clerical staff
25/09/08	1000 -1030 hrs	Employee F	Parks, Recreation and Environmental Services	Clerical staff

## Appendix 4: Questionnaire Survey Schedule

### Friday, 27 July 2008

(0730 – 1230 hrs)

Initial distribution and pretesting of the measuring instrument in consultation with and directed by the Director of Administration, Lilongwe City Assembly.

Follow up meeting to initial meeting with 2 research assistants to introduce and explain questionnaire, translation of questionnaire into Chichewa local language in order to capture responses from a group of labourers, landscapers and cleaners within the assembly to ensure full understanding of questionnaire

### Monday, 15 September 2008

(0730 – 1630 hrs)

Briefing meeting with two (2) research assistants to prepare for data collection stage

Introductory physical visits to all staff within the Civic Offices of the Lilongwe City Assembly

Finalisation of copying of 186 questionnaires for sample to be surveyed

### Tuesday, 16 September 2008

Preparation and scheduling of meetings with Directors to seek permission to approach respondents

Initial meetings to explain the purpose of survey to Directors, Heads of Departments, Sections, Units and staff.

Initial distribution of questionnaire to Directorate of Administration

### Wednesday, 17 September 2008

<b><u>Time:</u></b>	<b><u>Directorate:</u></b>	<b><u>Venue:</u></b>
10:00-12:30 pm	Mr A. D. Kwanjana, Cleansing Dept. Deputy Director, Health Services Directorate of Environment <i>[Group meeting with 13 respondents]</i>	Town Hall Area 3
1400 – 1445 hrs	Mr Manda Civic Offices Director, Directorate of Planning & Development	
1450 – 1545 hrs	Mr Tsogolane	

### Thursday, 18 September 2008

<u>Time:</u>	<u>Directorate:</u>	<u>Venue:</u>
0730 – 1100 hrs	Meeting with Research Assistants Civic Offices Final translation of questionnaire into Chichewa	
1100 – 1230 hrs	Mr Njele Civic Offices Director of Finance X3 staff Computer Room personnel x2	
1430-1630 hrs	Mr A. B. Phalula Parks Office Acting Director Directorate of Parks, Recr. & Env. Services <i>Respondents, teas/coffees]</i> <i>X3 groups Chewa Translation from Imelda &amp; Tia</i>	Area 13 [31

### Friday, 19 September 2008

<u>Time:</u>	<u>Directorate:</u>	<u>Venue:</u>
0900 – 1100 hrs	Mr E R M Chirambo Area ,3 Commercial Manager Directorate of Commerce & Industry  Mr B Chipeta Markets Supervisor <i>[Group meeting 16 respondents]</i>	
1500 – 1645 hrs	Mrs Edda Ulaya Area 3, Director, Directorate of Commerce and Industry	

### Monday, 20 September 2008

0730-1100 hrs	Mr Changaya Works Yard Head of Transports & Drivers [Group meeting with x10 drivers] – Research Assistants	
0900 – 1000 am	Mr Manda Civic Offices Director, Directorate of Planning & Development	

1000 – 1100 am

Mr Tsogolane  
Civic Offices  
Directorate of Engineering  
  
Deputy (Civils)  
Deputy (Mechanical & Electrical)

## **Tuesday, 21 September 2008**

Follow-up on Questionnaire distributed to the Directorate of Administration, Civic Offices

Mr C Mbewe  
Directorate of Administration  
Secretary x2  
Registry x2  
Procurement & Stores x2  
Payments x2  
Income x2  
Audit Section x3

## **Wednesday, 22 September 2008**

Interviews of employees and follow up on outstanding questionnaires

## **Thursday, 23 September 2008**

Interviews of employees and follow up on outstanding questionnaires

## **Friday, 24 September 2008**

Interviews of employees and follow up on outstanding questionnaires

Close of data collection process.