Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Communication: An Overview

Communication is an integral part of any social system. The MacBride Commission appointed by the UNESCO (1980) states that communication maintains and animates life. It is the motor and expression of social activity and civilisation. Communication integrates knowledge, organisation and power, and runs as a thread linking the earliest memory of man to his noblest aspirations through constant striving for a better life.\(^1\)

Communication is a two-way process, involving stimulation and response among organisms, and it is both reciprocal and alternating.\(^2\) It is interactive by its very nature. This concept of communication demands participation.

In its broadest sense communication is considered as not only the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmission and sharing of ideas, facts and data. Its main functions in any social system may be identified as: information – collection, storage and processing; socialisation – the provision of a common fund of knowledge to enable people to operate as effective members of society; motivation – the promotion of the aims of society; debate and discussion – the provision of facts needed; education – the transmission of knowledge; cultural promotion – the dissemination of cultural and
artistic products; *entertainment* – diffusion for recreation; and *integration* – the provision to all access to the variety of messages. Without "effective communication, economic and social development will be inevitably retarded, and may even be counterproductive." 

In an organisational context communication is a unifying means by which its members are linked together to achieve a common objective. It is a broad-spectrum and permeative activity which runs through all areas of the enterprise. Communication establishes connections for the organisation with external community, as well. For administration of any kind, in any organisation, communication is an indispensable tool.

Communication, in an organisation, solves operational problems and helps the management to get over crisis situations. The instrumental use of communication can promote co-operation of employees and keep up their morale. It is through communication that members of a team work together influencing each other and reacting to each other, all for achieving the desired goals.

Within an organisation communication serves a number of general functions. 'Information processing' is an important activity. Data are collected and turned into information which has meaning and purpose. Another function is 'co-ordination'. Communication allows the integration of activity within an organisation. Yet another function is 'visioning' as it expresses thoughts and ideas. It can communicate vision, mission, and strategies among employees
throughout the organisation continuously. It can also help in shaping the organisational culture by creating shared understandings. From the individual stand-point communication gives opportunities for ‘personal expression’ as everyone in an organisation has his own views and opinions about work and non-work issues.

1.2 Communication in Organisational Management

The subject of organisational communication involves two complex and multi-dimensional concepts - organisation and communication. An organisation involves a social collectivity or a group of people in which activities are coordinated in order to achieve both individual and collective goals. With the coordination of activities some degree of organisational structure is created to assist individuals in dealing with each other and with others in the larger organisational environment. In this context communication can be viewed as a process that is transactional, which involves two or more people interacting within an environment, and symbolic, which means that communication transactions stand for other things, at various levels of abstraction. Hence the study of ‘organisational communication’ involves understanding how the context of the organisation influences communication process and how the symbolic nature of communication differentiates it from other forms of organisational behaviour.

The study of organisational communication began in the middle of the 20th century and started gaining a foothold in the 1960s and 1970s. At present, it is a
well-established subject in the academic field and strongly influences organisational practitioners in both the private and public sectors, in the advanced countries, though it is only an emerging field in India.

The field of organisational communication is built on a few founding approaches originated in other academic fields, like sociology, psychology and management, and in business and industry. Those schools of thought that have strongly influenced the scholarship and practice in organisational communication are: classical approaches, human relations approaches, and human resources approaches. An understanding of these approaches seems to be necessary to have clear background of the subject.

1.2.1 Classical Approaches

With the advent of the industrial revolution, common methods of producing goods began to change, from cottage industries to mechanisation. The industrialisation led to the organisation of larger groups of people in factories. Scholars in the early 20th century tried to provide the business and industry with advice on how best to organise during this period. Three of the more important theories are: Henri Fayol’s Theory of Classical Management, Max Weber’s Theory of Bureaucracy, and Frederick Taylor’s Theory of Scientific Management.

Fayol’s Theory

Two aspects of Fayol’s (1915-9) theory that have been particularly influential are his consideration of the elements of management and the principles of
management. The elements of management deal with 'what' managers should do, and the principles of management deal with 'how' managers should enact these elements.

Fayol proposes five fundamental elements of management: planning, organising, co-ordination, command and control. His principles of management deal with organisational structure, power, reward and attitude. Communication finds a key place in the structure. One of the six principles dealing with organisational structure is the 'secular chain', which proposes that an organisation should be arranged in a strict vertical hierarchy and that communication should be largely limited to this vertical flow, moving up and down the organisational chart.

The 'unity of command' principle proposes that an employee should receive orders regarding particular task from only one supervisor. The 'unity of direction' proposes that activities having similar goals should be placed under a single supervisor. 'Division of labour' proposes that work can best be accomplished if employees are assigned to a limited number of specialised tasks. 'Order' principle proposes that there should be an appointed place for each employee and task within an organisation. The 'span of control' proposes that managers will be most effective if they have control for a limited number of employees.

These six principles of management propose an organisation that is highly structural and hierarchical.
Weber's Theory

Weber's theory (1947) concerns the "ideal type" features of an organisational form called bureaucracy. He proposes that a bureaucracy is a closed down system driven by rational and legal authority. Within the system, there is a strict reliance on rules, division of labour, and a clearly established hierarchy in which power is centralised. The result is a highly impersonal organisation in which rationality is the guiding force and individuality is discouraged.6 As Miner (1982) has described: "Bureaucratic systems dominate through knowledge, and this fact gives them their rationality. The result is a climate of formal impersonality without hatred or passion and hence without affection or enthusiasm."7

Taylor's Theory

Taylor's (1911) system of scientific management is one in which scientific methods are used to determine the best way to do each job. After this best way is determined workers are scientifically selected for their jobs and trained in methods deemed most appropriate by time and motion studies. The organisation functions by maintaining strict distinction between workers and managers in which workers are responsible for physical labour and managers are responsible for thinking and organising.8

Communication in Classical Approaches

The work of Fayol, Weber, and Taylor saw organisations run in a mechanistic manner relying on the principles of standardisation, specialisation, and
predictability. These general principles are represented by the more specific ideas of organisational structure (e.g., span of control, division of labour, scalar chain, hierarchy), power (e.g., rational-legal power, importance of authority), work design (e.g., specialisation, scientific design of tasks, and attitude (e.g., subordination of individual interest to organisation goals). Consequently 'communication process' also takes on particular characteristics in these machine-like organisations.

Contents. The contents of communication within the classical organisations are focused on task-related topics. Farace, Monse, and Russell (1977) talk about three kinds of communication that often flow in organisational settings: task-related communication, innovation-related communication (communication about new ideas), and maintenance-related communication (communication on local topics that maintains human relationships). Obviously, social communication would be strongly discouraged in the organisations represented by classical theories. Such communication would be counterproductive to the achievement of organisation goals. Even innovation-related communication would also be discouraged in these organisations - at least for the vast majority of employees.9

Direction. Another way to characterise communication in the classical theories is to consider how messages are routed through the organisational system. There are several possible directions that communication can flow. Communication can flow vertically up and down the organisational chart, with supervisors talking to
subordinates and vice versa. It can flow horizontally, with employees at the same level of the organisation talking to each other. Communication can also be free-flowing, in which all organisational members are encouraged to talk with all other members.

In the classical theories the most important route for communication is the ‘vertical flow’ of information along the scalar chain of the organisational hierarchy. Also the vast majority of communication in the organisation flows ‘downward’ in the form of order, rules, and directives. There is little feedback that moves upward from lower-level employees to higher-level management, though at exceptional cases possibilities of a little bit of horizontal communication are envisaged.

Channels. In addition to content and direction, several channels can facilitate communication flow. It can be face-to-face, written, or mediated channels like telephone or computer. The classical theories emphasise the ‘written’ mode of communication, with rules and procedures for efficient organisational functioning, relying heavily on written communication in the form of employees handbooks, instructions, mission statements, rules, and performance evaluations.

Style. Communication in organisations found in the classical theories tend to be top-down, written, and task-related and hence it is highly ‘formal’. Forms of address will often be distant rather than familiar (e.g., Mr. and Mrs. rather than first names). Titles will be used (e.g., supervisor, secretary, assistant) to separate
managers from other employees. The vocabulary chosen for messages will avoid slang and colloquial terms, opting for highly standard language.

1.2.2 Human Relations Approaches

The theories of Abraham Maslow and Douglas McGregor, represent 'human relations approach' to organisational communication and had a substantial impact on organisational thinking from the late 1930s through the 1960s. The most critical impetus for the human relations movement came from a series of research investigations in the late 1920s and early 1930s that have come to be known as Hawthorne Studies.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow (194310; 195411) developed this Hierarchy of Needs Theory as a general theory of human motivations. It is considered as one prototype example of a human relations approach to organising and managing. He proposes that human beings are motivated by a number of basic needs, of which the five types of needs that are consistently present are given below.

i. 'Physical needs' are the needs of the human body, including the needs for food, water, sleep, and sensory gratification. In the organisational context, these needs can be satisfied through provision of a "living wage" that allows individuals to buy adequate food and clothing, and through the physical working conditions that do not violate the physical requirements of the human body.
ii. 'Safety needs' include the desire to be free from danger and environmental threats. In the organisational context, these needs can, again, be satisfied through wages that allow employees to procure shelter against the elements and through working conditions that are protective and healthy.

iii. 'Affiliation needs' sometimes referred to as "belonging needs" or "love needs", refer to the necessity of giving and receiving human affection and regard. These needs can be satisfied in the organisation through the establishment of social relationships with co-workers and managers.

iv. 'Esteem needs' refers to the desire of individuals to feel a sense of achievement and accomplishment. Esteem needs can be divided into external esteem, achieved through public recognitions and attention, and internal esteem, achieved through a sense of accomplishment, confidence, and achievement. In the organisational context, external esteem needs can be met by compensation and reward structures. Internal esteem needs can be met by the provision of challenging jobs that provide employees with the opportunity to achieve and excel.

v. 'Need for self-actualisation', is the need Maslow characterises as the desire to "become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming". An organisation can facilitate the satisfaction of this need through the provision of jobs that allow an individual to exercise responsibility and creativity at workplace.
Herzberg’s Motivation - Hygiene Theory

Frederick Herzberg’s (1976) Motivation-Hygiene theory was developed through both a deductive consideration of the literature on job satisfaction and an inductive consideration of employee reports on job facets that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The basic premise of his theory is that there is a set of workplace characteristics that serve to satisfy and make a person happy and a separate set that serves to dissatisfy and make a person unhappy. Herzberg uses the label ‘motivators’ or ‘motivating factors’ to identify aspects of work that make a person satisfied or unhappy. He uses the label ‘hygiene factors’ to identify aspects of work that keep a person from being dissatisfaction or unhappy. Included in the category of motivators are responsibility, achievement, recognition, challenging work, and advancement in the organisation. The hygiene factors are physical working conditions, salary, benefits, company policy and the technical quality of supervision. Herzberg believes that the absence of these factors will lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction.13

Communication in Human Relations Approaches

Unlike those in the classical organisations communication in organisations following a human relations approach differs greatly from the characteristics like task-related, vertical and downward, written and highly formalised.

Content. In human relations organisations, task-related communication still exists, but it is accompanied by communication that attempts to maintain the
quality of human relationships within the organisation – 'maintenance communication'. Both the human relations theories described above point to the importance of social communication. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs emphasises the importance of affiliation needs that can be best satisfied through the give and take of social interactions. Herzberg’s theory also points to the importance of social interactions in fending off dissatisfaction.

Direction. A human relations approach does not eliminate the need for vertical information flow, which characterises the classical organisations. However, this approach does not restrict communication flow to this direction, though ‘horizontal’ communication is strongly encouraged in this approach.

Channel. Unlike in the classical organisations where a premium is placed on the performance of written communication, though all communication modes might be used, in the human relations approach, in contrast face-to-face communication takes a centre stage. As the goal of communication shifts from recording rules to satisfying human needs, the most appropriate channel for communication also shifts. Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) have coined the term ‘social presence’ to refer to the amount of emotional and social content that is likely to be transmitted along various communication channels. Since written communication does not allow for nonverbal cues and feedback, it is said to have less social presence than face-to-face interactions in which nonverbal cues and feedback are possible. The concept of social presence is useful in considering likely
communication channels in a human relations organisation. Thus face-to-face communication takes on a great deal of importance, and written communication channels are de-emphasised.\(^4\)

**Style.** While the classical approaches in organisations would rely on a formal style of communication human relations theorists emphasise the social organisations and the satisfaction of affiliation needs, communication in organisations that follow this approach should be relatively informal. Human relations organisations attempt to break down the status differential between managers and employees as a means of satisfying social needs. When these status differences are reduced, communication should be characterised by less reliance on titles and other means of formal communication.

1.2.3 **Human Resources Approach**

The 'human resources approach' acknowledges contributions of both classical and human relations approaches to organising. Human resources theorists recognise that individuals in organisations have feelings that must be considered and also recognise that individual labour is an important ingredient for meeting organisational goals. What they add is an emphasis on the cognitive contributions employees make with their thoughts and ideas. This approach differs from the classical approach in a number of ways, especially in seeing employees as contributors of mental as well as physical labour. It differs from human relations approaches in that employees are seen as assets who can contribute to
organisational goals with their ideas for better workplace functioning. Two of the founding theories of the human resources approaches are discussed here.

Managerial Grid

Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1991\textsuperscript{15}; 1964,\textsuperscript{16}) developed their 'Management Grid' as a tool for training managers in leadership styles that would enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness and stimulate the satisfaction and creativity of individual workers. They began with the assumptions that leaders will be most effective when they exhibit both 'concern for people' and 'concern for production' thus confining the interests of classical management (concern for production) and human relations (concern for people).

Likert's System IV

Rensis Likert theorises that there are a number of forms that an organisation can take and that these various forms are more or less effective in satisfying organisational and institutional goals. He explains the four organisational forms, labelled system I through system IV. Likert's System I, called the exploitative authoritative organisations, is characterised by motivations through threats and fear, downward and inaccurate communication, top-level decision making, the giving of orders, and top-level control. The system II is called the 'benevolent authoritative organisations'. This organisational type is characterised by motivation through economic and ego rewards, limited
communication, decision making at the top, goal setting through orders and commands, and top-level control.  

In the System III organisations decisions are still made at the top and control still rests primarily at the upper levels of the hierarchy. However, before decisions are made, employees are consulted and their views are taken into considerations. Goals are set after discussion, and there is a high level of communication moving both up and down the hierarchy. In a System IV organisation, decision making is performed by every organisational member and goals are set by complete workgroups. Control is exercised at all levels of the organisations, and communication is extensive, including upward, downward, and horizontal interactions. The contributions of all organisational members are strongly valued, and employees are rewarded through the satisfaction of a wide variety of needs.

Likert believes that a human resource organisation (system IV) is more than just managerial attitudes. He advocates structural principles that enhance the participation of individuals and the performance of the organisations. One of these is the ‘linking pin’ which describes an individual with memberships in several work-groups. Such multiple memberships should enhance the flow of communication and the utilisation of information.
Communication in Human Resources Approaches

Communication process in human resources organisations are task-oriented with facilities for social communication as well as communication of innovations. It is multi-directional in nature and all channels are employed.

Content. The human resources approach to organising emphasises the input from employees, and the innovations content of communication is critical. Communication about new ideas should maximise both organisational effectiveness and individual goal achievement. In addition, task communication is still pivotal and social communication retains its importance for the satisfaction of some human needs.

Direction. In a human resources organisation, the goal is to encourage the flow of ideas from all locations throughout the organisation. Communication thus, in this approach will include all directional flows — downward, upward, horizontal and diagonal. This multi-directional communication flow often takes place in ‘team-based’ settings in human resources organisations. Rather than restricting communication flow to the hierarchy of the organisation, it will often reconfigure the organisational chart in order to optimise the flow of new ideas. For example, a cross-functional team, of a company consisting of individuals from manufacturing, marketing, research, maintenance and finance might get together to discuss a new project or product. Such a team-based communication flow is expected to increase
the extent to which the unique contributions of organisational members can be maximised.

Channel. In a human resource organisation, it is unlikely that any particular channel of communication will be favoured over others. Human resource theorists desire to maximise the productivity of the organisation through intelligent use of human resources. These can be utilised through face-to-face contracts at meetings, or written memos or electronic mail depending upon the situations. Thus such organisations will take advantage of large range of communication channels.

Style. Human resources organisations have the dual goal of enhancing organisational effectiveness and fulfilling human needs. A informal style is most likely to satisfy the needs for affiliations. For organisational effectiveness side, as well informal style will probably serve better than a formal one, as employees will probably feel more comfortable contributing in a relatively informal style. Hence such a style is also the most congruent with the all-direction team-based communication advocated by human resources theorists, though formal style has to be used when it is appropriate.

1.3 Communication and Culture

In the study of organisational communication two prominent perspectives have emerged as central. They include the study of organisation cultures by Barnett, (1988)\textsuperscript{18} and Putnam & Pacanowsky, (1983)\textsuperscript{19} and also the study of language in the contest of formal organisations by Eisenberg & Riley, (1988).\textsuperscript{20}
These studies throw light on the cultural aspects of the organisations and they do have relevance to the communication process.

According to Kluckholn & Kelly (1945) 'culture' is defined as a historically created system of explicit and implicit pattern of living, which tends to be shared by all or specially designated members of a group at specific point of time. Culture consists of the habits and tendencies to act in certain ways. The values; feelings and meanings are expressed in an society or organisation's language. Thus the culture may be treated as an ordered system of meanings, expressed through symbols during the process of social interaction. As Geertz (1973) described:

[Culture is] an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in a symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about the attitude towards life.

Culture is not a property of an individual. It is a socially shared expression and hence a property of social groups like organisations. On the other hand, culture determines how group members communicate. Those meanings that are attributed to verbal symbols and non-verbal expressions are determined by the social group as a whole.

When new members are socialised into a social group, they acquire its culture. Individuals are transformed into group members during the process of social interaction with other members of the group.
The relationship between communication, the exchange of symbols, and culture has led scholars to define culture as a communication phenomenon. Pacanowsky and O’Donnell - Trujillo (1982)\textsuperscript{13} defined organisational culture in terms of the communication activities of social groups.

1.4 Knowledge and Organisations

During past few years there has been an upsurge of interest in ‘knowledge’. Many of the benchmarked organisations are concentrating on making themselves learning organisations or knowledge-managed enterprises. The trends in this direction could be due to the following reasons:

a) The globalisation of the economy which is putting terrific pressure on firms for increased adaptability, innovations, and process speed

b) The awareness of the value of specialised knowledge, as embedded in the organisational processes and routines, in coping with the above pressures

c) The awareness in the growing book to market ratios within knowledge based industries and (d) cheap networked computing which is at last giving a tool to work with and learn with each other.\textsuperscript{24}

In an organisational context the production and utilisation of knowledge for the solutions of individual and organisational problems is a complicated, interactive process involving a number of different stages, roles, functions, activities, opportunities and constraints. Effective communication is at the heart of the process if relevant knowledge is to be generated, made available, integrated, adapted, packaged, disseminated and used.\textsuperscript{25}
According to Prusak and Davenport: Knowledge is a fluid mixture of framed experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. In organisations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organisational routines, processes, practices and norms.26

1.5 Research Problem

Communication is generally accepted as an important activity crucial to the success of an organisation for meeting its goals. In spite of that, most of the organisations in India are paying little attention to address the issues involved in communication, like providing infrastructural facilities, developing alternative channels, as well as using the existing channels in an alternative way.

In organisations communication is not always used as an effective tool for achieving its desired goals. The effects of communication and its effectiveness are rarely studied. Though researches in areas like marketing, production, finance engineering and human resource management are often conducted in relation to the organisational performance, such researches in communication are far and few in the Indian context. Similarly the linkages between communication and the comparatively new discipline of knowledge management are yet to be studied in-depth.
1.6 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. to examine the nature, scope and processes of communication within KRL;
2. to study how communication was helping the organisation in managing knowledge;
3. to identity the ‘best practices’ in the field of internal communication, if available in the organisation, and
4. to evaluate innovations relating to communication made by the organisation.

1.7 Hypotheses

Following are the hypotheses for the research:

i) In a successful organisation like KRL there exists a strong density of internal communication system.

ii) There is enough scope for conventional communication channels as well as alternative ones in an industrial organisation.

iii) Communication has a strong bearing on the process of managing knowledge.

1.8 Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were made use of in the study. The main tools employed for data collection were as follows.
Primary Data

(a) Ethnography

To study the communication process within the organisation the participant observation method was adopted. For this, the researcher had to become part of the organisational environment to understand the actions of people who occupy and produce cultures, defined as the symbolic and learned aspects of human behaviour which include customs and language. The process of learning behaviour, in such a qualitative research, is argued to be absent from other forms of research, for instance, a questionnaire asks questions at one particular time is a 'static-casual snapshot' of attitudes; how and why people change is not understood.

Participant observation has been defined by Loftland and Loftland as (1984) the process in which an investigator establishes a many-sided and relatively long-term relationship with a human association in its natural setting, for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of that association.

The study was conducted by the researcher as a 'complete participant'. This required for the researcher to engage fully, in the activities of the organisation under investigation. The role was covert for the intentions were not made explicit. One advantage for this method was that it could produce more accurate information and understanding could not have been available by other means. Another advantage was that there was a high degree of flexibility in the method of
data collection, depending upon situations. Though access to the organisation was not difficult, the process was personally demanding for the researcher. The method, often referred to as ethnography, necessitated the researcher to immerse in the day-to-day activities of the people and processes. As an on-going process, the reflective rationalisation of conduct, which was continual interpretations and application of knowledge by people in the organisational environment, could be interpreted and analysed. Hence, in this process the researcher, often, had become the instrument of data collection. By active participation in the environment, useful information could be gathered by moving closely among people, sometimes quite literally ‘living among them’ and observing their everybody actions.

By living and breathing the lives of employers, employees, and sometimes their family members the researcher could experience the problem from more than one perspective. Using field notes and mapping of key elements in various processes ideas were developed from observations. In this ethnographic method the researcher had to study groups at work, particularly to know the work practices and group behaviour, in which the work was largely tacit, invisible and unarticulated, distributed across time and place, and hence hard to observe. It was done through the process of observing and interacting with the ongoing reality and “lifting the veils that obscure or hide what is going on.” The involved observation was an important research technique used in the study. Asking questions that were more open-ended than those which were formally phrased
and were "designed as triggers that stimulate the interviewee into talking about a particular broad area." 

The interpretations and analysis of data collected are presented at the end of each of the empirical chapters.

(b) Documents

A large number of original official documents relating to the subject were studied. They include: manuals, operating instructions, policy papers, files, circulars, notices, letters, memoranda, and notes.

(c) Computer Data Base

The data bases available in the computers of the following functions of the organisation under study were made use of: Local Area Network (LAN), Personal Information System (PINS), and the computer data base of Human Resource Management department.

(d) Questionnaire

A questionnaire was employed to survey the reading habits and their perceptions on the company house-magazine. The respondents who were all employees were selected based on stratified random sampling method. The whole population was divided into 13 strata and the respondents were selected using random table numbers developed by Leonard Kazmier. Total number of respondents were 300 from a population of 1988. Such a quantitative tool like
questionnaire was employed to supplement the ethnographic study relating to a major social communication activity of the organisation.

(e) In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with a large number of employees who were responsible for communication related functions and also some of those who were mere participants in the communication process. This is in addition to the numerous informal interviews with them.

Secondary Data

A number of secondary data were made use of in the study. They include annual reports, house-magazines, printed publications like brochures and profiles, published articles, compact discs (CD-ROMS) and Internet web-sites.

This study on the various dimensions and dynamics of human communication is related to one organisation, in the corporate sector located in the southern most Indian state of Kerala: Cochin Refineries Limited. During the study period the name of the organisation was changed to Kochi Refineries Limited which came to be known as KRL. In this study the name of the organisation is referred to as KRL.

The method adopted to study the various forms of communication within KRL and their relevance in managing knowledge was based on descriptive, exploratory and analytical research.
The selection of this organisation was done due to the following reasons: (a) KRL was the only organisation in southern India rated first among the best run public sector companies in India (b) KRL was the largest business enterprise in the state of Kerala in terms of turnover, productivity, capacity utilization and profit, (c) density of communication channels available in KRL was found to be high, and (d) the author's access to the internal information on the communication process.

The study was conducted during three years from 1998 to 2000.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study is essentially based on the communication process within one large and high technology organisation, which is financially more resourceful than most of the institutions in the region. Hence all the findings may not be relevant to the majority of the organisations that would not be able to make sizeable investment, both one-time and recurring, in managing information, communication and knowledge. However, an attempt is made to throw light on the methods of developing alternative communication systems that could be low-cost, appropriate and innovative, which could be innovated by any organisation.

Another limitation is the ethnographic method employed for research which does not provide strict quantitative indicators on human behaviour and other social phenomena, though the researcher had spent quite a long time in the living-in process. However, this approach could bring out pertinent qualitative information that might not have been easily possible to elicit using the
conventional quantitative method. The study could throw light on the trends in communication in the organisational context giving fresh directions in approaching the subject.

1.10 Plan of the Study

The study on communication in KRL is presented in 10 chapters. The first cluster of the research, chapters 1-4, deals with introductory, theoretical portions as well as the backdrop of the subject of study. The following four chapters 4-8 form the second cluster with empirical findings, descriptions and critiques pertaining to each of them. Chapters 9 and 10 deal with the learning culture and case studies, and conclusions respectively.

The thesis starts with introduction, which includes a discussion on the subject of organisational communication and its different dimensions, the statement of the research problem, objectives of the study, research methodology and limitations of the study besides a short description on the importance, and scope of the research. While the second chapter presents a review of literature, the third chapter provides a description on the research setting, which is the organisation selected for the study and its social background, and fourth chapter discusses the dimensions of the modern subject of knowledge management which has a strong bearing on the subject.

Chapter five examines the physical infrastructural facilities including the communication technology available within the organisation. Chapter six deals with the human resources communication in KRL and chapter seven with
communication in teams such as the face to face interactions at workplace. The second cluster ends with a discussion on social communication activities within the organisation.

Chapter nine deals with management culture and case studies on the innovative communication experiments done by KRL showing trends of a learning organisation. The thesis ends with chapter ten presenting conclusions and suggestions.

This study is an inter-disciplinary research encompassing subjects like human communication, organisational behaviour, knowledge management, sociology, psychology, journalism and culture. Though the underlying thrust is on communication within the organisation selected for the study, the subject is treated as an instrument for achieving the desired goals of the organisation, particularly as a vehicle of communication of information and knowledge. The review of studies relating the subject is given in the next chapter.

References


12. Ibid., p.382.


