Optimising the Management of Minutes of Meetings for Effective Communication in Formal Organisations Towards Societal Development

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Abstract
The Minutes of Meetings in organisations should ideally be viewed as a strategic tool for organisational communication and knowledge management to achieve goals, drive progress, and support the overall well-being of all stakeholders, translating into societal growth. However, the tendency is mostly to manage minutes haphazardly or simply as a routine administrative task, which leaves much to be desired in the administration of organisations. This article aims to project the importance of Minutes of Meetings as a veritable tool for overall communication and growth of society, leveraging on the claim by Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2012) that well-structured meetings, supported by effective documentation, significantly boost team performance and organisational success, aside from unifying all staff of any organization, present or not at meetings. Engaging the descriptive research design, this article navigates relevant subtopics culminating in the discussion of several challenges affecting the management of Minutes of Meetings, which include a lack of Clarity and structure, inconsistent practices, and their delayed distribution. The conclusion is that ineffective Minutes of Meetings compromise organisational decision-making, coordination, and knowledge management based on the complex nature of the challenges. To resolve such issues requires a comprehensive, theory-informed approach that integrates communication effectiveness, organisational design, and technological capability, including the adoption of standard minutes writing formats in organizations, regular manpower training for employers involved in minutes writing, timely distribution of minutes to all stakeholders, minutes stating clearly stating assignments to be carried with those to do so and the timelines, as well as organizations adopting integrated digital tools for enhanced communication dynamism and output.

Key words: Minutes of Meetings, Management, enhanced communication, organization, societal development

Introduction

Effective communication is a fundamental requirement for the success of formal organisations, including government institutions, corporate entities, healthcare systems, and educational organisations. Such entities rely on

structured communication processes to coordinate activities, facilitate decision-making, and ensure accountability. Among these processes, the management of Minutes of Meetings plays a critical yet often underestimated role. Minutes of Meetings serve as official records of discussions, decisions, and assigned responsibilities, forming a vital link in organisational communication systems (Wolfe, 2007; McEachern, 1998).

Despite their importance, Minutes of Meetings are frequently poorly managed, resulting in unclear communication, inefficiencies, and reduced organisational effectiveness. As Allen, Rogelberg, and Scott (2016) argue, ineffective meetings often produce ambiguous outcomes that are then inadequately documented, further exacerbating communication challenges. In an era characterised by complex organisational structures and increasing reliance on digital communication (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, & Bendz, 2020), the need to optimise Minutes of Meetings management has become more pressing.

This article speculates that optimising the management of Minutes of Meetings is essential for improving communication in formal organisations and subsequently society at large by the systematic examination of the following subheadings:

- Definition of Minutes of Meetings
- Expected roles of Minutes of Meetings in organisational communication,
- Key challenges in the Minutes of Meetings management,
- Practical strategies to enhance the effectiveness of Minutes of Meetings

Definition of Minutes of a Meeting

Minutes of Meetings is a record of the proceedings (of a meeting) compiled by a Secretary. which contains the name of the organization, names of the people present or absent, venue, and time of the meeting, and what was discussed or agreed upon at the meeting. A secretary needs to write the minutes as soon as possible after a meeting. His notes during the meeting help his writing. He has to present the minutes to the Chairman for approval within twenty-four hours and thereafter makes sure it is circulated to the members within one week. Good minutes are a summary of the proceedings and not a verbatim report. A secretary's notes, therefore, should be based on the ideas expressed by members and not on the real words spoken except where there is a need to quote a speaker. Writing of speakers' names should be avoided as much as possible, except where it is unavoidable, like the names of proposers and seconders of motions. Minutes should show the decisions or resolutions reached. How and why they were reached also need to be clearly and precisely stated. Minutes of Meetings become binding at the next meeting of an organisation after it is read and adopted. Chairmen append their signatures thereafter, while Secretaries would have done so earlier.

Expected Roles of Minutes of Meetings in Organisational Communication
Minutes of a meeting play crucial roles in capturing, documenting, and circulating information within organisations as follows:

- Firstly, as a formal record of meeting deliberations and the resolution reached, minutes should be managed to ensure that all stakeholders have access to consistent and reliable information (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Scott, Allen, Rogelberg, & Kello, 2015). This role is particularly important in complex organisations where various teams and departments must coordinate their activities.
- Secondly, according to Wolfe (2007), Minutes of Meetings enable verbal discourse that actively shape how organisational events are interpreted and understood. Rather than simply recording what happened, minutes influence how decisions are communicated and implemented.
- Similarly, McEachern (1998) opines that Minutes of Meetings function as symbolic action, reflecting organisational priorities and values.
- Moreso, the selective documentation of information suggests what is considered important, thereby shaping organisational culture (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008).
- Furthermore, Minutes of Meetings contribute to organisational continuity by providing a reference point for future actions. They also enable organisations to track progress, evaluate decisions, and maintain accountability. Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2012); Onjewu (2000) emphasise that well-structured meetings, supported by effective documentation, significantly boost team performance and organisational success, and, aside from unifying all staff of any organization, present or not at meetings, minutes' resolutions are binding on all.

Minutes of Meetings and Effective Communication in Formal Organisations
Efficient communication flow within formal organisations depends principally on the clarity, precision, and timeliness of information dissemination. Minutes of Meetings serve as a key mechanism for ensuring that information is communicated effectively across different levels of an organisation (Men, 2014).

In addition to facilitating internal communication, Minutes of Meetings also support external communication by providing evidence of decision-making processes, which is essential for transparency and accountability. For example, in school settings, accurate documentation is critical for ensuring coordination among teachers and maintaining student well-being. In the banking sector, similarly, minutes' resolution may aim to ensure customer satisfaction and the safety of their investments. Moreover, in Nigeria, the Minutes of Meetings with the resolution to open a corporate account is a major requirement by banks in Nigeria. Zwarenstein, Goldman, and Reeves (2013) demonstrate that communication and collaboration are essential for effective service delivery, highlighting the importance of reliable documentation (Onjewu, 2000)..

Similarly, in corporate and governmental contexts, Minutes of Meetings serve as a basis for evaluating performance and ensuring compliance with regulations. Clampitt and Downs (1993) argue that effective communication is closely linked to organisational performance, suggesting that improvements in communication processes can lead to better outcomes. Additionally, Morrison (2011) emphasises that employee voice and the ability to access accurate organisational information are central to organisational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction.

Challenges in Minutes of Meetings Management in Formal Organisations: A Theoretical and Practical Analysis

Minutes of Meetings are a critical component of organisational communication, serving as an official record of discussions, decisions, and action points that facilitate coordination, ensure accountability, and contribute to organisational memory and knowledge management. However, despite their importance, the effective management of Minutes of Meetings remains a persistent challenge in many formal organisations. The challenges are not merely procedural but are deeply rooted in broader issues related to communication processes, organisational structures, technological systems, and workplace dynamics.

This section presents a critical examination of the vital challenges associated with Minutes of Meetings management, linking them to relevant theoretical frameworks, including communication theory, organisational behaviour, knowledge management, and socio-technical systems theory, to highlight how deficiencies in minute-taking reflect wider organisational inefficiencies as follows:

Lack of Clarity and Structure

One of the most vital challenges in Minutes of Meetings management is the lack of clarity and structure. Poorly documented minutes often do not capture essential elements such as key decisions, supporting rationale, and clearly defined action points, which makes them difficult to interpret, particularly for individuals who were not present at the meeting.

This issue can be understood against the backdrop that poorly structured minutes introduce semantic noise, distorting meaning and reducing the effectiveness of information transmission, because, when the encoding process—recording discussions into written form—is flawed, the decoding process by readers becomes equally compromised.

Moreover, from an organisational behaviour perspective, this reflects process losses in group decision-making (Steiner, 1972). Ineffective meetings characterised by unclear objectives and poor facilitation often produce equally ineffective minutes. As highlighted by Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Rogelberg (2018), poorly managed meetings tend to result in vague and incomplete documentation, reinforcing a cycle of inefficiency. Consequently,

unclear minutes contribute to misinterpretations, repeated discussions, and reduced organisational productivity.

Inconsistent Practices

Another major challenge is the lack of standardisation in the preparation of the Minutes of Meetings. Different individuals or departments may adopt varying formats, levels of detail, and terminologies, resulting in inconsistency within the same organisation. Institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) provides a useful lens for understanding this issue. The absence of formalised structures and norms results in institutional division, where practices vary widely, reducing organisational coherence and efficiency. Without standardisation, Minutes of Meetings lose their comparability and reliability as a communication tool. From a knowledge management perspective (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), inconsistent practices hinder the conversion of tacit knowledge—discussions and insights shared during meetings—into explicit knowledge that can be stored and reused. Lu and Rogelberg (2019) note that such variability limits the strategic value of Minutes of Meetings, as they cannot be easily analysed or used to inform future decision-making, which undermines organisational learning and continuity.

Delayed Dissemination

Timeliness is essential for the effectiveness of Minutes of Meetings, yet delays in their distribution remain a common problem. When minutes are not shared promptly, their relevance diminishes, leading to confusion, missed deadlines, and duplication of efforts. Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) suggests that communication effectiveness depends on the appropriateness of the medium for the task. Minutes of Meetings are inherently a "lean" medium and rely heavily on timeliness to retain their value. Delayed distribution reduces their effectiveness further, as contextual understanding fades over time. Coordination theory (Malone & Crowston, 1994) also highlights the importance of timely information sharing for synchronising interdependent tasks. Delays disrupt coordination mechanisms, negatively affecting organisational performance. Rothberg et al. (2011) reinforce this by demonstrating how communication delays can impair workflow efficiency and decision implementation.

Lack of Accountability

Minutes of Meetings are intended to ensure that decisions made during meetings are translated into action. However, this objective is often undermined by the lack of clearly defined responsibilities and deadlines. Agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) explains this challenge in terms of misalignment between organisational goals and individual actions. Without explicit documentation of accountability, there is a limited basis for monitoring performance or enforcing responsibility. Furthermore, goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) emphasises that specific and clearly defined goals improve performance outcomes. When Minutes of Meetings fail to specify

"who is responsible for what and by when," they do not provide the clarity required for effective execution. Rogelberg et al. (2006) argue that a lack of accountability reduces the perceived value of meetings, as decisions are not followed through, leading to frustration and disengagement among participants.

Communication Distortion

In hierarchical organisations, communication is often subject to distortion as it passes through different levels. Minutes of Meetings may reflect selective reporting, bias, or misinterpretation of discussions, particularly when prepared under the influence of organisational power dynamics.

Tourish and Robson (2006) highlight how upward communication is frequently filtered, with individuals presenting information in ways that align with managerial expectations, which can result in incomplete or biased meeting records. Sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995) further explains that individuals actively interpret and reconstruct events when documenting them. Minute-takers are not neutral recorders; they shape the narrative based on their understanding and perspectives. This interpretive process introduces the risk of distortion, especially in organisational cultures that discourage open or critical communication. As a result, Minutes of Meetings may not accurately represent discussions, undermining informed decision-making.

Technological Limitations

Despite advances in digital tools, many organisations continue to rely on outdated systems for managing Minutes of Meetings. The systems often lack integration with other organisational platforms, limiting accessibility and collaboration. Socio-technical systems theory (Trist & Bamforth, 1951) emphasises the need for alignment between social processes and technological systems. When technology does not support organisational needs, inefficiencies arise. Olson and Olson (2000) note that fragmented systems hinder collaboration and make it difficult to retrieve and share information effectively. From a knowledge systems perspective, inadequate technology restricts the ability to store, organise, and access organisational knowledge. As a result, Minutes of Meetings remain static documents rather than dynamic tools that support communication and decision-making.

Challenges in Remote and Hybrid Work Environments

The emergence of remote and hybrid work has introduced additional complexities in managing Minutes of Meetings. Virtual meetings often involve reduced non-verbal cues, overlapping conversations, and varying levels of engagement, making accurate documentation more difficult.

Media synchronicity theory (Dennis et al., 2008) highlights the importance of matching communication processes with appropriate media. Virtual environments often struggle with reduced synchronicity, affecting clarity and shared understanding. Social presence theory (Short et al., 1976) further

suggests that reduced interpersonal presence in digital settings can prevent effective communication. Waizenegger et al. (2020) emphasise that dispersed work environments require more structured communication practices to maintain alignment. In such contexts, the accuracy and timeliness of Minutes of Meetings become even more critical, as opportunities for informal clarification are limited.

Conclusion

The challenges associated with Minutes of Meetings management are multifaceted and deeply embedded in organisational communication systems, structures, and technologies. Theoretical perspectives reveal that these challenges are not isolated issues but reflect broader organisational inefficiencies. Lack of clarity and structure indicates breakdowns in communication processes, while inconsistent practices highlight the absence of institutionalised norms. Delayed dissemination disrupts coordination, and weak accountability structures reflect agency problems that hinder implementation. Communication distortion underscores the influence of power dynamics and interpretive processes, while technological limitations reveal misalignment between organisational needs and digital systems. The challenges are further amplified in remote and hybrid work environments. On the whole, ineffective Minutes of Meetings compromise organisational decision-making, coordination, and knowledge management. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive, theory-informed approach that integrates communication effectiveness, organisational design, and technological capability.

Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of Minutes of Meetings management, organisations should adopt the following strategies:

- **Standardisation of Formats and Processes**: Institutions should utilise a standard template that includes key sections such as agenda items, decisions, action points, responsibilities, and deadlines for facilitating consistency, improving clarity, and supporting organisational learning.
- **Training and Capacity Development:** Employees responsible for minute-taking and writing should receive training in effective communication, critical listening, and structured documentation to ensure accurate encoding of information and reduce the risk of distortion.
- **Timely Dissemination Mechanisms**: Minutes of Meetings should be distributed within 24–48 hours to ensure relevance and support coordination. Automated systems and workflows can help ensure timely delivery.
- **Strengthening Accountability Structures**: Minutes should clearly assign responsibilities and deadlines for each action item. Follow-up mechanisms, such as progress reviews, should be integrated into subsequent meetings.

- **Adoption of Integrated Digital Tools:** Organisations should invest in modern digital platforms that enable collaborative documentation, real-time updates, and integration with other systems to enhance accessibility and transform minutes into dynamic communication tools.
- **Enhancing Transparency:** To reduce communication distortion, organisations should promote open communication and implement validation processes, such as participant review of minutes.
- **Adapting to Remote Work Environments:** In remote settings, organisations should use collaborative tools, record meetings where appropriate, and establish clear protocols for virtual minute-taking to ensure accuracy and inclusivity.

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