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For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.
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Dedicated to the loving memory of my mother, Maryna

ABSTRACT

In 2007 more than a quarter (26%) of the South African adult population was functionally illiterate. As a result many non-profit organisations (NPOs) in South Africa strive to raise adult literacy levels. Adult illiteracy leads to problems such as, amongst others, high levels of unemployment, poverty and crime.

Most NPOs do not practice strategic communication management to build strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. It is therefore difficult for many NPOs to achieve its mission and goals, because communication and stakeholder relationship management are not planned strategically, and clear relationship objectives for particular stakeholders are not set. A lack of funds as well as a lack of knowledge about the benefits of strategic communication management contributes to this debilitating situation.

Steyn and Puth (2000) developed a model for strategic communication management, informed by the Excellence theory and relationship management theory. It was this study's aim to analyse South African NPOs in the adult literacy sector's current communication practices against the normative, theoretical Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management. The purpose was to understand the participating NPOs' operational and strategic communication management context, since little research in this regard has been conducted. Against this background, the following general research question was asked: *How can NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa best practice strategic communication management within their specific context?*

In this qualitative study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with communication practitioners or personnel responsible for communication and/or the chief executive officer (CEO) of five NPO's focussing on the upliftment of adult illiteracy over a period of six months (May to October 2007). The aim was to understand the operational and strategic context of the NPO and to determine its approach to and implementation of communication management. Furthermore, a literature study of the participating NPOs' annual reports, other official documents and websites was conducted in order to obtain comprehensive background information on each organisation and its communication practices.

The study found that participating NPOs did not manage communication strategically, mainly because of a lack of knowledge on what strategic communication management entails and how it can contribute to organisational performance. This situation was made worse by the NPOs' lack of funding and specialised staff to implement strategic communication management. However, the NPOs did apply some of the principles of strategic communication management intuitively, and in most cases displayed a symmetrical organisational worldview.

The main contribution of the study was to simplify the Steyn and Puth model, by taking the NPOs' current communication practices, as well as their constraints, into consideration. The simplified model would assist NPOs, with training, in the transition towards applying strategic communication management. NPOs would also understand the process of strategic communication management better, without changing or weakening the core of strategic communication management. It is recommended furthermore that NPOs should be trained to practice strategic communication and relationship management, in order to attain organisational goals more effectively. Specific recommendations regarding training, considering especially NPOs' funding constraint, is presented. A simplified strategic communication model and training would enable NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa to fulfil their developmental role more effectively.

OPSOMMING

Verskeie nie-winsgewende organisasies (NWOs) in Suid-Afrika beywer hulle daarvoor om ongeletterdheid onder volwassenes uit te wis, aangesien meer as 'n kwart (26%) van die Suid-Afrikaanse *volwasse* bevolking in 2007 funksioneel ongeletterd was. Ongeletterdheid onder volwassenes gee aanleiding tot probleme soos, onder andere, hoë werkloosheidsvlakke, armoede en misdaad.

Meeste NWOs pas nie strategiese kommunikasiebestuur toe om sterk, blywende en wederkerig voordelige verhoudings met belangegroepe te vestig nie. Daarom is dit vir baie NWOs moeilik om hul missie en doelwitte te bereik, omdat kommunikasie en belangegroepverhoudinge nie strategies beplan word nie. Duidelike verhoudingsdoelwitte vir spesifieke belangegroepe word nie gestel nie. 'n Gebrek aan fondse sowel as a gebrek aan kennis insake die voordele van strategiese kommunikasiebestuur dra by tot hierdie moeilike omstandighede.

Steyn en Puth (2000) het 'n model vir strategiese kommunikasiebestuur, gegrond op die *Excellence theory* en verhoudingsbestuurteorie, ontwikkel. Dit was hierdie studie se doelwit om Suid-Afrikaanse NWOs in die volwasse geletterdheidsektor se huidige kommunikasiepraktyk te analiseer aan die hand van die normatiewe, teoretiese Steyn en Puth model (2000) vir kommunikasiebestuur. Die volgende algemene navorsingsvraag is in die lig van bogenoemde agtergrondinligting gestel: *Hoe kan NWOs in die volwasse geletterheidsektor, binne hul spesifieke konteks, strategiese kommunikasiebestuur ten beste toepas?*

In hierdie kwalitatiewe studie is diepgaande, semi-gestruktueerde onderhoude met kommunikasiepraktisyns, personeel verantwoordelik vir kommunikasie en/of die hoof uitvoerende beampte van vyf NWOs wat fokus op die uitwissing van ongeletterdheid onder volwassenes, oor 'n tydperk van ses maande (Mei tot Oktober 2007), gevoer. Die doel was om die operasionele en strategiese konteks van die NWO te verstaan, en om die NWO se benadering tot en implementering van kommunikasiebestuur te bepaal. Verder is 'n literatuurstudie van die deelnemende NWOs se jaarverslae, ander amptelike dokumente en webtuistes gedoen om omvattende agtergrondinligting rakende die organisasie en hul kommunikasiepraktyk, in te win.

Die studie het bevind dat die deelnemende NWOs nie strategiese kommunikasiebestuur toepas nie, hoofsaaklik vanweë gebrekkige strategiese kommunikasiebestuurskennis en hoe dit tot organisasie prestasie kan bydra. Die situasie is vererger deur die NWOs se gebrek aan befondsing en spesialispersoneel om strategiese kommunikasiebestuur te implementeer. Die NWOs het nietemin sekere van die vereistes vir strategiese kommunikasiebestuur intuïtief toegepas, en in meeste gevalle 'n simmetriese organisatoriese wêreldbeskouing openbaar.

Die belangrikste bydrae van die studie is dat die Steyn en Puth model, met inagneming van die NWOs se huidige kommunikasiepraktyke en hindernisse, vereenvoudig is. Die vereenvoudigde model sal NWOs van hulp wees wanneer hulle, met behulp van opleiding, die oorgang na die toepassing van strategiese kommunikasiebestuur maak. NWOs sal ook die proses van strategiese kommunikasiebestuur beter verstaan, sonder dat die aard van strategiese kommunikasiebestuur verander of verarm word. Daar word verder aanbeveel dat NWOs opgelei word om strategiese kommunikasie- en verhoudingsbestuur toe te pas sodat organisatoriese doelwitte meer effektief bereik kan word. Deur veral NWOs se gebrek aan befondsing in ag te neem, is spesifieke aanbevelings rakende opleiding gemaak. 'n Vereenvoudigde strategiese kommunikasiebestuursmodel en opleiding sal NWOs in die volwasse geletterdheidsektor in Suid-Afrika in staat stel om hul ontwikkelingrol meer effektief te vervul.

CONTENTS

Part I: Context, theory and research design

Part II: NPOs in the adult literacy sector: communication management analysis

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Part I

Context, theory and research design

This thesis is organised into three parts:

Part I consists of five chapters that forms the background of the study. The context of the study (Chapter 1), the background to NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa (Chapter 2), as well as the theoretical background (Chapters 3 and 4) is discussed. Chapter 5 consists of the research design.

Part II deals with the interviews conducted for the study and consists of Chapters 6 to 10.

Part III explains the conclusions reached and makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

1.1   Introduction

In 2007, 26% of the South African *adult* population was functionally illiterate. This situation leads to problems such as, amongst others, high levels of unemployment, poverty and crime. Several non-profit organisations (NPOs) exist with the specific aim to address adult illiteracy in South Africa. These NPOs either run their own programmes, or participate in government programmes (and receive funding from government to run the programme). Some NPOs also present adult literacy courses at cost to the economic sector (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1).

Many NPOs do not realise the importance of strategic communication management and the necessity of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Naudé, 2001:265; Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15). Although some NPOs recognise that communication and relationship management is essential for the existence of the organisation, communication mostly occurs unplanned and without clear relationship objectives for a particular stakeholder (Bowers, 2000:13; Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15). Without planned communication and relationship management, many NPOs find it difficult to achieve its mission and goals (Brennan & Brady, 1999:327-337; Sargeant, 2001:177; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005:136; MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806; Polonsky & Sargeant, 2007:461-462). Unfortunately few NPOs appoint trained communication practitioners to *strategically* manage communication and build relationships with stakeholders. This is mainly due to a lack of funds as well as a lack of knowledge about the benefits of strategic communication management (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1 and Chapter 4, Section 4.2).

Steyn and Puth (2000) developed a model for strategic communication management, incorporating the Excellence [1]theory and the relationship management theory. Although this model was academically applied in several types of organisations, it was not compared to the operational reality of NPOs (Steyn, 2008; Steyn, 2007:163; Steyn, 2002:19; Steyn, 2000:13; Steyn & Green, 2001, Steyn & Nunes, 2001) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1).

It was therefore this study's objective to analyse South African NPOs in the adult literacy sector's current communication practices against the normative, theoretical Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management. The aim was to understand the participating NPOs' operational and strategic communication management context. Taking the NPOs' constraints and challenges into consideration, as well as the Excellence theory, relationship management theory and using Steyn and Puth's model as a framework, recommendations were made to assist NPOs in the adult literacy sector to practice strategic communication management to build strong, lasting relationship with stakeholders (see Chapter 11).

This chapter serves as a general background to explain the focus and context of the study. In the next sections the study will be contextualised in the field of communication management. As an orientation to the study a general background to NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa will be pro-

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1   *The Excellence Theory is based on the principles of two-way symmetrical communication. In this study, the term "two-way symmetrical communication" therefore refers by implication to the assumptions of the Excellence Theory.*

vided, whereafter the study's problem statement, research questions and objectives will be stated.

1.2   Contextualising the study in the field of corporate communication management

Cutlip *et al.* (2000:6) define public relations[2], or corporate communication, as
"the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends".
This study examined strategic communication management in five selected NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa, and how it supports these NPOs in building and maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders, in order to attain its organisational goals. It is therefore clear that this study is conducted from the theoretical perspectives of general Excellence theory as well as relationship management theory. This study therefore falls within the field of communication management, with specific focus on stakeholder relationship management as key element of strategic communication management.

1.3   Theoretical framework

Although Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management forms the theoretical focus of this study, it was not developed in isolation. The model is based on the strong theoretical foundation of Grunig's Excellence theory and the relationship management theory, which will subsequently be discussed in the following sections.

1.3.1   Excellence theory

During 1984, the IABC Foundation commissioned a research project into "how, why, and to what extent communication affects the achievement of organizational objectives" (Grunig, L.A., *et al.,* 2002:ix). The research results were published in 1992 as "Excellence in public relations and communication management" and in 2002 as "Excellent public relations and effective organisations: a study of communication management in three countries". The Excellence theory originated from this research.

Cutlip *et al.*'s (2000:6) definition of corporate communication as a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its strategic stakeholders, implies firstly that communication should have a managerial function in an organisation, and secondly that it is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with the organisation's stakeholders. Grunig, L.A. *et al.* (2002:xi, 95) add that the communication function's true value lies in the effective development and maintenance of stakeholder relationships, because relationships assist the organisation to manage its interdependence with the environment.

The application of two-way symmetrical communication practices enhances the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial, long-term relationships because it creates dialogue and mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:10). Furthermore, the *Excellence* Study (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002) empirically verified that two-way symmetrical communication is both a normative and ethical way of prac-

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2   The term corporate communication is increasingly used to describe the management function that aims to make the organisation more effective by applying two-way communication to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:2-3). Although the term public relations are still used in academic literature to refer to corporate communication, this study will give preference to the term communication management, since the term corporate is not applicable in the non-profit sector.

ticing communication management for more effective achievement of organisational goals. It is evident that the growing importance of stakeholder relationship management has led communication management to focus more attention on relationship management because stakeholders that affect or are affected by the organisation, can support or divert an organisation from its mission (Freeman *et al.*, 2004:364; Grunig & Grunig, 2000:310; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998:63).

Communication should have a managerial function for it to bring value to an organisation. Grunig (1992a:28) and Grunig and Grunig (2000:308) clearify this point when they state that communication should be managed strategically by a trained communication professional and that the communication director should have decision-making power in the dominant coalition. This implies that the communication function should participate in the strategic decision-making processes of an organisation if the communication department is to contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:548). Communication managers manage strategically when they are able to identify and segment strategic stakeholders, and balance the mission and needs of the organisation with what the different stakeholders, or environment, will allow or encourage it to do (Grunig & Grunig, 2000:308-309).

According to Grunig and White (1992:31-64) a symmetrical organisational worldview is a prerequisite for strategic communication management. The reason is that a symmetrical worldview prefers cooperative and mutual adjustment over control and adaptation, which are characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview.

Summing up, excellent communication has fourteen characteristics, which are manifested on program, departmental and organisational level (Grunig, L.A. *et al.,* 2002:9). On a program level, excellent communication management is managed strategically. On a departmental level, it is argued that to be excellent, the communication department should be a single or integrated department, separate from the marketing function. The communication manager or director, who should be a senior person, reports directly to senior management or the dominant coalition. This manager or director should be a trained communication professional, with knowledge on management and the application of the two-way symmetrical model. Furthermore, excellent communication management is characterised on departmental level by equal opportunities for men and women.

Organisations that practice excellent communication management are characterised by a symmetrical worldview, a participative organisational culture, an organic organisational structure and a turbulent, complex environment. The communication management director has power in or with the dominant coalition.

Lastly, practicing excellent communication management has three distinctive effects. All communication programs meet communication objectives, and as a result costs of regulation, pressure, and litigation are reduced. Job satisfaction is therefore high among employees.

Communication management that adheres to the above criteria will support the organisation in attaining its goals because it assists the organisation in reconciling its goals with the expectations of its strategic stakeholders (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 1992:86; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:10). This means that excellent communication management's main task is to strategically build strong, long-term relationships with the organisation's stakeholders to enable the organisation to achieve its goals and to manage stakeholders' issues (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5).

1.3.2   Relationship management theory

The relational perspective in communication management was initially discussed by Ferguson in 1984 (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii), but it was seriously taken up as a research area in the 1990s (Jahansoozi, 2006:942; Jahansoozi, 2007:398). According to the relationship management theory, organisations need to build mutually beneficial relationships with their key stakeholders, which have an impact on the organisation's licence to operate (Jahansoozi, 2007:398).

Organisations need to understand, listen, and develop dialogue with their stakeholders so that risks originating from organisational activities are reduced (Jahansoozi, 2007:399), and stakeholders' issues are addressed. Concerning organisational risks, the sociologist Ulrich Beck (1990:53; 1992:97-123) proposes that in addition to the benefits of industrialization there are also risks created by organisational activity. Whilst organisations benefit from their activities, there are also negative and positive consequences that may impact their stakeholders and in turn could have implications for the organisations' social license to operate (Jahansoozi, 2007:399). Within the relationship management perspective, the negative consequences of an organisation's activities need to be addressed in order for the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders to continue (Jahansoozi, 2007:399).

It is against this background that Ledingham (2003:190) proposes the theory of relationship management:

> *"Effectively managing organizational–public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics."*

Ledingham (2003:195) offered the following axioms of relationship management theory, where organisation-stakeholder relationships are:
- transactional;
- dynamic and changing over time;
- goal-oriented;
- analysed in terms of relationship quality, maintenance strategies, relationship type, and relationship actors;
- driven by perceived needs and wants of the interacting organisation and stakeholders;
- dependent on the degree to which expectations, expressed in interactions, are met;
- involving communication, but communication is not the only instrument of relationship building;
- impacted by relational history, the nature of the transaction, the frequency of exchange, and reciprocity; and
- described by type (personal, professional, community, symbolic, and behavioural) independent of the perceptions of those relationships.

Ledingham (2003:195) contines by emphasing that the focus of the domain of communication management (public relations) is relationships and not communication. This implies that communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships, but it is dependent on supportive organisational behaviour. Lastly, effective stakeholder relationship management supports mutual understanding and benefit, and the relationship perspective is applicable throughout the communication management process with regard to all communication management techniques.

1.3.3   Steyn and Puth's approach to strategic communication management

Steyn and Puth's model (2000) for strategic communication management is informed by the Excellence theory (Steyn, 2007:138), as well as the relationship management theory, because it proposes the use of two-way symmetrical communication to establish mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders, in order to manage organisational risks and stakeholders' issues.

Steyn and Puth (2000) developed the model for strategic communication management in organisations as part of a longitudinal action research project conducted at the University of Pretoria. In their research towards the model Steyn and Puth (2000:20-21) empirically verified three communication practitioner roles, as opposed to Grunig's two roles. Steyn and Puth's first two roles represent a differentiation in the traditional communication manager role, namely between that of the *strategist* and the manager (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19, 21). Several authors share the view that communication management should have a strategic function, and that a dedicated, highly skilled practitioner, functioning as a strategist, should fulfil the role (Dozier, 1992:341; Wright, 1995:186; Toth *et al.,* 1998:158; Moss *et al.,* 2000:301; Van Ruler, 2000:412). It is evident that Steyn and Puth's model (2000) corresponds with the *Excellence Study*'s findings in that it posits that communication should be practiced by a trained communication practitioner who:

- serves as a strategist in the dominant coalition;
- performs research on organisational risks, stakeholders and their issues;
- brings this information to strategic decision making processes; and
- thereby assists the organisation to build and maintain relationships with strategic stakeholders.

From a relationship management perspective, Steyn and Puth's (2000) model strives to build and maintain strong, long-term, and mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. This implies that organisations that are run in the interests of a wide variety of stakeholders are more likely to behave responsibly, because the organisation engage in dialogue with stakeholders and stakeholders participate in decision-making (Steyn & Puth, 2000:188-190). Managing communication according to Steyn and Puth's model should therefore assist organisations to build strong, mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, and attain organisational goals effectively.

1.4   Orientation to the study

The 2001 census in South Africa found that about 8.5 million South African adults, or over one third of the South African adult population (33.9 per cent), are functionally illiterate (Statistics South Africa, 2003:41; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:95; Ntshingila, 2006:1). This figure has dropped to 26 per cent in 2007, but this still means that more than a quarter of the South African population is functionally illiterate (Statistics South Africa, 2007a:2; Statistics South Africa, 2007b:8).

It is evident from the above-mentioned statistics that formal education has failed to reach a large proportion of the South African adult population. Therefore, non-formal adult education, as provided by NPOs, is very important for these illiterate adults to obtain functional literacy. Several NPOs in South Africa focus on addressing the adult literacy issue. NPOs exist to benefit society without striving for financial gain. Such organisations employ personnel and partake in revenue-generating activities that enable them to achieve their goals (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:13; Olson *et al.*, 2005:127).

Numerous authors (Brennan & Brady, 1999:327-337; Sargeant, 2001:177; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005:136; MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806; Polonsky & Sargeant, 2007:461-462) posited that NPOs need

to build strong, lasting relationships with its stakeholders, especially donors, to survive. Two types of relationships exist between an organisation and its stakeholders, namely exchange and communal relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999:20). It is important that NPOs, like any other organisation, understand that it need to build communal relationships with some stakeholders, while other stakeholders necessitate an exchange relationship. Relationships should therefore be managed according to the demands unique to each type of relationship (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.5.1).

However, NPOs experience serious constraints that impact negatively on the successful achievement of their goals, namely a lack of *funding* and a lack of knowledge about the value of *strategic communication management*, which includes stakeholder relationship management. The inability to build strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships, which is the focus of strategic communication management, forms the core of the NPOs' constraints. Steyn and Puth's model (2000) can therefore provide a framework for strategic communication management by NPOs. However, many NPOs' lack of funding prevents them from employing a trained communication practitioner to strategically management communication.

1.5   Problem statement

From the above discussion it is clear that NPOs face several constraints, of which funding and a lack of strategic communication management knowledge and/or training, poses the greatest threat to its existence. Very little research determining the communication practices of South African NPOs in the adult literacy sector, or examining whether these NPOs strategically manage their communication to build and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders has been conducted. It was this study's purpose to compare the practical implementation of communication management by NPOs in the adult literacy sector to the theoretical and normative Steyn and Puth (2000) model for strategic communication management.

Although Steyn and Puth's (2000) model has been applied by students and other project participants in NPOs, government institutions and small-to-medium sized companies in South Africa, the operational reality of organisations' communication practices has not been measured against the model (Steyn, 2002:19; Steyn, 2008). The Steyn and Puth model (2000) has furthermore received criticism from both communication practitioners and theorists for being theoretically idealistic but not taking practical constraints into account (Ströh, 2007:199-220). The model does however provide a framework for the implementation of strategic communication management in profit and non-profit organisations. However, proper implementation of the model might not always be possible due to practical constraints in the adult literacy NPO sector, as will be explained in Chapter 2.

This study was based on the premise that strategic communication management can further the achievement of organisational goals, and foster stakeholder relationships of NPOs in the adult literacy sector. The communication practices and strategic reality of NPOs in the adult literacy sector, and criticism on the Steyn and Puth (2000) model (Ströh, 2007:199-220), were examined in response to the following general research question:

> ***How can NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa best practice strategic communication management within their specific context?***

1.5.1 Specific research questions

The specific research questions for this study are:

1. What are the implications of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management for strategic communication management?
2. What is the nature of strategic communication management according to Steyn and Puth (2000)?
3. How do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management within their unique context?
4. To what extent do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management according to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management?
5. How can strategic communication management best be practiced by NPOs to enhance the achievement of their goals?

1.6   Research objectives

This section presents the research objectives, which are in response to the research questions outlined in the preceding section. As these objectives are a direct response to the questions, they form an overall objective and specific objectives, which are delineated in the following sections.

1.6.1 General objective

This study's general objective was to determine how NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa can best practice strategic communication management within their specific context.

1.6.2 Specific objectives

This study aims to:

1. determine the implications of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management for strategic communication management;
2. determine the nature of strategic communication management according to Steyn and Puth (2000);
3. determine how NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management within their unique context;
4. determine the extent to which NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management according to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management; and
5. determine how strategic communication management can best be practiced by NPOs to enhance the achievement of their goals.

1.7   Central theoretical statement

As mentioned in Section 1.1, Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management is based on the Excellence theory, which empirically verifies that two-way symmetrical communication is both a normative and ethical way of practicing communication management for more effective achievement of organisational goals. The use of research, the norm of reciprocity, and the importance of managing relationships with stakeholders are inherent to two-way symmetrical communication, and also form the basis of the Steyn and Puth model (2000). Application of Steyn and Puth's model (2000) for strategic communication management assists organisations in aligning

their communication strategy and plans with organisational strategies, for more effective achievement of the organisation's strategic goals.

The principles of two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002), relationship management theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b; Hung, 2001; Grunig, L.A. *et al.,* 2002; Hung, 2005:393-425; Hung, 2007:443-476) and Steyn and Puth's model (2000) for strategic communication management were used in this study to determine in what manner strategic communication management can be implemented in the non-profit adult literacy sector with its unique constraints and challenges.

The NPOs' communication practices were compared to the Steyn and Puth model (2000). In this way, the theoretical, normative model was compared to the practical feasibility of communication management in NPOs in the adult literacy sector.

In Chapter 2, 3 and 4 this general statement will be stratified into eleven specific theoretical statements. Specific theoretical statements one to six, concerning two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management will be handled in Chapter 3, and specific theoretical statements seven to eleven, concerning strategic communication management, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The research method for the study is explained next, in order to indicate the process followed in achieving the research objectives.

1.8   Research methodology

1.8.1   *Literature review*

The following databases have been consulted: NEXUS; Ferdinand Postma Library Catalogue; International Thesis and Dissertations; ISAP (South African journal articles); SA ePublications; EBSCOHost: Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Econlit; MCB Emerald; and ScienceDirect. Several studies, for example Grunig *et al.* (1992) and Grunig, L.A. *et al.* (2002) have been undertaken concerning the application of two-way symmetrical communication for the purpose of building relationships with stakeholders. Research on strategic communication management highlighting its important contribution in supporting organisations to reach its goals has been conducted (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; Grunig & Grunig, 2000:303-321; Steyn, 1999:20-43; Steyn, 2000:1-33; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Grunig, L.A. *et al.,* 2002; Steyn, 2002; Steyn, 2003; Steyn, 2007:137-172). Many studies examine relationship marketing (Brennan & Brady, 1999:327-337; Sargeant, 2001:177-192; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005:122-139; MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806-818; Knox & Gruar, 2007:115-135) and customer relationship marketing (Polonsky & Sargeant, 2007:459-476) by NPOs, while very few studies focus on strategic communication management (Balser & McClusky, 2005:295-315) by NPOs. No reference to a study similar to the current study could be found. Furthermore, strategic communication management in NPOs in the adult literacy sector has not been investigated within the South African context.

1.8.2   *Empirical study*

The empirical section of the study was an in-depth, qualitative examination of the communication practices and operational context of five selected NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. The selected NPOs were studied in order to understand each organisation and their specific constraints and circumstances. The aim of this empirical study was to achieve a deeper understanding of the

strategic communication practices and needs of the selected group of NPOs, and not just a superficial analysis of surface comparability between large numbers of respondents (Mason, 2002:65).

The NPOs were selected by means of a non-probability sample from the Southern African NGO Network's Programme for Development Research (SANGONeT Prodder) Directory. In order to be selected, the NPOs' main function had to be the upliftment of adult illiteracy. Both large and small NPOs were selected to obtain a better understanding of the sector as a whole.

A qualitative approach was used because the field of study is still new and little is known about the communication practices of NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. A qualitative approach presented an understanding of the specific operational constraints in the environment of each NPO and the opportunity to investigate the reasons and motives behind the NPOs' communication practices. The findings were compared to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management, which is a theoretical, normative model, in order to determine to what extend NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management according to the model.

The following qualitative methods were used:
• In-depth, semi-structured interviews (Babbie, 2001:291-292; Du Plooy, 2002:143; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:159; Mason, 2002:65) were conducted with communication practitioners or personnel responsible for communication and/or the chief executive officer (CEO) of each NPO, in order to understand the operational and strategic context of the NPO and to determine its approach to and implementation of communication management. An option for follow-up interviews was reserved in case the need for more information and/or clarification of facts arose.
• A literature review of the selected NPOs' annual reports, other official documents and websites was conducted in order to obtain any relevant information on each organisation and its communication practices.

The research methodology will be explained and motivated in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.9 Key concepts

This section defines some of the central concepts in this study: non-profit organisations; stakeholders and publics; relationship management, relationship marketing, and social marketing.

1.9.1 *Non-profit organisations (NPOs[3])*

According to the South African Nonprofit Organisations Act (1/1997), a *"'nonprofit organisation' means a trust, company or other association of persons:*
• established for a public purpose; and
• the income and property of which are not distributable to its members or office-bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered"*.
In other words, a non-profit organisation is formed to serve a purpose for public or mutual benefit, independent of government or commercial interests (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:13; Wolstenholme, 2006:560). Werker and Ahmed (2008:74) define NPOs as "*private organizations characterized primarily by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial, objectives … that pursue activities to relieve*

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3   The terms "NGO" (non-government organisation) and "NPO" (non-profit organisation) are used interchangeably in literature. This study prefers the term "NPO" because all NGOs are also NPOs, and both adhere to the characteristics as stated below. Furthermore, The Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre (see Chapter 9) is part of a government organisation (therefore not a NGO), but is a non-profit organisation within a parastatal organisation (SA Defence Force).

suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community developing". This definition excludes NPOs such as hospitals and universities. Other types of NPOs include trade unions, charities, and pressure groups, each with its own characteristics and purpose (Wolstenholme, 2006:560-563).

Cutlip *et al.,* (2006:444-445) and Jeppe (1992b:22-24) identify six distinguishing features of NPOs, defining such organisations as:
- *organised* with a charter, regular meetings, officers, rules and so on;
- *private*, meaning they are institutionally separate from government, even if they do receive government funding;
- *not* attempting to generate *profits* for the owners or directors. NPOs can make a profit, but the distribution of the profits to those who manage or direct the organisation is prohibited. Any profits generated by a NPO can be utilised to further the development aims and objectives of the NPO (Liebenberg, 1997:66), or be applied towards higher wages, shorter work hours or better offices (Werker & Ahmed, 2008:77);
- *self-governing*, meaning that they set their own procedures, are independent of external control, have their own board of directors, and provide opportunities for citizen involvement;
- *voluntary*, meaning that there must be some voluntary participation in either the management of the organisation or in the conduct of the programme. NPOs are largely staffed by employees and volunteers working towards ideological, rather than financial, ends (Werker & Ahmed, 2008:77);
- *supporting development*, which ensures its "public interest" character.

According to Jeppe (1992b:9-10) NPOs can be categorised by its function:
- *spesialised NPOs* engage in human and physical development activities such as technical training, adult literacy, housing, and so on;
- *welfare NPOs* focus on relief and welfare actions;
- *developmental NPOs* focus on human development and developing physical infrastructure; and
- *advocacy NPOs* provide communities and individuals with specialised assistance or consultation services.

Certain constraints and strengths characterise the NPO sector. NPOs' constraints can be summarised as follow (Jeppe, 1992a:172; Jeppe, 1992b:32-33; Merrington, 1992:16 as quoted by Liebenberg, 1997:75; Clark, 1990:57-60 as quoted by Liebenberg, 1997:75; Zhang, 2005:18):
- difficulty to acquire funding;
- lack of funding that might cause NPOs to interrupt or terminate projects, with detrimental consequences for beneficiaries;
- inadequate funding that hinders NPOs to do research concerning its activities and the effective implementation of activities;
- long delays in approval and financing of projects, as well as excessive bureaucracy concerning management of government projects;
- sensitive political environment;
- inadequate leadership and management training;
- lack of strong and continuous leadership;
- inadequate planning, administration, organisational and management skills;
- inadequate training of staff, mainly due to lack of funds;
- lack of technical expertise and skills;
- inability to replicate projects to ensure sustainability;
- inability to effectively collaborate with government services;

- a lack of co-ordination between individual NPOs to maximise efforts; and
- inability to learn from other NPOs' mistakes because of isolation and rivalry (mainly for funding) between NPOs.

On the other hand, NPOs have definite strengths (Liebenberg, 1997:75-76):
- NPOs can effectively identify community needs because they are closer to the community than government structures;
- because of its functioning at community level, NPOs tend to have more legitimacy in the community they serve. The reason for this might be that communities feel that the initiatives address their own needs and interests, and as such view the initiatives "as their own". Communities are then also more likely to support the NPO's initiatives;
- the high degree of community participation encourages the use and adaptation of local knowledge and technology to local development needs;
- NPOs' non-bureaucratic structures are flexible and adaptive to local conditions and changes in the environment, enabling them to respond faster to possible difficult situations.

NPOs work independently and alongside aid agencies, private-sector infrastructure operators, self-help organisations and government (Werker & Ahmed, 2008:74). NPOs are likely to relate to government in the following ways:
- by *complementing* government where the NPO participates with government in providing services government would otherwise be unable to provide;
- by *opposing* government through various pressure groups in an effort to engage with government to change its policies; and
- by *reforming* government where NPOs can represent interest groups that are working at grass-roots level, as well as negotiating with government to improve government policies.

Although Liebenberg (1997:75-76) notes that a NPO usually has one of the above relationships with the state, this study found that NPOs in the adult literacy sector has a combination of the above relationships with the state (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.5 and 3.5.3).

South Africa's transition to democracy began with the April 1994 election. However, whilst the new government has developed visionary policies, it has been a key challenge to provide service delivery to previously marginalised and impoverished South Africans. Zhang (2005:14) notes in this regard that *"whilst formal governmental accountability has been substantially achieved through constitutional means, accountability of government in the delivery of services and development processes remains incomplete"*. It has been acknowledged that government itself cannot effectively address societal issues such as HIV/Aids aid, environmental protection, poverty alleviation, job creation, and victim aid. There are therefore an increasing emphasis on the role of NPOs and public/NPO partnerships in addressing service delivery and development issues in South Africa (Zhang, 2005:15).

1.9.2   *Adult basic education and training (ABET)*

McKay (2007:291) differentiates between adult basic education (ABE) and adult basic training by saying that ABE refers to the educational base that individuals require to improve their life chances, while adult basic *training* refers to the foundational income-generating or occupational skills that individuals require to improve their livelihoods or living conditions. In other words, ABE provides adults with basic schooling to achieve functional literacy (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2), and therefore ABE is an adult equivalent of the basic compulsory schooling that children receive (Aitchison, 2001:134). This foundation enables the adult to continue his/her formal education to achieve, for instance, Grade 12.

Combining the two, adult basic education and training (ABET) supplies the foundational knowledge, skills, understanding, and abilities that are required for improved social and economic life. ABET programs also enables further learning, providing learners with the ability to improve and develop their own, as well as the lives of others around them (McKay, 2007:291). The South African Department of Education's national definition of ABET is:

> *"... the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and, ideally, provides access to nationally recognized certificates"* (Department of Education, 2003:8–9)."

ABET is defined in the Adult Basic Education and Training Act (52/2000) as

> *"... all learning and training programmes for adults from level 1 to 4 where level 4 is equivalent to*
> *(a)grade 9 in public schools; or*
> *(b)national qualifications framework level 1..."*

It is important to note that the "T" in ABET refers to a wide range of skills and expertise such as plumbing, dressmaking, beadwork and other crafts, as well as spesialised skills such as conflict management and negotiation, and also creative skills such as dance (McKay, 2007:291).

During the interviews with representatives from the participating NPOs, all said that in practice, all ABE and ABET programmes are referred to collectively as ABET programmes. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, the term "ABET" will be used in this study to refer to both ABE and ABET programmes.

1.9.3   Stakeholders and publics

In many instances, the terms *stakeholders* and *publics* are used interchangeably to indicate people, or groups of people, with which the organisation communicates and builds relationships (Skinner *et al.,* 2001:392). However, this study uses *stakeholders* to refer to people, or organisations, who are affected by the decisions and actions of an organisation or whose decisions and actions affect the organisation. Many stakeholders, for instance employees or residents of a community, are passive (Grunig & Repper, 1992a:125; Steyn & Puth, 2000:5; Choo, 2006:243).

When a potential problem arises in the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders, stakeholders turn into publics. While the stakeholders are unaware of the problem, they are viewed as latent publics. When stakeholders become aware of the problem, they become active publics (Steyn & Puth, 2000:5; Choo, 2006:243).

1.9.4   Relationship management versus relationship marketing and social marketing

Several approaches to communication or marketing in the NPO sector are evident in literature. This study focuses on strategic communication management and stakeholder relationship management, but recent developments in marketing, such as relationship marketing and social marketing, necessitates that the terms are differentiated.

Grunig (2001:7) distinguishes between two kinds of organisational environments, namely the economic, or task, and the social, or institutional, environment. The economic or task environment

consists of consumers, competitors, suppliers, and creditors. The economic environment stakeholders provide the organisation with resources and they purchase or use the organisation's products and services. The social or institutional environment consists of stakeholders that assist, or oppose (as in the case of activist groups) the organisation to determine and achieve its mission. Such stakeholders include government, communities, stockholders, employees, and activist groups. The marketing department therefore works within the economic environment and the communication department within the social environment of organisations.

Grunig (2001:7) also distinguishes between marketing and communication, stating that marketing assists the organisation in *exchanging* products and services with consumer *markets*, which mainly consist of *individuals* who purchase the organisation's goods and services. *Stakeholders* consist of *social groups* who respond to the effects that the organisation has on them. Stakeholders therefore try to *participate* in management decisions in ways that serve their interests. It is therefore necessary to keep the marketing and communication functions separate, because communication's main function is to *build relationships* with *stakeholders* because they have an influence on the organisation achieving its mission and goals.

Building strong stakeholder relationships is very important because, as the Excellence Study (Grunig et al., 1992) finds, effective organisations identify and achieve goals because they develop relationships with their stakeholders. When organisations identify goals that are valued both by management and by strategic stakeholders, they achieve support from stakeholders. Hon and Grunig (1999:9) describe strategic communication management's contribution to organisational effectiveness as follows:

> *"Public relations makes an organization more effective, therefore, when it identifies the most strategic publics as part of strategic management processes and conducts communication programs to develop and maintain effective long-term relationships between management and those publics."*

Relationship management is therefore the most important outcome of strategic communication management. Hung (2001:10) defines relationships as follows:

> *"Organization-public relationships arise when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage."*

There are mainly two types of relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders, namely an e*xchange relationship,* where members benefit from one another in response to specific benefits received in the past or expected in the future (Hung, 2005:396; Hung, 2007:456) and a *communal relationship,* where benefits are given in order to please the other, without the benefactor expecting the beneficiary to return the favour (Hon & Grunig, 1999:21; Hung, 2007:456). In other words, economic gain is *not* the main aim of communication management, which includes relationship management. According to Hung (2007:454), an organisation's intention and motivation for survival in the institutional environment affect the type/s of relationships it aims to have with its stakeholders (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5 for a discussion on relationship management).

Relationship marketing, on the other hand, "*is a customer-centered business strategy aimed at increasing satisfaction and loyalty of customers by offering them tailored services*" (Kristoffersen & Singh, 2004:29). O'Malley and Prothero (2004:1286) add that relationship marketing is based on the belief that profitability would increase should the organisation be able to retain customers. If

an organisation were to collect and process customer information to compile a customer profile, it would develop an understanding of its customers' needs. When the organisation understands what its customers want from the organisation, it can provide its customers with the desired value that leads to loyalty (Kristoffersen & Singh, 2004:29) and increased profits (Fawkes, 2001:6). Advertising, customer care, and customer loyalty programmes are used in relationship marketing, which is managed through marketing techniques.

By using relationship marketing, organisations attempt to build trust, commitment and mutual benefit between the organisation and its customers. Trust and commitment are also two outcomes that characterise relationship building in communication management (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3). Relationship marketing focuses on increased profits, while relationship management focuses on mutual understanding. Relationship marketing is therefore represented as being helpful, and fair, with possible win–win outcomes for both customers and marketers (O'Malley & Prothero, 2004:1286). According to O'Malley and Prothero (2004:1287) relationship marketing results in marketing strategies with increased focus, increased customer loyalty, decreased price sensitivity, and the creation of opportunities for up-selling and cross-selling. Therefore, building and maintaining relationships from a marketing perspective, have become an important source of competitive advantage for organisations because it is more expensive to attract new clients than to retain existing clients (Sargeant, 2001:178).

Social marketing, according to Andreason and Kotler (2003:329), differs from other forms of marketing only with respect to its objectives. The aim of social marketing is to influence social behaviours and not to benefit the marketer. It therefore only benefits the target audience and the general society. Social marketing is in response to members of the public engaging in unsafe behaviours, where changed behaviour would improve their personal welfare, as well as that of wider society (Bennett & Sargeant, 2005:801). Social marketing focuses on such issues as HIV infection and sexual responsibility, smoking, drunk-driving, pollution, recycling, and drug abuse. The communication messages in social marketing mostly make use of fear appeals (Bennett & Sargeant, 2005:802).

The main characteristics of relationship management, relationship marketing and social marketing are depicted in the following table to clearly differentiate between the terms:

Table 1.1: Relationship management vs. relationship marketing and social marketing

	Relationship management	**Relationship marketing**	**Social marketing**
Aimed at:	Stakeholders	Consumer markets	General society
Overarching goal:	Build relationships to minimise negative effects for organisation and stakeholders, and to maximise benefits for organisation and stakeholders	Increased profitability by retaining consumers	Influencing and changing social behaviour
How?	By building and maintaining trust, control mutuality, commitment and relationship satisfaction between the organisation and its *stakeholders*	By building trust, commitment and mutual benefit between the organisation and its *consumers*	By highlighting benefits for individuals and society as a whole
Timeframe:	Long-term relationship	Long-term relationship	No relationship
Result:	Creation of understanding and mutual benefits for both the organisation and its stakeholders	More focused marketing strategies, increased consumer loyalty, and more profits	Changed social behaviour

Although relationship marketing can be applied by NPOs, in order to attract and retain donors, the focus of NPOs is not to increase profits. NPOs also aim to change social behaviour (for instance to educate illiterate adults), but its main aim is to build long-term relationships with stakeholders to create mutual benefits for both the organisation and its stakeholders (for instance to retain donors by providing well-designed educational programs to adult illiterates). Therefore both relationship marketing and social marketing is *not* the focus of this study.

1.10 Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into three parts. **Part I: Context, theory and research design** consists of Chapters 1 to 5. *Chapter 1* has provided an introduction to the main components of the study as well as a description of the research problem. *Chapter 2* will examine NPOs, their constraints and challenges, and subsequent need for strategic communication management. The characteristics of NPOs in the adult literacy sector, as well as their particular constraints will then be discussed. *Chapter 3* will provide a brief discussion of this study's broad theoretical framework which consists of the Excellence theory, as constituted by two-way symmetrical communication, and the relationship management theory. *Chapter 4* will present the theoretical focus of this study by discussing strategic communication management according to Steyn and Puth's model (2000). *Chapter 5* will detail the research methodology followed in this study, in order to answer the research questions.

Part II: NPOs in the adult literacy sector: communication management analysis will present the research results and consists of Chapters 6 to 10. Each NPO will be discussed in separate chapters. *Chapter 6* will present the results from the SHARE Adult Education Centre. *Chapter 7* will present the results from Project Literacy. *Chapter 8* will present the results from the Family Literacy Project. *Chapter 9* will present the results from the Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre; and *Chapter 10* will present the results from the Optimus Foundation.

Part III: Conclusions will conclude the thesis and is formed by the final chapter. The research questions will be answered in *Chapter 11*. It furthermore contains the concluding remarks, future recommendations, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN THE ADULT LITERACY SECTOR

"Literacy is a human right. … It is a scandal that this right continues to be violated for such a large proportion of humanity."

UNESCO, 2003

2.1   Introduction

Chapter 1 explained that as much research is aimed at marketing and relationship marketing in the non-profit sector, little research has been done on strategic communication management and its contribution to organisational excellence in this sector. It is for this reason that this study focuses on strategic communication management practices in the non-profit sector, comparing them to the normative Steyn and Puth (2000) model. The aim of the study is therefore to determine how strategic communication management can best be practised by NPOs, in order to further the achievement of their goals (see Section 1.4). It is now necessary to investigate the nature of NPOs, their constraints and challenges, and their need for strategic communication management. First, a brief background on the adult literacy sector in South Africa is provided, as this is the environment in which the NPOs under investigation operate in. Thereafter, the need for strategic communication management, which includes relationship management, in NPOs is discussed.

2.2   Functional adult literacy

Illiterate people cannot read newspapers, books, signposts, or warnings on food or medicine labels. They can also create dangerous situations in the workplace (Anon., 2001:18; Kassam, 1989:533); such an instance could be when an illiterate worker in a pharmaceutical factory production line places the wrong labels on medication bottles (Anon., 2001:18). Illiterate people, often migrant workers, from rural areas or neighbouring countries flock to South African cities in search of jobs, where they have difficulty adapting to the demands of urban life (Kagitcibasi *et al.*, 2005:472–474).

Because illiterate or semi-literate[1] adults cannot read or interpret written texts, they are forced to rely on a third party for information on their basic rights and responsibilities (Morris, 2004:5). This situation might lead to misinformation and manipulation. In addition to this, when adults have to ask children to read, for instance, a letter to them, this places them in a situation where their authority is reduced and thus their human dignity is damaged (Anon, 2004b:6; Roman, 2004:85).

In 2000, the then Education Minister, Kader Asmal, said, "Throughout the world the best predictor of the learning achievement of children is the education and literacy level of their parents" (Anon, 2000:4). A negative consequence of adult illiteracy is that illiterate parents cannot provide a stimu-

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1   *The developmental stage between basic literacy and lifelong functional literacy is known as being semi-literate. People who are semi-literate find common texts like official forms and newspapers too difficult to read. They might be able to write their own name and even address, but are unable to read an unseen text. Otherwise they might be able to read simple words, but not write at all, or sound out words in English, but do not understand what they mean (Harley et al., 1996:19-20)*

lating learning environment for their children at home, or even read their children's report cards (Naidoo, 1998:6; Anon, 2000:4; Anon, 2004b:6; Mtyala, 2004:4). This leads to a situation where preschool pupils do not attain the minimum level of early literacy skills they require to proceed to Grade 1 (Ntshingila, 2006:1), and school becomes a continuous battle until they drop out.

Non-formal adult education for obtaining functional adult literacy is particularly important in developing countries, such as South Africa, where formal education has been out of reach for a significant proportion of the adult population. Adult basic education and training is viewed "as both a right (as expressed in the National Constitution) and as a functional economic necessity in a changing society which requires a citizenry engaged in a lifelong process of learning" (Department of Education, 2003:1).

This leads to the question of what literacy, or functional literacy, is. Literacy is more than being able to read, write, and count. Basic literacy refers to the initial skills upon which basic education is grounded. Functional literacy refers to all the reading, writing, and counting skills needed to function autonomously in a given society, and as such, to engage effectively in all activities in which literacy is normally assumed. Functional literacy thus covers a wide continuum of skills ranging from basic alphabetisation, varying degrees of proficiency in workplace languages and basic life skills needed to function in society to a complex set of skills and behaviours embedded within the political, economic, and social relations of a society (French, 1988:26; Aitchison, 2001:134; Muller & Murtagh, 2002:3; Roman, 2004:81; Kagitcibasi *et al.*, 2005:472–474).

Roman (2004:81) adds that to be functionally literate, one has to compute and solve problems and be able to use technology, in order to become a life-long learner. Examples of functional literacy include being able to read instructions on packaging or medical prescriptions, knowing which bus to catch, keeping accounts for a small business, and knowing one's political and/or constitutional rights.

There is an ongoing debate on definitions and standards of literacy, which revolves mainly around the levels of acquired skill (Kagitcibasi *et al.*, 2005:472). In South Africa, it is generally accepted that the minimum education level indicator of sustainable functional literacy is seven years of schooling—that is, up to Grade 7, with nine years of schooling indicating a full general education—that is, up to Grade 9 (Aitchison, 2001:134; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:90). Writing from a Latin American perspective, Torres (1990:44) postulates that the minimum education level refers to six to nine years of compulsory schooling, which includes completed primary and some secondary education. Roman (2004:80–81) and Harley *et al.* (1996:21–24) warn though that grade level attainment is not always a good indicator of literacy level and abilities. They point out that the number of years completed in school does not reflect the amount of education received, but rather the amount of education attempted. Other factors, inherent to the South African context, contributing to the problematic assumption that schooling has a high correlation with functional literacy are quality variations between sections of the schooling system and the relativity of the standard of schooling, particularly in comparison with developed countries (Harley *et al.*, 1996:21–22). Viewed from this perspective, it is evident that literacy appears to be a product of both educational attainment and life experience. The situation concerning adult illiteracy in South Africa will be reviewed in the next section.

2.3   Adult illiteracy in South Africa

In 2000, there were an estimated 880 million illiterate adults worldwide, with 37 per cent of these adults in sub-Saharan Africa (World Education Forum, 2000:8; Muller & Murtagh, 2002:4). The 2001 census in South Africa found that approximately 4.5 million adults aged twenty years and older

had no schooling at all, while approximately 4 million had completed some primary education. Put into percentages, 17.9 per cent of adults have no schooling at all, and 16 per cent of adults have completed some primary education (Statistics South Africa, 2003:41). This means that approximately 8.5 million South African *adults*, or over one third of the South African population (33.9 per cent) were functionally illiterate in 2001. This figure dropped to 26 per cent in 2007,[2] which means that more than a quarter of the South African adult population is functionally illiterate (Statistics South Africa, 2007a:2 ; Statistics South Africa, 2007b:8).

In Table 2.1, a comparison between the statistics available for 1996 and 2001 to 2007 of the percentage of the South African population aged twenty years and older with no functional literacy is presented. There is a definite decrease in the percentage of those with no schooling since 1996, but for those with primary education, there has been no change since 1996. These statistics show that 26 per cent of the population aged twenty years and older is functionally illiterate.

Table 2.1: Percentage of population aged twenty years and older with no schooling or some primary schooling

	NO SCHOOLING	SOME PRIMARY SCHOOLING
1996	19.3%	16.5%
2001	17.9%	16.0%
2002	12.1%	17.3%
2003	11.4%	16.2%
2004	11.0%	15.7%
2005	10.7%	15.1%
2006	10.7%	14.5%
2007	10.3%	16.0%

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2007a:2; Statistics South Africa, 2007b:8; Statistics South Africa, 2007c:32)

It is clear from the Table 2.2 that the proportion of adults with no schooling has decreased from 1996 to 2001 in all the provinces of South Africa, except the Eastern Cape and very slightly in the Free State. The total percentage of the South African population with no schooling has decreased by 1.4 per cent.

Table 2.2: Percentage of population aged twenty years and older with no schooling listed by province according to Census 1996 and 2001

PROVINCE	1996	2001	% CHANGE
KWAZULU-NATAL	22.9%	21.9%	-1.0%
LIMPOPO	36.9%	33.4%	-3.5%
EASTERN CAPE	20.9%	22.8%	1.9%
GAUTENG	9.5%	8.4%	-1.1%
MPUMALANGA	29.4%	27.5%	-1.9%
NORTH-WEST	22.7%	19.9%	-2.8%
FREE STATE	16.1%	16.0%	-0.1%
WESTERN CAPE	6.7%	5.7%	-1.0%
NORTHERN CAPE	21.7%	18.2%	-3.5%
TOTAL	**19.3%**	**17.9%**	**-1.4%**

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2004:35; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:95)

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2   *There was no formal South African Census in 2006, but a Community Survey was conducted in all provinces in February 2007. A General Household Survey was conducted every year from 2002 to 2006. The next census will be conducted in 2011.*

The 1996 census found that 19.3 per cent of adults aged twenty years and older had no education at all, while 16.7 per cent had completed some primary education (Statistics South Africa, 2004:35). Adult Learning South Africa (2004) and Aitchison and Harley (2006:94) point out that while the total number and percentage of functional illiterate adults fell between 1996 and 2001, the actual number of adults with no schooling at all increased by 501 310, and the total number of adults aged twenty years and older with only some primary education increased by 571 327. This phenomenon can have three possible causes (Adult Learning South Africa, 2004; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:94):

- The increase is a real increase; that is, there really were more adults with no schooling in 2001 than there were in 1996.
- The 2001 Census was more accurate because it reached more people with no schooling, or those participating in the 2001 census were more honest about their lack of schooling.
- The Census 2001 educational statistics are seriously wrong (see Section 2.5.3.1.3 on statistical problems).

Figure 2.1 depicts the gender differences in persons with no formal education.

Figure 2.1: Gender differences in the percentage of persons with no formal education (aged twenty years and older)
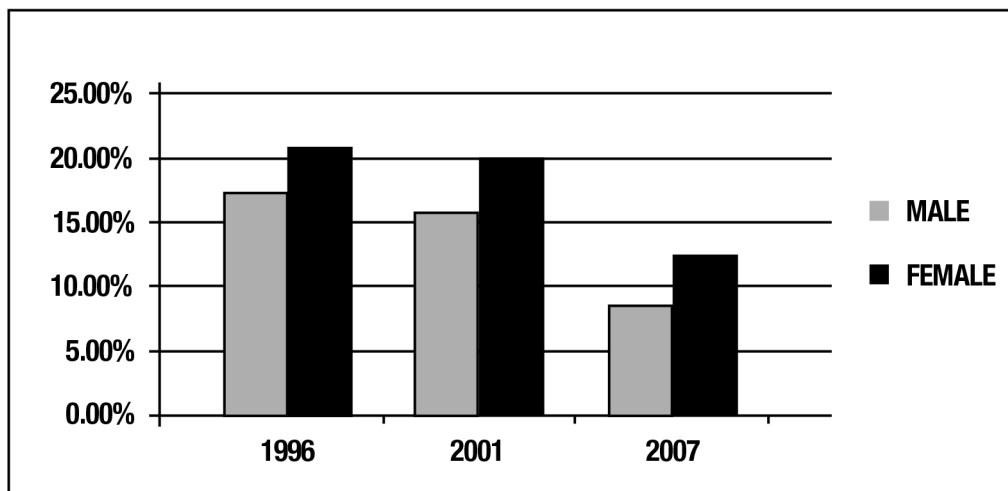
(Source: Statistics South Africa, 2007c:34.)

Females constitute 60 per cent of all functional illiterates in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2003:47; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:97; Department of Education, 2007:5). This is in-line with a worldwide trend, where two thirds of all illiterate people in the world are women (UNESCO, 2003). In South Africa, illiterate women in poor households tend to undertake more work than men, but they have less access to income-earning activities than men. Illiteracy contributes to unequal gender relations that deny illiterate women access to land and tenancy rights, rural credit, and farming inputs necessary for agricultural success (Macfarlane, 2001:8). Literacy is thus an empowering process for women in particular (Kagitcibasi *et al.*, 2005:472–474).

The next table depicts the distribution of functionally illiterate adults according to population group.

TABLE 2.3: FUNCTIONAL LITERACY AMONGST PERSONS AGED TWENTY YEARS AND OLDER BY POPULATION GROUP

	NO SCHOOLING		SOME PRIMARY	
	2001	**2007**	**2001**	**2007**
BLACK AFRICAN	22.3%	12.8%	18.5%	18.8%
COLOURED	8.3%	5.6%	18.4%	16.3%
INDIAN OR ASIAN	5.3%	3.6%	7.7%	7.3%
WHITE	1.4%	0.6%	1.2%	1.0%

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2003:47–48; Statistics South Africa, 2007c:32–33).

Table 2.3 shows that the percentage of those from all population groups with no schooling has decreased since 2001, with the largest decrease amongst black Africans. According to the 2007 Community Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2007c:34), the educational level of all population groups has increased. This means that just over one in ten black African adults (12.8 per cent) in 2007 had no schooling at all, compared to less than one in one hundred white adults (0.6 per cent).

As a result of the skills-biased employment shifts in the economic sector, individuals with low levels of education or skills will in all probability not be employed. Bhorat (2004:47–54) finds that these 'unemployable' individuals are most likely to be older than forty years and have at the most some primary schooling. More than a quarter of this group are not able to read or write in any language. The instrumentalist approach to ABET that is currently practised in South Africa (see Section 2.4.1) can explain the reason for the adult illiteracy rates remaining high.

A distinction must be made between the above-mentioned 'unemployables' and the 'employables'. The 'employables' refer to those who are currently unemployed but who are skilled or better educated than the 'unemployables'. Bhorat (2004:47–54) finds that the 'employables' are mostly younger than forty years old and have completed some secondary education and even matriculated. It is likely that the 'employables' will find employment where they can benefit from having access to ABET.

In the next section, the two main approaches to adult basic education followed in South Africa, namely *instrumentalist* ABET and *emancipatory* ABET (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:395–399) are discussed.

2.4   Approaches to ABET in South Africa

2.4.1   Instrumentalist ABET

As a result of globalisation, human capital is viewed as a determining factor in economic success. Therefore individual's competencies, skills, knowledge, and values that enable them to move across jobs in several sectors of the economy is a priority. Governments around the world invest in adult education, which has led to terms such as *ABET*, *further education and training* (FET), *outcomes-based education* (OBE), *human resource development* (HRD), and *lifelong learning*. According to the instrumentalist view, the aim of adult education should be to create a highly skilled workforce that will assist industry in becoming more competitive in the world economy (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:395). Employees are seen as human capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills, and atti-

tudes that are developed and valued for their economically productive potential (Baptiste, 2001:185). Human capital investment is subsequent organisational expenditure in terms of time, money, resources, training and so on to enhance its human capital.

Torres (1990:116) argues that adult literacy and ABET contributes to economic development through:
- increasing the productivity of the newly literate adult employee;
- increasing the productivity of those working with the newly literate adult employee;
- expanding the general knowledge of the newly literate adult employee through training in such areas as health and infant nutrition;
- stimulating the demand for technical training and vocational education;
- selecting the more able individuals for training and thereby enhancing their occupational mobility; and
- strengthening economic incentives through exploiting the tendency of people to respond positively to a compensation raise for their efforts.

Some criticism of the instrumentalist view of ABET (Baptiste, 2001:184–201; Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:396–397) concludes that:
- instrumentalism reduces adult literacy to an instrument of economic productivity;
- human beings are viewed as overly-mechanistic and one-dimensional;
- the notion develops that more educated people are more productive than less educated people;
- social inequalities as a result of exploitation and oppression are not viewed as injustices but as a natural and inevitable outcome of a competitive free market;
- the free market is viewed as the only legitimate social institution by which to govern, regulate, and explain human behaviour and achievement;
- ABET is all that is needed to increase productivity;
- ABET leads to more employment opportunities;
- as ABET is left to organisations and other employers, it leads to the withdrawal of the government from financing adult literacy and basic education; and
- it has led to an increase in the number of people who cannot read and write because only employees are targeted for ABET.

In summary, instrumentalist ABET can be viewed as adult basic education and training provided by the economic sector, in order to enhance the skills and abilities of the workforce with the aim of making the organisation more competitive in a global economy. The biggest drawback of the instrumentalist approach is that adult illiterates, who cannot find employment because of their illiteracy, remain illiterate without a chance of employment.

2.4.2   Emancipatory ABET

The emancipatory approach is mostly associated with education for liberation or popular education, and it is largely linked to the work of Paulo Freire[3]. The aim of emancipatory ABET is social and political transformation through a critical understanding of contemporary social problems, and creating the ability in adults to play an active role in achieving social justice. In order to achieve this aim, ABET is linked to real day-to-day issues and problems, community action, and social movements (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:397–398).

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3   *Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationist, has written several books and articles on the role of education in democracy and is especially known for his views on critical pedagogy. The following books can provide a more complete background on Freire's views: Freire, 1987; Freire, 1992; and Freire, 1993.*

The emancipatory approach to ABET is characterised by (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:398–399):
- a non-authoritarian pedagogy that resists links with the state and the bureaucratic organisation of educational practices;
- closer links to the needs of communities, and as such, emancipatory ABET responds more easily to the demands of communities than formal education systems;
- curricular and organisational flexibility that formal schooling lacks;
- an emphasis on being an instrument of mobilisation and the development of political consciousness in revolutionary states such as pre-Apartheid South Africa;
- a struggle for democracy because of a belief in the value and worth of people, in their rights and freedoms, in the recognition of people's desire and right to manage their own affairs and to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives;
- inclusivity and fighting for the rights of the poor, oppressed, and exploited; and
- opposition to the instrumental rationality that applies adult basic education purely for economic benefit.

In summary, emancipatory ABET's main aim is the creation of social and political awareness in illiterate adults, in order for them to know and demand their democratic rights, of which education is but one. The emancipatory approach is criticised for playing a limited role in economic upliftment, and its ability to address social, political, and community problems is questioned (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:399).

2.5 The South African adult basic education field

2.5.1 Historical overview

Literacy was brought to South Africa in 1652, and it was introduced to indigenous people mostly by missionary movements. The extension of white colonisation, the industrial revolution, and mining activities necessitated literacy, particularly adult literacy. However, when the National Party came to power in 1948, control was exerted over black education, by providing inadequate formal education to black Africans, in order to further state domination and to serve a narrow white ethnic nationalism (French, 1988:27; Kassam, 1989:534; Aitchison, 2003:125–178; Morrow, 2004:317).[4]

Non-profit, non-government literacy organisations (NPOs or NGOs) were initiated, in order to counteract inadequate black education and to provide adult literacy education. While providing non-formal ABET, the NPOs offered opportunities to voice dissent concerning the educational situation in South Africa, and as such, non-formal ABET became *"… a political process of raising critical awareness of injustice, and a joint investigation and creation of measures to change oppressive and undemocratic systems"* (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:393). Much of the South African struggle stemmed from the 1976 Soweto Uprising against the National Party's educational dispensation. That overseas donors supporting the NPOs tended to take a less formative approach led to a strong, politically-oriented, and radical oppositional NPO sector before 1994 (Morrow, 2004:318). NPOs in the adult educational field before 1994 thus tended to operate according to an emancipatory approach (see Section 2.4.2).

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4   *For a comprehensive account of ABET in South Africa, see Aitchison, 2003:125-178.*

2.5.2   *ABET after 1994*

After the ANC came to power in the 1990s, adult basic education as typically carried out by NPOs was expected to centralise and integrate into the state's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) because the RDP policy recognised ABET as an integral part of all development projects (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:400; Morrow, 2004:318). Donors diverted resources and funds to the state's developmental priorities, and NPOs were expected to align or subsume themselves with, and in the state's programme (Morrow, 2004:318–319).

In 1996 the RDP was replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy and subsequent policy and implementation plans necessitated a more formal, standardised and utilitarian adult education system. It was at this time that ABET shifted from a political-revolutionary position (ABET for emancipation) to a social-gradualist position (ABET for economic growth – instrumentalist) (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:301). This implied a shift from basic literacy (the ability to read and write) to adult basic education and training (ABET), which recognised post-literacy necessary for lifelong learning. Lifelong-learning comprise of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation.

The abovementioned shifts subsequently led to policy developments, acts[5] and ABET initiatives to formalise and standardise adult basic education, such as:
*   In 1995, *The National Adult Basic Education and Training Framework: Interim Guidelines* (Department of Education, 1995) appeared as the first policy for ABET in South Africa, which played an important role in unifying the ABET sector. The guidelines were based on policy discussions, including the *National Education Policy Investigation* (NEPI, 1993), COSATU's *Consolidated Recommendations on ABET* (1993), and the ANC's *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (ANC, 1995). The Directorate for Adult Education and Training was established to work closely with the National Stakeholders Forum for ABET.
*   The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (58/1995) that provides for the creation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), establishing a national learning system that is to integrate education and training at all levels and across sectors was accepted.
*   In 1996, the National Education Policy Act (27/1996) and the South African Schools Act (84/1996) were passed; the latter making schooling compulsory for children aged seven to fifteen.
*   In 1996, sub-directorates of ABET were established in all nine provincial Departments of Education. The government launched the *Ithuteng Ready to Learn Campaign*.
*   In 1997, the *Interim Guidelines* were replaced by the *Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training*, (Department of Education, 1997a) operationalised through the *Multi-Year Implementation Plan* (Department of Education, 1997b) and nine *Provincial Multi-Year Implementation Plans*.
*   In 1998, the Skills Development (SDA) Act (97/1998) was proclaimed.
*   In 1999, during the Regional Conference on Education for All for Sub-Saharan Africa in Johannesburg, the upliftment of adult illiteracy was recognised as a priority of education for the African Renaissance[6].
*   In 1999, the Ikhwelo Project was launched which aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of adult learners in Agriculture and small, micro and medium enterprises (SMME) in order to en-

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5   *For a detailed discussion on policy development in the ABET sector, review Aitchison, 2003:125-178; Walters, 2006:7-26; and McKay, 2007:285-310.*

6   *Thabi Mbeki advocated the African Renaissance which aims, amongst others, to: build "Afro-centrism"*
as an universal value; counter "Afro-pessimism"; win support from both Eastern and Western developed countries;
promote South Africa and the ANC's leadership in Africa; and promote peace and stability in Africa (Kapp, 1999:13).

able them, simultaneously, to obtain credits towards a GETC and to establish sustainable businesses as a means of alleviating poverty. The Project ran from April 1999 to April 2003 (Basel, 2004:363-364).

- In 1999, the first assessment of ABET learners through the South African Certification Council (Safcert) was undertaken.
- In 1999, the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA) (9/1999) was proclaimed.
- In 2000, the Adult Basic Education and Training (52/2000) was completed, and amended by the Education Laws and Amendment Act (50/2002).
- In 2000, South Africa committed to the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All[7], where, amongst others, a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, for women in particular, was committed.
- In 2000, the Department of Education launched the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI)[8], a literacy campaign targeting 500 000 learners.
- In 2001, the Department of Labour launched the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), aiming to raise the basic education levels of workers so that 70 per cent of all workers would have a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) by 2005.
- In 2001 and 2002, the framework for a national quality assurance system was established with the accreditation of thirty-one Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of (58/1995)[9]. This accreditation process included the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the twenty-five Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAS), which were established by the Department of Labour. The SETAs were established to implement the NSDS of 2001 (World Education Forum, 2000:8, 24-34; Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:402-404; Walters, 2006:13-14).

All the above policy developments took place with emphasis on formalising the national ABET system. This brief background information on adult literacy and education before 1994 and the policies and initiatives after 1994 leads to the question of whether ABET policies are implemented successfully in South Africa. This is discussed in the next section.

2.5.2.1 The Kha ri gude Mass Literacy Campaign

In 2005, the Education Minister, Naledi Pandor, admitted that there had been little success with post-democracy ABET programmes, even though eradicating illiteracy has been a government priority since 1994 (Blaine, 2007:4). In 2007, the new mass literacy campaign, *Kha ri gude*, which means 'let us learn' in Tshivenda, was announced. The campaign, with a budget of R6.1 billion, aims to reach 4.7 million of the 9.6 million functionally illiterate South Africans by 2012. South Africa would thereby meet its 2000 commitment to the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All to reduce illiteracy by at least 50 per cent by 2015 (see Section 2.5.2).

A ministerial Committee on Literacy was established in 2006, under the leadership of Veronica McKay from the University of South Africa (UNISA). Leonie du Plessis of Project Literacy (see Chapter 7) was commissioned to represent the NPO sector. Several models for mass literacy campaigns, such as the South African SANLI; Cuba's *Yo, si puedo* campaign; *Yo, si puedo* in New Zealand; *AlfaSol* in Brazil; and the *National Literacy Mission* in India were studied to form the basis of the *Kha ri gude* Campaign (Department of Education, 2007:6–12).

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7   See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf for full information.

8   See http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/0006291010a1007.htm for announcement of the Initiative.

9   See http://www.saqa.org.za/show.asp?include=structure/etqa.htm for more information on SAQA and the ETQAs.

The first phase of the campaign took place from 2006 to 2007, when organisational set-up was planned, materials were developed, and the campaign announcements were made. The second phase envisages a three-year intensive campaign (2008, 2009, and 2010), where it hopes to reach 3.22 million illiterates. During the third phase, two "mopping up" years will follow in 2011 and 2012, where another 1.48 million illiterates will be reached (Department of Education, 2007:12).

The *Kha ri gude* Campaign targets potential learners in the fifteen to twenty and thirty-five to fifty-four age groups. Teaching will take 240 hours, after which learners can proceed to further learning opportunities (Department of Education, 2007:10). Andrew Miller, CEO of Project Literacy (see Chapter 7), said that this campaign would see "the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak" targeted, meaning that unemployed adults with no hope of finding employment due to illiteracy would benefit from the *Kha ri gude* Campaign (Blaine, 2007:4).

Different to previous mass literacy campaigns, the Education Department has appointed the auditing company SAB&T to manage the project and seconded two of its senior officials to the campaign, in order to ensure the integrity of the financial and administrative systems. In addition, curriculum, research, and evaluation committees will oversee the campaign. There will also be a monitoring team, which includes international experts and an inter-ministerial committee for general oversight (Pretorius, 2008).

The success of the campaign will largely depend on effective teacher training. It is expected that in 2008 about 40 000 to 80 000 tutors will be trained. Continuous in-service support will be available for teachers, and they will receive an hourly stipend for their work (Department of Education, 2007:20). In the next section, constraints that inhibit the successful implementation of adult basic education policy, will be discussed.

2.5.3   Constraints in the ABET NPO sector

2.5.3.1 Funding

As mentioned in Section 2.5.2, ABET NPOs were expected to centralise and integrate into the state's RDP, and thus be dependent on the state for funds. As a result donors tend to give funds to the government's development projects rather than directly to NPOs in the adult education field. A major problem was that although literacy was a RDP Presidential Lead Project, it was the only one that had no money allocated to it and was to be entirely dependent upon foreign donors (Aitchison, 2003:152). The agreements between the state and foreign donors as well as implementation of agreements took an extended amount of time. The state's failure to reallocate resources rapidly led to a situation where NPOs had serious funding problems (Aitchison, 2003:153).

Many NPOs in the adult literacy sector also struggled with the new value-for-money, accountability and measurable outcomes set by the state and donors. Before 1994, some South African education NPOs tended to have "high legitimacy, but low productivity", and during the Apartheid struggle, they practised "struggle accounting" which meant that donor funds were often used for political and even personal purposes (Morrow, 2004:319). A further problem was that many NPOs found it difficult to adapt in a new world outside of the Apartheid environment against which they had inevitably defined themselves (Morrow, 2004:319). It was thus apparent that adult literacy and education NPOs had to be managed more effectively for them to survive.

Brennan and Brady (1999:329) point out that obtaining funding is difficult for NPOs because they have to provide donors with clear, measurable results. Providing these results is sometimes problematic, as is the case of NPOs in the adult literacy sector where there are no immediate and tangible results.

Morrow (2004:319) indicates that adult education NPOs had several alternatives:

- They could seek non-governmental funding and attempt to survive independently from government.
- They could attempt to integrate themselves more closely with government initiatives and to implement official policies.
- They could become consultancies, but then they would lose their characteristic NPO service ethos.
- They could close, acknowledging that the aims for which they had been striving had been achieved.

Because effective partnerships between the state and many NPOs did not materialise, the number of NPOs in ABET started to decline in 1997. In 1997, the situation was aggravated by the collapse of the National Literacy Co-operation, which co-ordinated ABET on a national and provincial level. The National Literacy Co-operation was found guilty of fraud and not fulfilling its obligations. This led to the withdrawal of large foreign donations for ABET provision (Aitchison, 2003:158–159).

In 1999, the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, confirmed NPOs' important role in ABET provision but added that the state would not be able to find sufficient funds for formal ABET programmes run by provincial education departments. He therefore encouraged employers to run ABET programmes, partly funded through the Skills Levy Act (9/1999) on all employers (Aitchison, 2003:161). Funding for ABET through PALCs is therefore minimal, while the NSDS provides more funds to ABET programmes in the business and industry, such as mining and manufacturing.

Concerning the above, many successful ABET NPOs have started to provide courses and learning materials to the private sector, thus complementing their income from donor and state funds. Commercial providers of ABET that provide programmes to business and industry in-line with the NSDS are flourishing (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:404). Andrew Miller warns though that many of the commercial providers took work from NPOs with "a promise of quick fix solutions, pushy business practices and a very poor understanding of education" (Project Literacy, 2007a:7). Many NPOs, such as Project Literacy and the Molteno project, are also expanding into Africa by providing adult literacy and education material commercially (Morrow, 2004:331–332).

Other aspects influencing NPO funding are state budgetary problems, ABET in the economic sector, and statistical problems. These aspects are discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.5.3.1.1   *State budgetary problems*

The state-sponsored mass ABET campaigns, such as the Ithuteng Campaign and the SANLI Initiative failed, mostly because of the state's poor economic commitment to the campaigns, as well as the emerging reformist, neo-liberal economic policies that viewed ABET as an *expense* rather than an *investment* in social development (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:405). The SANLI Initiative, in collaboration with UNISA, attracted 30 000 more learners each year than was originally targeted and dropout rates were less than 5 per cent (McKay, 2007:304). The number of SANLI learners in 2002 and 2003 exceeded any other governmental and non-governmental ABET programmes in South Africa, and because of this the SANLI Initiative can be viewed as a success (McKay, 2007:306). In

contrast, Aitchison (2003:163) claims that the extent to which the SANLI Initiative reached illiterates is uncertain, and therefore it cannot be viewed as successful. Unfortunately, the campaign was discontinued due to insufficient political and budgetary support.

Contributing furthermore to the failure of the Department of Education's mass literacy campaigns are such problems as staffing, unavailability of funds, insufficient planning, tender regulations, and power struggles in the Department of Education over the control of the campaigns (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:405–406). According to Aitchison (2003:160), the state's ABET programmes and initiatives failed at "*just about every level: management, planning, innovation, monitoring and evaluation, and above all, delivery to adult learners*". One of the reasons for these failures could be the appointment of unqualified and incompetent personnel at the provincial education departments in particular (Aitchison, 2003:151). The mass campaigns failed financially because the state committed less than one per cent of the overall education budget to ABET, and explanations for the lack of financial support for ABET are yet to be provided by the state (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:405).

2.5.3.1.2 ABET in the economic sector

The *SDA* (Skills Development Act) (97/1998), *SDLA* (Skills Development Levies Act) (9/1999) and the *NSDS* (National Skills Development Strategy) of 2001 were established to implement ABET in the economic sector. This legislation led to the establishment of institutions and systems that require employers to contribute 1 per cent of their company payroll towards funding the skills development and training of their employees. In this way, the training of employees became a statutory requirement. The money is allocated to the National Skills Fund (20 per cent) and to the relevant SETA (80 per cent) (Walters, 2006:14). The National Skills Fund targets training of the unemployed and the employable (McKay, 2007:307). The SETAs were introduced by the SDA, with the main purpose of facilitating the implementation of the SDA across all sectors. Sectors are determined based on their related economic activities, for example the banking, manufacturing, retail, and information technology sectors (Walters, 2006:14).

As previously mentioned, the main aim of NSDS was for 70 per cent of workers to have achieved at least a NQF Level 1 qualification by March 2005. Unfortunately, the SETAs have become new bureaucratic structures, which mostly hinder education and training programme providers in their work (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:409). Walters (2006:14) says in this regard that although there is dissatisfaction with the rate of delivery of the SETAs, Government claims that from 2001 to 2005 the National Skills Fund spent R690 million to train 380 000 people.

The problem with the SDA (97/1998) and the SDLA (9/1999) is that due to high unemployment the private sector can employ people who have NQF qualifications higher than Level 1. This implies that workers who already have an education receive more, while those without education do not get employed or educated. This means that the 70 per cent literacy target of workers can easily be reached without altering the literacy profile of South Africa (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:410).

Section 2.5.3.1 noted that the majority of funds for adult education are allocated to ABET programmes in the economic sector. Although 20 per cent of the levies paid by the private sector are aimed at the education of the unemployed, no institutional framework and infrastructures were set in place to facilitate training of the unemployed. This responsibility was shifted to the SETAs, but as they are struggling to meet the needs of the formal economic sector, it is unlikely that they will be able to effectively implement education and training for the unemployed (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:410). In reponse to this, the Department of Labour launched the *Extended Public Works Programmes*

(EPWP), to address poverty and unemployment (McKay, 2007:307–308). The EPWP expects to create 1 million jobs by:

- creating and maintaining essential infrastructure, such as roads and school buildings in high-poverty areas, thereby creating jobs for the unemployed; and
- providing training to the unskilled workforce in specific areas, based on a speciifc number of workdays per person, as well as on-the-job training, to improve workers' potential of earning an larger income in future.

McKay (2007:308) notes that a possible challenge for the EPWP may be to ensure that people have a sufficient level of literacy and numeracy to allow them to learn job-related skills. An example of the EPWP is the Department of Water Affair's *Working for Water* Programme that aimed to employ 18 000 previously unemployed people in 2002. The employees were to receive at least two days' training per month and an hour of HIV/AIDS awareness training per quarter, in addition to access to childcare facilities (Walters, 2006:16) (also see Section 8.1.1).

2.5.3.1.3 *Statistical problems*

The lack of reliable statistics concerning the intake and retention of learners in ABET programmes is a problem for NPO funding. Many statistics for ABET learners include those of FET learners (mainly young people who failed matric (Grade 12) at school and who are now attempting their matric a second time through a PALC). There are also discrepancies regarding the number of PALCs and the number of educators working at these PALCs. Reports from the Department of Education state that they are, according to the Dakar Framework for Action adopted by the World Education Forum in April 2000 in Dakar, on track in their aim to reduce adult illiteracy; yet their reports contain many unreliable and misinterpreted statistics (Pretorius, 2004:344; Willenberg, 2005:163; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:89–112). This could lead to the goal of reducing adult illiteracy not being realised, as for example less funding for adult education will be available from government and donors simply because future reports may misleadingly indicate that the adult illiteracy problem has been solved.

2.5.3.2 *The formalisation of ABET and problems regarding learner retention*

The state's decision to formalise ABET was influenced by international trends concerning competency-based training standards and qualifications (Aitchison, 2003:154). However, the formalisation of ABET has proved to be fraught with problems, such as the employment of poorly-trained school-teachers as part-time adult educators; the poor supply of books and materials, such as chalk and mathematics textbooks; dysfunctional PALCs with administrative and management problems; and a highly prescriptive policy for registering and accrediting ABET providers, a matter that is problematic particularly for smaller NPOs (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004:406–407).

Well-trained ABET teachers play a very important role in enhancing the quality of the learning experience for adults (McKay, 2007:295). However, the National Education Policy Investigation, conducted in 1993 by the ANC, found that there was a need for 100 000 adult basic educators. Although UNISA's ABET Institute has trained more than 50 000 ABET teachers since 1994, the majority of ABET teachers are working in programmes implemented by the SETAs and not in those implemented by the Department of Education (McKay, 2007:298, 309). According to McKay (2007:309), this implies that the Department of Education is not as committed to ABET as the Department of Labour is. Poorly-trained teachers contribute to the huge problem of poor learner retention.

The formalisation of ABET also contributes to poor learner retention because of the teaching of

school subjects to adult illiterates that do not answer to their everyday needs. According to Baatjes & Mathe (2004:406–407), the PALCs have become 'schools' for adults in which it is assumed that adult's learning and educational needs are similar to those of children. This is in contrast to the highly successful Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) in Turkey (Kagitcibasi *et al.*, 2005:472–489). The Functional Adult Literacy Program attempts to make literacy functional and meaningful in the everyday lives of adult learners, by including exercises on daily competencies and tasks, such as reading bus schedules, filling out job applications, and taking notes. Adult learners are facilitated in discussions on subjects directly relevant to them, such as communication in the family, child discipline, first aid, health and family planning, and citizen rights. Critical thinking skills necessary for both functional and information literacy are developed through active discussions, reasoning, drawing inferences, and activating previous knowledge on a specific topic. The adult learner's interaction with society and the world is increased by reading newspaper articles, books, and poetry. The FALP approach is also followed by the Family Literacy Project that will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The way in which FALP presents adult literacy education is reflected in an adult literacy centre in Hamilton in Ohio (USA). Roman (2004:88–91) argues that it is necessary to individualise instruction to suit each learner's personal interests and goals. Tutoring needs to be made relevant to the individual learner, and it should be presented according to the learner's learning style. She has found that computer-based learning has various advantages, such as individualised instruction, the learner working at his or her own pace, the learner focusing on material of interest to him or her, and introducing the learner to a vital skill needed in today's workplace. Information literacy is also included in computer-based course: learners are required to access the Internet, then access an on-line newspaper, select an interesting story, and answer questions regarding the content. Computerised instruction is consistent with the success that Media Works, a South African company that has developed programmes using computers and multimedia, has achieved. Unfortunately, Media Works only provides their programmes to large organisations for employee training, such as Sasol Secunda, Robertsons Foods, Grinaker Duraset, De Beers Mining, Pick 'n Pay and Sappi. Their programmes are not available to unemployed adult illiterates (Gray, 2001:14; Mecoamere, 2003:1).

In South Africa, the formalised curriculum that is irrelevant to adult learners is not the only factor leading to poor learner retention. Other factors contributing to this problem are tired learners who work long days and commute long distances, a lack of safety in travelling to and from class, difficulty getting to classes at night, and the struggle of many illiterate female learners against dominating husbands or employers who do not want them to become "too clever" (French, 1988:29; Lund, 1998:15; Magardie, 2002:10). In addition to these obstacles to learning, illiterate adults tend to come from the lowest socio-economic strata, and they are usually employed in physically- demanding and poorly-remunerated jobs in physically unpleasant or unsafe environments (Willenberg, 2005:163–164). They often do not have a reasonable quality of life, and they have a daily fight for survival; subsequently, they not have the means and/or energy for part-time education.

When learners fail to perform or drop out of school, the communal relationship between the learners and the NPOs, as well as the relationship between the learners and donors, is damaged. Poor learner retention also negatively affects the exchange relationship between donors and NPOs, as donors do not want to fund what they perceive as a lost cause, where results are evident only after several years or where few outcomes are achieved or evident (see Section 3.5 for a discussion on relationship building).

2.5.3.3   *Critical voice of the NPOs*

Another constraint concerning state funding of ABET programmes is that because NPOs are dependent upon the state for funding, they change into adult literacy and education service providers, compromising their critical role of state policy (Morrow, 2004:327–331). Donor funds enable NPOs to be independent of the state, assist with, and be critical of state policy for adult literacy and education. Although many donors prefer to work through the Department of Education, some support an independent NPO sector through which a multiplicity of voices and ideas can be heard (see Chapter 8).

2.6   Conclusion

In Chapter 2, functional adult literacy has been defined as a wide continuum of skills ranging from basic alphabetisation with varying degrees of proficiency in workplace languages and basic life skills necessary for functioning in society to a complex set of skills and behaviours embedded within the political, economic, and social relations of a society. The two basic approaches to ABET followed in South Africa, namely instrumentalist and emancipatory ABET, have been outlined and some basic criticism presented. A brief description of the South African ABET situation and the constraints that NPOs in the ABET sector experience has been given.

The discussion has demonstrated that the ABET sector is an intricate sector characterised by high expectations, many role players, and low delivery, particularly from the state. NPOs in this sector face many constraints. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that NPOs be able to evaluate their environment, in order to predict changes that might influence their organisation's survival. Formal environmental scanning or research is the foundation of strategic communication management, which aims to build strong relationships that enable organisations to perform exceptionally. Indeed, several researchers have found that strong relationships are necessary for NPOs to survive in turbulent times.

In the next chapter, the concept of two-way symmetrical communication as the normative basis of strategic communication management will be discussed. In addition, the importance of relationship management as an outcome of strategic communication management will be highlighted.

CHAPTER 3

TWO-WAY SYMMETRICAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

3.1   Introduction

A brief description of the adult literacy sector in South Africa was provided in the previous chapter. Functional literacy was defined as all the reading, writing, and counting skills a person needs to function autonomously in a society. The statistics concerning the state of adult illiteracy in South Africa presented, show that more than a quarter of the *adult* population is currently functionally illiterate, which is a cause of grave concern for the social, economic, and political development of South Africa. From Chapter 2, it is evident that although the upliftment of adult illiteracy has been a government priority since 1994, little has been achieved in this regard, mainly because of the state's incompetence in managing and funding campaigns. To complicate the situation even further, NPOs working in the sector face many constraints that pose a danger to their survival. Funding constraints have the most detrimental effect on these NPOs.

In Chapter 1, two-way symmetrical communication as the most ethical way to practise communication management was introduced. Furthermore, the Excellence study determine that to enable communication practitioners to practise the two-way symmetrical model for organisational excellence, organisations need to have a symmetrical worldview. Because practising the two-way symmetrical model leads to reciprocal communication and mutual understanding, it aids communication practitioners in building strong relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. These concepts, namely *two-way symmetrical communication*, *symmetrical worldview*, and *relationship management* form the core of strategic communication management. It also forms the broad theoretical framework for this study. Steyn and Puth's approach to strategic communication management is the theoretical focus of this study, and it will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Firstly, a short overview of the origin and nature of the communication models is presented. Thereafter the influence of an organisation's worldview on communication management is discussed and lastly, relationship building as an important outcome of strategic communication management is presented and applied to the NPO sector.

3.2   Historical origin of the communication models

Communication management developed more or less simultaneously in Europe and the USA during the nineteenth century (Nessman, 1995:151); however, the two World Wars hindered communication development in Europe, and therefore it developed faster in the USA. Carl Hundhausen first used the term *PR* (in reference to public relations) in Europe (Nessmann, 1995:152). Although Europe and the USA influenced each other, communication management theory and practice developed in their own right on each continent (Nessmann, 1995:153). For the sake of completeness, development in both the USA and Europe is discussed, although the focus of this study is on American theory and practice, as it also informs South African theory and practice.

Although American politicians made use of press agents and other publicity methods, it was a circus owner, P.T. Barnum, who bought advertising space, fabricated news, and exploited the newsworthi-

ness of his circus (Skinner *et al.*, 2001:20). These organised communication practices led to the development of the *press agentry/publicity model* during the period of 1850 to 1900. This one-way, asymmetrical communication model was used to create publicity for heroes, such as Buffalo Bill Cody, Calamity Jane, and American film stars (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:287; Skinner *et al.*, 2001:20). The press agentry/publicity model is currently used for, amongst others, the introduction of movies, publicity for movie stars and sport events, and promotion of products (Cutlip *et al.*, 2000:16; Van Heerden, 2004:61).

The second communication model, *the public information model*, came into practice between 1900 and 1920 in reaction to the media's harassment of large organisations and governments, demanding accurate information and organisation accountability (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288; Skinner *et al.*, 2001:20). Realising that the then-employed *press agentry/publicity model,* which spread propaganda, could not prevent such harassment nor respond to it in a positive light, organisations and governments began to employ their own journalists, to release positive reports, mostly based on truthful and accurate information, about their organisations (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288; Dozier *et al.,* 1995:41).

The most prominent practitioner of this model was Ivy Lee. He was a journalist prior to managing corporate communication at large corporations, such as Rockefellers. He believed that he only presented the truth to the public *as he interpreted it* (Hiebert, 1966). He interpreted this to mean that it was not possible to misrepresent the truth. This approach to communication management is an example of epistemological relativism where the truth or reality is considered relative (Naudé, 2001:60). The approach led to the distortion of facts by communication practitioners, in order to cast their organisations in the best possible light, which led to the belief that communication management is unethical and dishonest (Naudé, 2001:60).

The public information model corresponds with the European *information model*, in which management focuses on providing information to stakeholders about the plans and decisions of the organisation (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:8).

The *press agentry/publicity model,* the *public information model* and the European *information model* represent one-way, asymmetrical communication, distributing information from organisations to stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288).

During World War I, communication practitioners began to base their work on behavioural and social studies (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288). The leader of this period was Edward L. Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud, who practised communication management based on his interest in psychology (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288). The application of a more scientific approach resulted in the development of communication as two-way communication. Communication practitioners obtained information from stakeholders, and used the information to provide more effective media messages and message strategies to stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288; Dozier *et al.*, 1995:41). This was the beginning of the *two-way asymmetrical model* in accordance with which information obtained from stakeholders was applied, along with propaganda and persuasive communication, in such a way to effect a change in stakeholders' attitudes and behaviour, in order to promote the interests of inflexible organisations (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288; Dozier *et al.*, 1995:41; Naudé, 2001:61). Bernays reasoned that people could be manipulated if their motivation could be understood and then exploited to send out appropriate messages, which would produce the desired behaviour and attitudes required by the organisation (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288).

The two-way asymmetrical model corresponds with the European *persuasion model*, which has become a widely used communication model in Europe since the 1980s (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:8).

The *two-way symmetrical model* originated during the 1960s and 1970s, yet the model is not widely applied in practice (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:292; Naudé, 2001:61; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:311–312). No one particular individual can be linked to the origin of the model. Elements of the *two-way symmetrical model*, such as "*telling the truth*", "interpreting the client and public to one another", and "management understanding the viewpoints of employees and neighbors as well as employees and neighbors understanding the viewpoints of management" can be found in the written work of practitioners, such as Lee, Bernays, and John Hill. They themselves though did not practise the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:289). Academics, such as Scott M. Cutlip, Allen Center, and James Grunig laid the foundation for this model. With the *two-way symmetrical model,* two-way communication based on research is applied (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:289) to complete the circular course of communication. Conflict resolution techniques are employed to negotiate mutual advantages for both organisations and stakeholders (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:41).

The European *relationship* model and the *dialogue* model correspond with the American *two-way symmetrical model*. The *relationship model* focuses on establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders with the aim of reaching consensus and avoiding conflict (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:9). Communication management's role is to facilitate negotiation between the organisation and its stakeholders. The *dialogue model* furthers the negotiation process, by engaging in dialogue with stakeholders, in order to learn from each other and to create as many interpretations of and approaches towards an issue as possible. While the creation of harmony and the avoidance of conflict is the aim of the *relationship model*, the *dialogue model* is based "more on a 'battle' of interests than on harmony of interest" (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:10).

In Europe, the r*eflective model* followed from the relationship and dialogue models, in order to address the problem of public legitimacy and social trust of organisations. Van Heerden (2004:66) notes that the reflective model assists organisations, through reciprocal reflection, in determining their identity, role, and responsibility in society. The reflective model illustrates a strategic process of viewing the organisation from the 'outside', by which society's view of the organisation, its trustworthiness, and its societal responsibility can be determined (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:12–14). The first *reflective* task is *inward* communication, which entails the selection and decoding of societal information; providing this information to organisational decision makers; organisational reflection, in order to understand society's expectations; balancing organisational behaviour in relation to the expectations of the society; and communicating accordingly, in order to gain societal trust (Holmström, 1996:98; Van Heerden, 2004:65). The second *reflective* task is outward-expressive communication, which entails the creation and transmission of the messages of a socially responsible organisation on behalf of the organisation (Holmström, 1996:99–100; Van Heerden, 2004:65).

The role of the communication practitioner practising reflective communication management is to *counsel* members of the organisation in adjusting to the changed values, norms, and societal issues; *coaching* members of the organisation in communicating competently, in order for them to be able to respond to societal demands; *conceptualising* communication plans, in order to maintain relationships and gain public trust; and *executing* communication plans (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2004:24). The reflective model is therefore viewed as the most advanced level of the practice of communication management in Europe (Van Heerden, 2004:66), while the same applies to the two-way symmetrical model in the USA.

3.3 Nature of the models

Although Grunig and Hunt (1984) identify the four American models as stages in the development of communication management, they believe that all four models were in use at the time. It is probable that organisations make use of all four models in communicating with different stakeholders, as each model is appropriate to a specific situation for communicating with a specific stakeholder group (Grunig, 1992a:18). According to Laskin (2009:38-39) all four models are currently still in use. He estimates that 15 per cent of organisations practice the press agentry/publicity model; 50 per cent of organisations practice the public information model; 20 percent of organisations practice the two-way asymmetrical model; and 15 per cent of organisations practice the two-way symmetrical model. In determining whether the models describe communication practice, as well as the reasons for organisations applying specific models, J. Grunig identified two variables present in all four models, namely *direction* and *purpose*:

- *direction* describes the extent to which communication can be regarded as one- or two-way. *One-way communication* presents information in a monologue, while *two-way communication* exchanges information in a dialogue; and

- *purpose* describes the extent to which communication can be regarded as either symmetrical or asymmetrical. *Asymmetrical communication* is unbalanced: the organisation remains unchanged while it attempts to change stakeholders' attitudes and behaviour. *Symmetrical communication* is balanced: it changes the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:289).

Both the *press agentry/publicity* and the *public information models* represent one-way, asymmetrical communication, with no focus on the creation of dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders. By practising these communication models, communication programmes are not based on research and strategic planning (Grunig, 1992a:16). By practising the *two-way asymmetrical model*, communication practitioners use research about stakeholders to construct organisational messages in such a way as to produce attitudes and behaviours desired by the organisation, by manipulating stakeholders. The organisation remains as it is and does not change to accommodate its stakeholders. Grunig (1992a:16) states that the *two-way asymmetrical model* is a "*selfish model, because the organisation believes it is right … and that any change needed to resolve a conflict must come from the public and not from the organisation*". In contrast, the *two-way symmetrical model*, proposes that communication practitioners make use of research but use it to facilitate understanding and dialogue between the organisation and its stakeholders. Both viewpoint and behaviour changes might take place in the organisation and its stakeholders following dialogue between them (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:288; Grunig & White, 1992:39). The main purpose of practising the *two-way symmetrical model* is to build strong, mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000:161–162).

Pearson already posited in 1989 that ethical communication is equal to dialogue (1989:67–86). Dialogue takes place when participants can move freely from one level of abstraction to the next. Participants can then raise questions that are part of a background consensus shared within a community of discourse (Pearson, 1989:72). The shared background refers to Pearson's *intersubjective* approach in which all participants in a communication process determine together what is right and what is wrong, taking all perspectives into account (Pearson, 1989:122, as cited by Naudé, 2001:76). This approach is regarded as the only ethical way of practising communication management, as it is based on dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders (Pearson, 1989:122, as cited by Naudé, 2001:76). This approach is based on the norm of reciprocity, where both the organisation and its stakeholders are willing to compromise because they mutually understand each other (Gru-

nig & White, 1992:46–48). Reciprocity implies that all role players share ideas and viewpoints based on respect and recognition, and that they are all prepared to change their perceptions of each other (Van Es & Meijlink, 2000:70).

According to Huang (2004:346), an organisation's use of symmetrical communication is perceived as inherently ethical, and it positively affects market intentions, overall organisational performance, conflict resolution, and crisis management. Grunig and White (1992:57) emphasise that communication management should be based on an organisational worldview (see Section 3.4.2) that incorporates ethics into the communication process rather than focusing only on ethical communication outcomes. If the communication process is ethical, the outcomes should also be ethical.

Huang (2004:343) therefore finds that two-way symmetrical communication cannot be differentiated from ethical communication. A symmetrical worldview, symmetrical dialogue, and the norm of reciprocity show that the two-way symmetrical model can be viewed as the most ethical communication model (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:350).

The Excellence theory furthermore posits that the *two-way symmetrical model* is the normative model for communication management, as it describes the manner in which effective corporate communication should be practised (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:312-317, 362). A normative theory describes the manner in which activities *should* be carried out, while a positive theory describes the manner in which an activity is *actually carried out* (Grunig, 1992a:15; Grunig & Grunig, 1992:291; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:310). Theorists develop normative theories to establish a model that, when followed, will improve practical activities. A normative theory is not proof of the manner in which activities are practised, but it is a recommendation on ways through which to *improve* these activities. However, a normative theory is not viewed as a feasible theory if it cannot be carried out in practice (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:291).

Grunig (1992a:15) asserts that the two-way symmetrical model is the norm:

> *The ideal, normative, model of public relations, it turns out, is a two-way, open, and symmetrical approach to public relations.*

Grunig, L.A. *et al.* (2002:312–317, 362) point out that the communication practitioner must balance the interests of the organisation in addition to those of the stakeholders, by promoting listening, dialogue, and willingness to accommodate each other. They find that although the *two-way symmetrical model* is not necessarily always successful, it will promote dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Although research has shown that the two-way symmetrical model is the norm, and the most ethical way of practising communication, many communication practitioners still practise communication management according to an asymmetrical worldview, because they feel that the two-way symmetrical model is too idealistic, and thus unrealistic. This view resulted in the development of a new communication model, namely the *mixed-motive model*.

3.3.1 The mixed-motive model

Research has indicated that the two-way symmetrical model is the ideal or norm for which professional communication practitioners strive while performing their duties (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:312–317, 362). The two-way symmetrical model has, however, been criticised as unrealistic

or idealistic because few organisations will appoint communication practitioners who do not give priority to the interests of the organisation and concede to the demands of stakeholders with different priorities than those of the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:45–46; Plowman, 1998:239; Terblanche, 2003:108; Laskin, 2009:45). This phenomenon of communication practitioners being torn between loyalty to their organisation and concern for stakeholders is termed the "incidence of mixed motives" by Grunig and White (1992:46).

A further point of criticism against the application of the two-way symmetrical model is that persuasion, an inherent feature of asymmetrical communication, is not necessarily unethical or ineffective (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:310). Critics of this model assert that understanding between an organisation and its interest groups is promoted if both parties try simultaneously to convince each other of the validity of their respective points of view. With the use of persuasion, the possibilities of reciprocal understanding increase.

Another research finding indicates that several organisations give preference to practicing the *two-way asymmetrical model*, except in cases in which it is strategically essential to use the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:362). Such organisations believe that knowledge of the application of both the two-way and asymmetrical models contribute to communication excellence because both models make use of research and communicate for strategic purposes (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:39, 42).

In order to be excellent, communication departments use two-way asymmetrical communication within a symmetrical worldview (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:51; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:358. This communication model is known as the mixed-motive model. Plowman (1998:238) holds the view that knowledge of the application of the mixed-motive model will result in the assimilation of communication practitioners into the dominant coalition because the dominant coalition of excellent organisations puts a high premium on negotiation and conflict resolution skills, in order to reach a situation equally advantageous to both parties, or a win-win zone.

The mixed-motive model is based on the principle of reciprocity or reciprocal communication where excellent organisations realise that they are likely to benefit if they concede to some of the demands of their stakeholders. The principle of reciprocal communication, which includes instances of power differences, allows the mixed-motive model to fit into the symmetrical worldview and qualify as excellent communication management (Grunig & White, 1992:48).

However, when one party yields more power than the other party does, a problem arises in the application of the mixed-motive model. In the case of a large, powerful organisation, it is improbable that the organisation will apply symmetrical communication until stakeholders' power has increased (Grunig & White, 1992:46).

Hellweg (1989, as cited in Grunig & Grunig, 1992:312) recommends that the four communication models be presented as a continuum. In their study, Grunig and Grunig (1992:312) differentiate between the four models by referring to the one-way models as "trade" models and to the two-way models as "professional" models (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:42). The differentiation can be illustrated schematically in Figure 3.1, on the following page.

Figure 3.1: Trade models
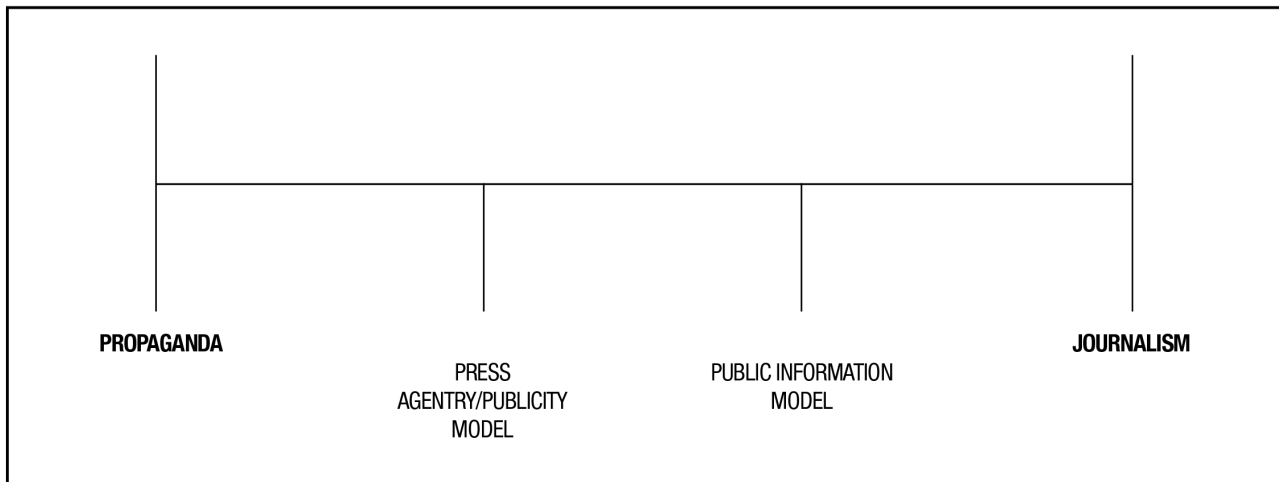
(Source: Grunig & Grunig, 1992:312.)

According to Grunig and Grunig (1992:312), the trade models refer to communication practitioners that regard their task as merely an application of communication techniques and the conveyance of publicity and information to the media and other
communication channels.

Figure 3.2: Professional models
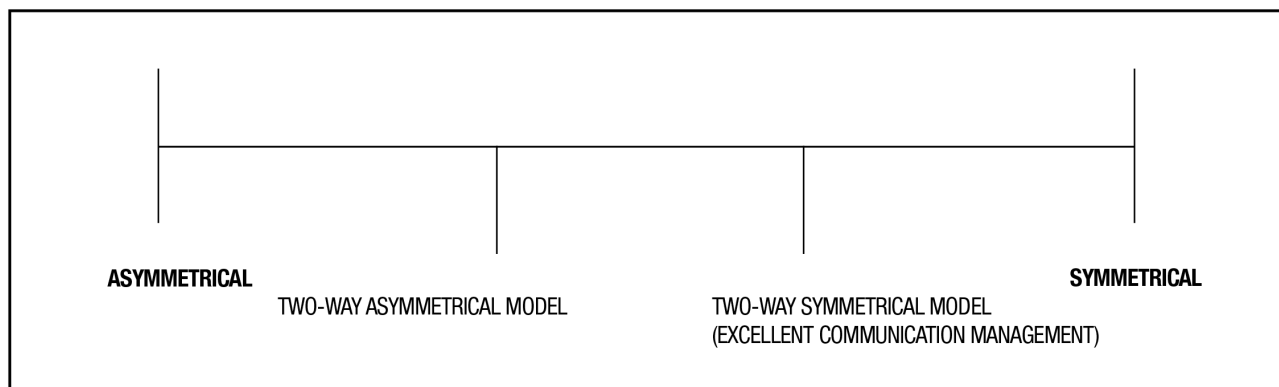
(Source: Grunig & Grunig, 1992:312.)

Communication practitioners that apply the professional models rely on both knowledge and technique. They regard communication management as a strategic function that aims to manage conflict and establish relations with strategic stakeholders that pose a threat to the autonomy of the organisation (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:312).

Criticism of the above illustration of the two-way models is that the area between the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical model is open and vague and that the mixed-motive model is to be found somewhere between these two extremes. Dozier *et al.* (1995:39–51) refined the continuum, indicating the position of the mixed-motive model on the continuum. The mixed-motive model can thus be illustrated as follows:

Figure 3.3: Mixed-motive model
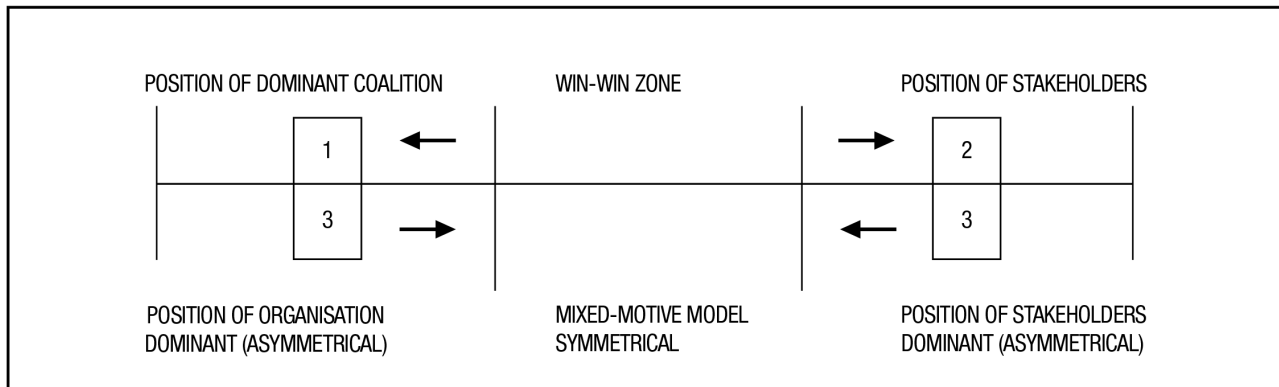
(Adapted from Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48)

As shown in Figure 3.3, it is assumed that organisations and stakeholders have separate and sometimes conflicting interests. In spite of this, common factors, termed the win-win zone, can be found by means of negotiation and compromise (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48–49; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:355–358).

Unsatisfactory and unstable relations can be found on both sides of the win-win zone. To the left of the win-win zone, the organisation's interests dominate those of other stakeholders, and vice versa to the right of the win-win zone (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48–49; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:355–358). The organisation or dominant coalition can use communication to manipulate or persuade other groups to accept its point of view, as indicated by Arrow 1 (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48–49; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:357).

Stakeholders can also use communication to persuade the organisation or dominant coalition to accept their point of view outside the win-win zone, as indicated by Arrow 2 (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48–49; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:357). When the organisation's communication practitioner assists stakeholders, by trying to persuade the organisation to accept clearly unfavourable positions that will benefit stakeholders at the expense of the organisation, the cooperation model is being fully implemented. Naturally, such a model is not welcomed by the dominant coalition (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:48–49; Terblanche, 2003:108).

Symmetrical communication, in which communication practitioners negotiate with both the dominant coalition and stakeholders, in order to secure a position, relation, or outcome in the win-win zone is indicated by Arrow 3. These practices are referred to as the *two-way model*, as they replace the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models. Asymmetrical tactics are sometimes employed to secure a win-win zone. Because these practices in which the value of long-term relationships is respected and appreciated are applied within a symmetrical worldview, the two-way model is essentially symmetrical. The two-way model implies that the dominant coalition is managed as another stakeholder that is influenced by communication programmes (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:49; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:357–358).

Plowman (1998:237–261; 2005:131–138) refines the mixed-motive model, by adding seven negotiation techniques to enhance its effectiveness. The negotiation techniques are the following:
- *competition*: implies an "I win, you lose" situation;
- *cooperation*: implies a win-win zone for both parties;
- *compromise*: implies a equal ratio of advantages and disadvantages;
- *avoidance*: represents a situation in which both parties are losers and in which one or both par-

ties have a better alternative than the advantage that would be gained by cooperating with each other;

- *settlement*: always implies an "I win, you lose" situation;
- *unconditional benefits*: refers to the results of an organisation's decision, based on research regarding an action that is advantageous to both the organisation and the stakeholders, even though the stakeholders do not share the organisation's point of view at the time (there is still two-way communication because the action is based on research, and the action results in a win-win zone or both the organisation and its stakeholders); and
- *win-win or no agreement*: implies that both parties agree to no point of agreement in a conflict situation if it is not advantageous for both parties. In other words, they decide to wait until both parties can gain from the agreement, resulting in a win-win agreement. These tactics correspond to a large degree with *avoidance*, but with a view to future collaboration.

The communication outcomes of the mixed-motive model, as shown in Figure 3.3, are compared to other models in Table 3.1, on the next page.

Table 3.1: Outcomes of the new symmetrical model

TYPE OF PRACTICE	EXPLANATION
Pure a-symmetrical model	Communication is used to dominate stakeholders to accept the position of the dominant coalition
Pure cooperation model	Communication is used to persuade the dominant coalition to accept the position of the stakeholders
Two-way model (mixed-motive model)	Communication is used to move stakeholders, the dominant coalition, or both to an acceptable win-win zone

(Source: Naudé, 2001:81; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:357.)

Various researchers consequently regard the mixed-motive model as a normative and positive model because it is an accurate reflection of the actual practices of communication practitioners (Holtzhausen & Verwey, 1996:39; Plowman, 1998:237–261; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:358; Plowman, 2005:131–138).

In Table 3.2 on the following page, a diagrammatic summary of the five American communication models, including theory from the European models, is presented.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of the communication models

CHARACTERISTIC	MODEL				
	PRESS AGENTRY/PUBLICITY	PUBLIC INFORMATION (EUROPEAN: INFORMATION MODEL	TWO-WAY ASYMMETRIC (EUROPEAN: PERSUASION MODEL)	TWO-WAY SYMMETRIC (EUROPEAN: RELATIONSHIP MODEL, DIALOGUE MODEL, REFLECTIVE MODEL	MIXED-MOTIVE
PURPOSE	Propaganda	Distribution of information	Scientific persuasion, protection of image/reputation, promotion of plans/decisions	Reciprocal understanding, negotiation, relationship building, co-creation of new meanings, public licence to operate, public legitimation	Reciprocal understanding, scientific persuasion
DIRECTION	One-way; whole truth not important	One-way; truth important	Two-way; unbalanced results	Two-way; balanced results	Two-way; balanced results; win-win zone
COMMUNICATION MODEL	Sender → Recipient	Sender → Recipient	Sender → Recipient Sender ← Recipient (feedback)	Group → Group Group ← Group (feedback)	Group → Group Group ← Group (feedback)
NATURE OF RESEARCH	Little or no research	Research in terms of readability and readership only	Evaluation of attitudes	Evaluation of mutual understanding	Evaluation of mutual understanding
WHERE IT IS PRACTISED TODAY	Sports, theatre, product promotion	Government, NPOs	Competitive business	Regulated business	Competitive and regulated business, NPOs

(Adapted from Grunig & Hunt, 1984:22; Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:22; Van Heerden, 2004:61)

The description and discussion of the five communication models in the previous sections leads to specific theoretical statements regarding NPO communication practices, which are presented in the following sections.

3.3.2 Specific Theoretical Statement 1

The communication model practised by NPOs could be determined by:

- the purpose of communication (for example, to inform, distribute information, persuade, or build relationships); and
- the direction of communication (one-way or two-way communication).

3.3.3 Specific Theoretical Statement 2

- NPOs that practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in dialogue with their different stakeholders, which include *listening* to stakeholder needs. The goal of practising two-way communication with stakeholders is to reach mutual understanding, which will lead to strong, lasting relationships.
- NPOs that practise the asymmetrical communication models will not view dialogue as an integral part of their communication efforts. They would tend rather to address one-way monologue towards their stakeholders.

In practice, the model practised and the communication practitioner's role depends on the organisation's worldview, which determines how the organisation will be managed, notwithstanding the communication practitioner's expertise and choice of model. Following is a discussion of organisational worldviews and their influence on the practice of communication management.

3.4 Organisational worldview and communication models

Kearney (1984 as cited by Grunig & White, 1992:33) defines *worldview* as "*a set of images and assumptions about the world*". According to this definition, each person has subjective reasons for their beliefs and behaviour, and therefore the practice and theories of communication management are affected by the worldviews of practitioners and theorists (Grunig & White, 1992:32).

Although each communication practitioner may have his or her own presuppositions regarding communication management, the practice of a specific communication model is closely linked to organisational social structure, culture, and worldview (Naudé, 2001:69). The presuppositions underlying worldviews cannot be changed easily as they are embedded in organisational culture, communities, and society. Researchers identify and compare worldviews, finding that some worldviews are linked to more successful problemsolving in organisations and communities than others (Grunig & White, 1992:33). The organisation's cultural presuppositions most applicable to communication management concentrate on the beliefs regarding the relationship between the self (meaning the organisation) and 'other' (meaning the different stakeholders/publics of an organisation) (Naudé, 2001:69). In the subsequent sections, the asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews and their influence on communication management are discussed.

3.4.1 Asymmetrical worldview of organisational communication

Grunig (1989:30) believes that the practice of asymmetrical communication leads to unethical, socially irresponsible, and ineffective communication practices. According to asymmetrical models, organisations know what is best for all and stakeholders can only benefit from working with organisations. This view can be problematic, as Grunig (1989:32) points out:

> … *organisations often expect publics to accept strange things as a result of "cooperation": pollution, toxic waste, drinking, smoking, guns, overthrow of governments, dangerous*

products, lowered salary and benefits, discrimination against women and minorities, job layoffs, dangerous manufacturing plants, risky transportation of products, higher prices, monopoly power, poor product quality, political favoritism, insider trading, use of poisonous chemicals, exposure to carcinogens, nuclear weapons, and even warfare. The list could go on and on. The list is important because few of the organisations advocating these positions believe the practices are detrimental to the publics they ask to adopt the behaviors.

The above passage clearly shows that organisations that believe it ethical to control and dominate their environment can actually harm their stakeholders because of their worldview (Grunig & White, 1992:42).

Grunig and White (1992:39) indicate that communication management practised according to the asymmetrical models - where an organisation obtains what it wants without changing its behaviour - was the dominant worldview of most organisations. However, in a follow-up study Grunig, L.A. *et al.* (2002:336) find that large organisations' managers prefer the two-way symmetrical model, while their communication departments believe that management prefer asymmetrical communication models. Similarly, Steyn (1999:20–43) finds that in the South African context managers prefer *strategic* communication management, although the communication department is often not able to practise strategic communication management.

The asymmetrical worldview is characterised by the following presuppositions (Grunig, 1989:32–33; Grunig & White, 1992:43):

- *internal orientation*: members of the organisation do not have an objective view of the organisation because they do not view it as outsiders do; as a result they do not see the organisation's shortcomings;
- *closed system*: information flows from the organisation and not into the organisation because organisation members believe their knowledge is sufficient and thus no outside information is necessary;
- *efficiency*: efficiency and cost control are more important than innovation and therefore new ideas and methods of work are not encouraged;
- *elitism*: leaders of the organisation know best and have more knowledge than stakeholders or publics;
- *conservatism*: change is viewed as negative, should be resisted and thus pressure for change is considered subversive;
- *tradition*: tradition provides stability for the organisation and helps to maintain its culture, which is the reason change is not readily accepted; and
- *central authority*: the organisation is managed as an autocracy, where a few top managers have the most power and authority, while employees have little or no authority or power, rather they are expected to do their work and not to think of new ideas or threaten management's power.

In addition to the above presuppositions that influence the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders, an asymmetrical worldview is characterised by certain presuppositions regarding the *social role* of communication management (Grunig, 2000:29–30; Grunig & White, 1992:50–55).

- Firstly, communication management has a *pragmatic social role*, characterised by a result-oriented function, and viewed as only valuable if it helps the organisation to achieve its goals. Communication management in this role is related to marketing and has a commercial function with

little place for ethical conduct and corporate social responsibility.

- The second presupposition posits that communication management has a *conservative social role* in which the status quo in the organisation and in society must be defended and maintained. This role corresponds with the presuppositions about conservatism and tradition discussed above. New ideas and change are not tolerated.
- The third presupposition states that communication management has a *radical social role* in contributing to organisational and societal change. Both the radical and the conservative world-views hold that communication management can have powerful effects on society and because of this they view communication management as an instrument in the war between opposing social groups.
- According to the fourth presupposition, communication management has a *neutral social role*. This view corresponds with logical positivism, which views communication management as a neutral object of study. Philosophers of science now widely reject the idea that observation and interpretation can be neutral.
- The fifth presupposition states that communication management is merely a *technical function* with no theoretical grounding. This presupposition is relevant to the press agency/publicity and public information models. Accordingly, communication management has a marketing function and cannot play a strategic management role.

Changes in attitudes and behaviour, methods of persuasive communication, the spread of innovation, and the effect of media campaigns are likely to be viewed as relevant communication management problems by organisations with an asymmetrical worldview (Grunig, 1989:33–34). Any one or all three of the asymmetrical models could be used to achieve organisational goals. Communication management practised according to an asymmetrical worldview is typically less excellent than communication management practiced according to a symmetrical worldview.

3.4.2   *Symmetrical worldview of organisational communication*

According to the symmetrical worldview, communication management is a process of compromising and negotiating, where organisations realise that they would benefit, if they were to give up some of what they want (Grunig & White, 1992:39). The purpose of two-way symmetrical communication is to use research and dialogue to manage conflict, improve understanding, and build relationships with stakeholders. According to this worldview, both the organisation and its stakeholders are willing to change their viewpoints or behaviour (Grunig & White, 1992:39).

As explained in the previous section, social and cultural structures play an important role in determining which communication model will be applied in the organisation. The following presuppositions characterise the symmetrical worldview (Grunig, 1989:38–39; Grunig & White, 1992:43–44; Naudé, 2001:71–72):

- *interdependence*: an organisation cannot isolate itself from its environment. Although an organisation is separated from its environment by boundaries, interaction with its stakeholders or other organisations is vital for its survival;
- *open system*: an organisation is open to interaction with other systems for information to be exchanged freely between systems;
- *moving equilibrium*: organisations as systems strive towards a balance, or equilibrium, with other systems. This balance constantly moves due to environmental changes. According to the symmetrical worldview, organisations seek an equilibrium by mutual and cooperative adjustments to other systems;
- *equity*: employees must be respected and must receive equal opportunities. Any employee, re-

gardless of background or education, must be free to give input into an organisation. Naudé (2001:71) states that equity in a symmetrical worldview does not mean that all employees are equal in terms of organisational hierarchy, salary, or other benefits, but that they all receive equal opportunities;

- *autonomy*: employees are more innovative, constructive, and productive when they have the autonomy to make decisions concerning their work and behaviour, rather than being controlled by others. In this way, employees experience more work satisfaction inside the organisation and more cooperation outside the organisation is gained;
- *innovation*: in contrast to the asymmetrical organisational worldview, where innovation is discouraged, new ideas and flexible thinking is important in a symmetrical worldview;
- *decentralisation of management*: power is not restricted to a few top managers, but is collective and participatory in organisations with a symmetrical worldview. Managers coordinate rather than dictate. In an organisation with a decentralised management style, employee's autonomy, work satisfaction, and innovation are promoted;
- *responsibility*: an organisation and its employees must be aware of the consequences of their behaviour on others and attempt to eliminate negative consequences for others;
- *conflict resolution*: conflict resolution within an organisation or between the organisation and its stakeholders must be resolved through negotiation, communication, and compromise. Tactics such as force, coercion, manipulation, and violence do not form part of a symmetrical organisational worldview; and
- *interest-group liberalism*: the political system is viewed as a mechanism for open negotiation amongst stakeholders. The main aim is to protect the needs and interests of ordinary people against the government and large organisations. This can only happen if the organisation functions as an open system that encourages communication amongst stakeholders.

There are presuppositions about the *social role* of communication management within a symmetrical worldview (Grunig, 2000:30; Grunig & White, 1992:53–55; Naudé, 2001:72), which are presented in the following list.

- The first presupposition states that communication management has an *idealistic social role* that serves public interest, develops mutual understanding, and facilitates dialogue between organisations and stakeholders. Communication management also contributes to debate about issues in society. This worldview presupposes that a norm of reciprocity exists in society that enables the communication function to realise its symmetrical and idealistic function.
- According to the second presupposition, research uncovers poor ethics and negative social consequences of ineffective communication management that deviates from normative communication practices. The two-way symmetrical model serves as a *norm* against which such communication management practices can be measured.
- The third presupposition argues that excellent communication management should have a *managerial role*, and not merely a technical role, as presupposed by the asymmetrical worldview.

It is clear from the above discussion that an organisation's worldview determines which communication model will be practised, what role the communication practitioner will fulfil, and whether the communication function will have a strategic role.

The asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews described above, as well as the different views on the social role of communication management, leads to the next two specific theoretical statements as presented in the subsequent sections.

3.4.2.1 Specific Theoretical Statement 3

A NPO's choice of a communication model will be directly influenced by its organisational world-view:

- An asymmetrical worldview (characterised by an internal orientation, a closed system, efficiency, elitism, conservatism, tradition, and a central authority) will lead to the practising of an asymmetrical communication model (press agentry/publicity model, public information model, or two-way asymmetrical model). A NPO with an asymmetrical worldview will view communication management as a mere technical function, and it will be more likely to practise an asymmetrical communication model.
- A symmetrical worldview (characterised by interdependence, an open system, a moving equilibrium, equity, autonomy, innovation, decentralised management, responsibility, conflict resolution, and interest-group liberalism) will enable the practising of the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model. A NPO with a symmetrical worldview will view communication management as a managerial function, and it will be more likely to practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

3.4.2.2 Specific Theoretical Statement 4

A NPO's view on its social role, from which the social role of communication management can be derived, are linked to its organisational worldview and will influence its choice of communication model:

- Those NPOs that view communication management as having a pragmatic, radical, or a neutral social role will be more inclined to practise an asymmetrical model.
- Those NPOs that view communication management as having an idealistic or critical social role will practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

3.4.2.3 Specific Theoretical Statement 5

The model practiced by a NPO, as well as the role played by its most senior communication practitioner can be determined by examining:

- the expertise of the communication practitioner;
- whether the communication practitioner is part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
- whether the practitioner has a strategic role; and
- the organisational worldview and culture of the NPO.

Communication management contributes to organisational effectiveness only when it assists the organisation in reconciling its goals with the expectations of its strategic stakeholders. In other words, communication management contributes to organisational effectiveness by building strong, long-term relationships with stakeholders (Grunig, L.A. *et al.,* 1992:86; Hon & Grunig, 1999:9; Grunig & Huang, 2000:24). Both the organisation and its stakeholders benefit when two-way communication models are used to build symmetrical relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b:65). Trust in particular, which forms the core of strong, long-lasting relationships, is the result of symmetrical relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig & Huang, 2000:27, 29).

As discussed in the previous sections, a symmetrical organisational worldview is a prerequisite for the practice of the two-way communication models. In the next section, relationship management as the most important outcome of communication management through the two-way models is discussed. The theory on relationship management is applied to the NPO context.

3.5   Relationship management

In 1984, Freeman (1984) introduced the stakeholder approach to corporate management. Before that, only shareholders were considered to be an organisation's stakeholders that should receive attention from the organisation. Freeman's stakeholder approach broadened management's view to consider "*all interests and well-being of those who can assist or hinder the achievement of the organisation's objectives*" (Philips *et al.*, 2003:481), and to create value for all stakeholders. In addition to being a moral and ethical approach to corporate management, following the stakeholder approach would enable organisations to improve trade (Freeman *et al.*, 2004:368). At the same time, M. A. Ferguson (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii) caused a major shift in the core focus of strategic communication management, in stating that relationships, and "*not ... the organisation, nor the public, nor the communication process*", should be the focus of communication management (Ferguson, 1984, as cited by Ledingham, 2003:182). Since then, research has shown that communication management adds strategic value to an organisation when its main approach consists of "*strategies to develop, maintain, and enhance relationships and the relationship outcomes that the organisation strives to achieve with these strategies*" (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:550). In other words, communication management's strategic value lies in the use of symmetrical communication programmes for developing and maintaining strong, long-lasting relationships with the organisation's stakeholders, in order to assist the organisation in obtaining its goals (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:548). This is powerfully put by Ledingham and Bruning (2000a:xiii):

> "*The emergence of relationship management as a paradigm ... calls into question the essence of public relations—what it is and what it does or should do, its function and value within the organisational structure and the greater society, and the benefits generated not only for sponsoring organisations but also for the publics those organisations serve and the communities and societies in which they exist.*"

Ledingham and Bruning (1998:63) highlight an important aspect: that stakeholders will only be loyal to an organisation when its involvement and support of its community is "*known by its key publics*". In other words, they view communication management as a two-step process in which organisations must firstly focus on the *relationship* with their strategic stakeholders, and secondly, *communicate* involvement of those activities or programmes that build the organisation–public relationship to strategic stakeholders. Concerning this, Gregory (2008:19–20) adds that communication practitioners manage stakeholder expectations when they ensure that stakeholders know that the organisation has delivered on its promises, and that stakeholders understand and support organisational goals. The communication department therefore has an important role in strategic organisational management because of the focus on the activities most valued by strategic stakeholders, grounded in the relationship dimensions of trust, involvement, commitment, and openness.

Relationship building is a very important part of communication management for NPOs. Knox and Gruar (2007:116) note that NPOs' stakeholders are generally more important than those of commercial businesses are because they often have complex relationships with the NPOs and are very involved in the achievement of organisational goals. Building strong relationships is particularly important in the case of donors because good relationships will encourage donors to repeat and increase the value of donations (Brennan & Brady, 1999:332). Furthermore, NPOs operate in a highly competitive environment where an ever-increasing number of NPOs rely on a small number of donors (MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806). When donors cease to donate funds, they usually elect to support other organisations that they perceive to be more deserving (Sargeant, 2001:183). More than one in ten lapsed donors appears to have no memory of ever having supported a specific NPO, which indicates that the NPO in question failed to communicate effectively with its donors. It is therefore

very important to provide donors with ongoing and specific feedback that has resulted for the NPO's beneficiaries. When donors are given the opportunity to interact with the NPO, it seems unlikely that their support will lapse, because they have a relationship with the NPO and feel appreciated by the organisation (Sargeant, 2001:188–190).

3.5.1   *Types of relationships*

Two types of relationships exist between an organisation and its stakeholders, namely exchange and communal relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999:20). In an e*xchange relationship* the parties to the relationship benefit from one another because they received specific benefits in the past or expect benefits in the future (Hung, 2001:13; Hung, 2005:396; Hung, 2007:456). In contrast, in a *communal relationship* benefits are given in order to please the other party, without the benefactor expecting the beneficiary to return the favour (Hon & Grunig, 1999:21; Hung, 2001:13; Hung, 2007:456). In these relationships, friendships with mutually beneficial objectives are often built with an extremely high value placed on fairness and justice between all parties involved. Commitment amongst all involved in the relationship is an integral part of communal relationships, projecting a positive image of the NPO as an entity that recognises its social responsibility function (Goffee & Jones, 2000:143; Grunig, 2000:2; Paine, 2003:8). Clark and Mills (1993:684-691) explain the difference between the two types of relationships: *communal relationships* express the concerns that one party has about the welfare of the other party, whereas *exchange relationships* are derived from economic exchanges.

Hung (2005:415–417; 2007:457–458) adds to the relationship types by identifying five other types of relationships, namely exploitive, manipulative, contractual, symbiotic, and covenantal relationships. She refines communal relationships into mutual and one-sided communal relationships. In Figure 3.3, Hung's relationship types are illustrated along a continuum.

Figure 3.4: Continuum of types of relationships
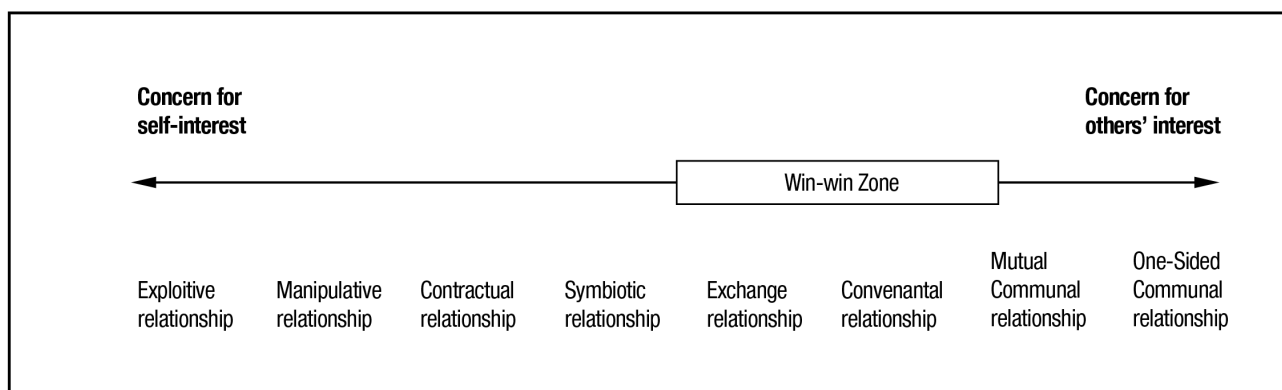
(Source: Hung, 2005:416; Hung, 2007:458.)

The exploitive relationships on the far left side represent the extreme behaviour of an organisation concerned only about itself without considering the other party. One-sided communal relationships on the far right side express another extreme behaviour, that of being concerned only about the other party. Hung (2005:416) emphasises that the extremes on the continuum are not recommended for organisations because exploiting stakeholders will result in a bad reputation for the organisation and loss of public support. However, considering stakeholders without considering the organisation's own welfare will also jeopardise an organisation's survival because the organisation might sacrifice its own well-being in accommodating stakeholders. Hung (2005:415–417; 2007:457–458) therefore views exchange, covenantal (which implies the exchange of opinions between two parties that are

both committed to a common goal), and mutual communal relationships as striving towards a win-win zone. Strategic communication practices, particularly for NPOs, should thus aim to build these three types of relationships.

An organisation's relationships with stakeholders begin the moment the organisation realises its interdependence with stakeholders in its institutional environment. According to Hung (2007:454), an organisation's intention and motivation for survival in the institutional environment affect the type(s) of relationships it aims to have with its stakeholders. In other words, organisations do not engage in only one type of relationship with all their stakeholders, but interchange relationship types depending on its goals and the situation (Hung, 2001:50–51). In the NPO sector, it is important to build strong communal relationships with stakeholders, particularly donors, on one hand because NPOs receive funds from them and do not give funds back. On the other hand, NPOs also have exchange relationships with donors because donors expect the NPO to deliver certain services to its beneficiaries (which are also the donor organisation's beneficiaries). In the case of NPOs in the adult literacy sector, donors provide funds to the NPOs in exchange for the NPOs providing literacy education to illiterate adults.

3.5.2 Relationship-cultivation strategies

Hung (2007:459) states that relationship building is an ongoing process in which an organisation not only maintains a relationship in its current state, but also from time to time has to restore a failed or deteriorated relationship. In order to build strong relationships, the following symmetrical relationship-cultivation strategies can be used (Plowman, 1998:245; Grunig & Huang, 2000:36–37; Hung, 2001:15–19; Plowman, 2005:133; Hung, 2007:459–461):

- *Access*: stakeholders provide access to communication practitioners, while communication practitioners grant stakeholders access to organisational decision-making processes.
- *Positivity*: organisations do all that is necessary to make stakeholders feel content in the relationship.
- *Openness or disclosure*: organisations and stakeholders must be willing to openly discuss the nature of their relationship, while those with greater power have the obligation to prove that it is in the interest of those with less power not to have access to certain information.
- *Assurances of legitimacy*: this involves efforts by the parties in a relationship to express their commitment to maintaining the relationship, which leads to more satisfaction and commitment from both sides.
- *Networking*: this pertains to organisational efforts to build networks with the same groups as its stakeholders, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups.
- *Sharing of tasks*: both the organisation and its stakeholders solve problems together, for example, board members can assist NPO management in building relationships with certain donors.
- *Dual concern*: these strategies can also be called mixed motive strategies because they entail balancing the stakeholders' interests with the organisation's interests. The following asymmetrical dual-concern strategies will not be effective in developing and maintaining the most positive relationships over the long term because they emphasise the organisation's interests over the stakeholders' interests, or vice versa:
  ‣ Contending: this entails the organisation's attempts to persuade its stakeholders to accept its position.
  ‣ Avoiding: the organisation ignores conflict with its stakeholders.
  ‣ Accommodating: the organisation concedes and gives up its goals, to some extent.
  ‣ Compromising: the organisation partially meets the stakeholders' expectations, but no parties are completely satisfied with the outcome.

‣   Distributive: these strategies asymmetrically enforce one party's position onto that of the other party without concern for the other party's welfare.
- *Cooperating*: the organisation and its stakeholders work to bring together their interests, in order to reach a mutually beneficial relationship.
- *Being unconditionally constructive*: the organisation does it best for the relationship, even if it has to give up some of its aims and its stakeholders do not respond to its good intentions.
- *Stipulating win-win or no deal*: should the organisation and its stakeholders not be able to find a mutually beneficial solution, they agree not to make a deal rather than making a decision that is not beneficial for both parties.
- *Keeping promises*: organisations keep promises to achieve dependability and competence, which are both dimensions of trust (see Section 3.5.3). In the case of NPOs, Sargeant (2001:186) emphasises that donors in particular want to know "*how my money is spent*". When donors feel that they can trust the NPO to deliver on its promises, they are most likely to continue to support the organisation.

3.5.3 Relationship outcomes

In practising relationship building within the two-way symmetrical model, supported by a symmetrical worldview, organisations both generate and receive benefits. Organisations' initiatives thus help to build communities, while they also provide social and economic returns on their investments (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b:66). The following *relationship outcomes* that indicate the quality of the relationship have been identified (Hon & Grunig, 1999:18–20; Grunig & Huang, 2000:42–47; Huang, 2001:65–68; Hung, 2001:25–30):
- *Trust* is one party's level of confidence in and willingness to be open to the other party. Several researchers posit that building trust, particularly with regard to donors, is a very important aspect in the NPO sector (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005:128; MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806–818). Trust has several underlying dimensions:
  - integrity, which is the belief that an organisation operates in a fair and just manner;
  - dependability refers to the belief that the organisation will do what it said it would do; and
  - competence refers to the belief that an organisation can do what it says it will do.
- *Control mutuality* refers to the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another. Although this suggests a power imbalance, ethical, two-way symmetrical communication could produce control mutuality in a relationship. Control mutuality implies that:
  - the organisation and its stakeholders are considerate of each other;
  - the organisation believes the opinions of its stakeholders to be legitimate; and
  - the organisation affords its stakeholders an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and gives stakeholders some level of control over situations in the organisation. In the case of NPOs, this would for example mean that the NPO could co-decide with a donor organisation the manner in which the funds should be spent.
- *Commitment* entails all parties involved feeling that the relationship is worth spending time and energy on.
- The level of *relationship satisfaction* refers to the extent to which one party is favourably disposed toward the other because positive expectations regarding the relationship are reinforced; in other words, the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs. Both parties reap benefits from the relationship and stakeholders are thus happy in their interactions with the organisation and feel important to the organisation.

The above discussion on relationship management as the most important outcome of two-way symmetrical communication management leads to the next specific theoretical statement.

3.5.4   *Specific Theoretical Statement 6*

- NPOs' use of two-way symmetrical communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with their strategic stakeholders.
- These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.
- By building and maintaining strong relationships with strategic stakeholders, the communication function assists the organisation in achieving its goals, and therefore in being excellent.

3.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, the implication of two-way symmetrical communication to strategic communication management has been discussed. Although the two-way symmetrical model is a normative model, it became clear that the practice of two-way symmetrical communication according to the newly developed mixed motive model enables organisations to build strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders. Building strong relationships with strategic stakeholders is the communication function's most important contribution to organisational effectiveness because it highlights the organisation's commitment to mutual trust, control mutuality, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. Although a well-trained communication practitioner would know the benefits of two-way symmetrical communication, the choice of which communication model will be practised depends mainly on the organisation's worldview. Practising two-way symmetrical communication and subsequent strong stakeholder relationships will only be possible in an organisation with a symmetrical worldview, which is characterised by interdependence, an open system, a moving equilibrium, equity, autonomy, innovation, decentralised management, responsibility, conflict resolution, and interest-group liberalism.

In order to maintain quality relationships between organisations and its stakeholders, it is essential to manage communication strategically. Strategic communication management forms the foundation for relationship building with stakeholders. In the next chapter, Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management will be discussed as the theoretical core of the study, and the importance of strategic communication management in the NPO sector will be highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

4.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, the broad theoretical framework of this study, consisting of the Excellence theory and relationship management theory, was provided. The discussion provided a short historical overview of the origin of the four communication models, and how they led to the development of the two-way models as both normative and positive theory. The way in which Grunig's two-way symmetrical model contributes to relationship management, which is one of the most important functions of strategic communication management, was outlined. It was furthermore emphasised that the two-way symmetrical model can only be applied in an organisation with a symmetrical worldview. When the two-way asymmetrical model is applied within a symmetrical worldview, communication is also viewed as ethical and contributing to the achievement of organisational goals.

The above theoretical background leads to the theoretical focus of the study, which is Steyn and Puth's approach to strategic communication management. This chapter would therefore endeavour to answer the question of what *strategic* communication management entails, and why it is necessary in the NPO sector. A discussion on the different communication practitioner roles leads to how Benita Steyn, a leading South African researcher on strategic communication management, distinguished between communication practitioner roles, in order to identify the role of the *strategist*. Thereafter, a brief discussion on the levels and process of strategic management will follow, highlighting the role of communication practitioners in each step. Based on her research on practitioner roles, Steyn with Puth developed a model for strategic communication management (Steyn & Puth, 2000). The steps, particularly of the *strategic* part of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, are discussed in detail, as they form the theoretical focus of this project. However, Steyn and Puth's model and approach to strategic communication management have received some criticism, and this is also discussed, in order to provide a more nuanced view of the model.

4.2   Communication practitioner roles

Role theories developed from a sociological context, where it is argued that employee roles consist of expectations about the quantity and type of behaviour of a person in a specific role (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991:169). Roles in an organisation depict repeated, standardised behavioural patterns of employees and serve as a guide to the behaviour and outcomes management expectations of employees (Dozier, 1992:327). Role theory, applied in communication management, supplies a point of departure for the study of practitioner roles, their accompanying functions, and the strategic function, if any, of these roles in the organisation (Moss *et al.*, 2000:284; Steyn & Puth, 2000:14).

During the 1980s, Broom (1982:18) distinguished between the *expert prescriber*, *the communication technician*, *the communication facilitator*, and *the problem-solving process facilitator* in his classification of practitioner roles. The functions of practitioners fulfilling these roles can also be related to certain communication models (Broom, 1982:18–19; Broom & Dozier, 1986:39; Dozier, 1992:329–330; Steyn & Puth, 2000:14–15):
- The *expert prescriber* operates as communication expert/authority that researches and defines

a problem, designs a program and takes the responsibility for the implementation of that program. This is a high-risk role because the practitioner would take all blame if a problem would occur. This role can be associated with the two-way asymmetrical and the press agency/publicity models.

- The *communication facilitator* acts as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organisation and its stakeholders. The emphasis is on a continuous flow of two-way information with the removal of communication barriers as a major communication concern. This role can be connected to the public information and two-way symmetrical models.
- The *problem-solving process facilitator* serves as a member of management and has the task of defining and solving problems. This communication practitioner helps to guide other managers and the organisation through a rational problem-solving process and maintains a high level of management involvement in the implementation of communication programmes. Practitioners in this role apply the two-way symmetrical model.
- The *communication technician* is primarily concerned with the production of communication material and the implementation of communication programmes. This practitioner has no managerial function and is primarily employed for his or her communication and journalistic skills. The communication practitioner only performing this role applies the press agency/publicity and public information models.

Broom (1982:20) finds though that the roles of the *expert prescriber*, *communication facilitator*, and the *problem-solving process facilitator* largely correlate, cannot be empirically separated from each other, and are mostly practised by the same person. The activities associated with these roles do not correlate with the role of the *communication technician*, which suggests that this role is independent from the others (Broom, 1982:20; Broom & Dozier, 1986:40; Dozier, 1992:331). A communication practitioner can, however, fulfil all four roles, but the practitioner's dominating role is the one that is practised most often (Broom & Dozier, 1986:39; Dozier & Broom, 1995:20).

Dozier (1983) and Moss *et al.* (2000:293–294) in a British study, refined the above research, finding furthermore that basically only two roles can be distinguished, namely that of a *manager* and a *technician*. *Communication managers* are responsible for communication policy and affairs decisions. They use research for the planning and evaluation of communication programmes, council management about communication issues, and are responsible for communication programme outcomes. Because *communication managers* are responsible for the facilitation of communication between management and stakeholders, they are required to conceptualise and manage communication programmes (Dozier, 1984:16–17; Steyn & Puth, 2000:16). Although Moss *et al.* (2000:293–294) find that c*ommunication managers* mostly perform routine management tasks, some participate in long-term strategic planning. Several participants in the Moss *et al.* (2000:293–294) study agreed that the right to have a strategic communication management role should be earned and not be assumed.

The *communication technician* is mainly responsible for the manufacturing of brochures and pamphlets, press releases, and the technical provision of communication material. *Communication technicians* make no management decisions, are not accountable for communication programme outcomes, and only have a supportive role in managing the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders (Dozier, 1984:17; Moss & Green, 2001:120–121). Communication practitioners mostly have a technical role in the case of a static and unthreatening organisational environment (Moss & Green, 2001:121).

In Europe, the European Body of Knowledge (EBOK) Project also identified four communication practitioner roles: the *managerial*, *operational*, *educational*, and *reflective* roles (Van Heerden, 2004:70–71). The *managerial* role corresponds with the North-American *communication manager* role, while the *operational* role is the same as the North-American *technician* role. The *reflective* role corresponds with Steyn's (2003:11) definition of the *communication strategist*, which is discussed in Section 4.2.1.

Robinson (1969:9–17) already stated in the 1960s that communication practitioners need to plan communication activities according to research findings and evaluate communication programmes scientifically, in order to convince management of the communication function's value. Both the asymmetrical and symmetrical models use research to ensure excellence. The application of scientific planning and evaluation would thus position the communication function strategically in an organisation (Plowman, 1998:243; Plowman, 2005:135–136; White & Dozier, 1992:103, 105).

Strategic, scientific communication planning entails environmental scanning or boundary spanning between the organisation and its environment (Dozier, 1992:339; Steyn & Puth, 2000:60), in order to obtain external information regarding changes or trends in the organisation's environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:60). The communication practitioner in this function is in interaction with the organisation as primary group and the environment as outside group. The communication practitioner's task is to convey management's views to the organisation's stakeholders, and in turn to convey the stakeholders' views to management (Leichty & Springston, 1996:468). This information must be interpreted, in order to present it as strategic information to management.

Communication practitioners, however, are not always considered equipped to contribute towards strategy formulation and strategic management because of the following constraints (Broom & Dozier, 1983:6–7; Center & Broom, 1983:2; Grunig, 1983:28; Dozier, 1992:226–337; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 1999:21; Moss *et al.*, 2000:296, 300; Van Ruler, 2000:403–423; Steyn & Green, 2001:15–16; Dolphin, 2002:20; Steyn, 2003:1–3; Wu & Taylor, 2003:473, 477; Ströh, 2007:199):

- they do not have the time or budget to scientifically plan and evaluate communication programmes;
- they do not have the training, knowledge, or skills to perform strategy formulation, scientific planning and evaluation;
- they do not know how to design a communication strategy that will be accepted by management and simultaneously reflect the contribution communication management makes to the overall achievement of organisational goals;
- they prefer to perform a more technical-oriented role in their organisations;
- they lack a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, and business problems their organisation face, and therefore do not have a sense of the ultimate overarching goal;
- they do not specialise as strategic decision makers;
- they do not integrate gathered information into strategies;
- they do not act proactively; and
- they do not have a sound knowledge about the managerial aspects of their organisation.

This reluctance results in the communication practitioner not being viewed as a strategic role player and being delegated to lower management levels (Broom & Dozier, 1983:6; Broom & Dozier, 1986:42; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:606; Steyn, 1999:39; Steyn & Green, 2001:15; Van Ruler, 2000: 403–423). In spite of the above assumptions, research has shown that most CEOs of organisations prefer communication practitioners to play a strategic role, in order to assist the organisation in achieving its goals (Gregory, 2008:20; Steyn, 1999:21–23, 40).

Regarding the situation in the NPO sector, many NPOs do not have a traditional communication department, or the communication and marketing functions may be combined into one department. A lack of financial resources forces many NPOs to appoint one person to perform multiple tasks, of which communication management might be one. Communication practitioners in NPOs mainly focus on fundraising, event management, information campaigns, board relations and recruitment, web site maintenance, and volunteer management (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15). With so many responsibilities, it is crucial for communication practitioners to take great care when balancing the fundraising, publicity, awareness, and sympathy needs of the organisation that they represent. All communication programmes and campaigns must be aligned with the organisation's mission, values, and aims (Wolstenholme, 2006:564).

Communication practitioners in NPOs, whether they have communication training and/or experience or not, are responsible for communication programmes and projects. Naudé (2001:266) finds that most of the communication practitioners employed in NPOs have tertiary qualifications in disciplines other than Communication, such as Political Science and Social Work. This means that the formal communication expertise of many communication staff in NPOs may be lacking. Another obstacle that this situation presents is that staff without formal communication qualifications tends not to value communication functions in their organisations as highly as those who do have such qualifications (Naudé, 2001:266).

Owing to a lack of communication training, many NPOs' communication practitioners in NPOs practise the public information model; "*Just getting the word out*" (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15; Naudé, 2001:265). All communication efforts are centred on communicating to stakeholders what the organisation does for its beneficiaries. Most NPOs believe that if their stakeholders and the public know what the organisation is and what it does, donors and the public will donate money and volunteer at the organisation (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15; Naudé, 2001:265). This practice comes down to advocacy, which is unsuccessful in that many think that the case the advocate is making is so self-evidently true that he or she must just convey it clearly to the audience. When advocacy fails, the 'advocates' mostly blame their audiences without considering the views of their audiences (Nimon, 2002:120–21). This implies that there is little or no chance of engaging in two-way symmetrical communication with stakeholders, in order to learn about stakeholders' needs and build relationships with stakeholders.

The communication practitioner's strategic role is therefore the interpretation and selection of information presented to management and the formulating of suggestions concerning communication methods for addressing organisational risks and problems (Steyn & Puth, 2000:60–61; White & Dozier, 1992:105). Environmental scanning is particularly important when the organisation's environment is unstable and changing. Dozier (1992:342) argues that as communication practitioners assist their organisation to adapt to their environment, they ought to participate in the strategic decision-making process. This argument leads to Steyn's (1999:24) further differentiation between the roles of manager and strategist, which is discussed in the next section.

4.2.1   Role of the strategist

With reference to the above distinction between the manager and technician roles of communication practitioners, Steyn (1999:24) furthermore distinguishes between the traditional manager's role and that of the strategist. The strategist has a mirror function, which entails monitoring development and changes in the environment, as well as anticipating the consequences of such developments and changes for the organisation's strategies and policies. This strategic function allows the communication practitioner to interpret information from the environment and use it as strategic management

information (Steyn, 2000:19). The manager, who on the other hand, fulfils a window function, is responsible for the preparation and execution of communication strategies and policies into messages that clearly portray all facets of the organisation (Steyn, 2000:19). In contrast to this, the communication technician is responsible for the physical implementation of communication plans and therefore also fulfils a window function (Steyn, 2000:19, 21). Based on her research, Steyn and Puth (2000) developed a model for the strategic management of communication in organisations as part of a longitudinal action research project conducted at the University of Pretoria. Although Steyn and Puth's (2000) model has been applied by students and other project participants in NPOs, government institutions and small-to-medium sized companies in South Africa, the operational reality of organisations' communication practices have not been measured against the model (Steyn & Nunes, 2001; Steyn & Green, 2001; Steyn, 2000:13; Steyn, 2002:19; Steyn, 2007:163; Steyn, 2008). Steyn and Puth (2000:20-21) therefore have empirically verified the above differentiation in the traditional communication manager's role in the South African context (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19, 21).

Dozier (1992:341) argues that participation in decision-making functions, the use of research such as environmental scanning, and evaluation should be a separate management role. Wright (1995:186) furthermore distinguishes between the communication executive and the communication manager. He emphasises that the executive communication practitioner forms part of the dominant coalition, functions in a strategic capacity, and has management power. In an American study, Toth *et al.* (1998:158) identify a third role in addition to those of manager and technician, that of the *agency profile*. The agency profile*s* tasks also include strategic elements. This role corresponds mainly with Broom's expert prescriber, and no technical functions are performed by the agency profile. Furthermore, Moss *et al.* (2000:301) assert that there should be a division between managers with higher-order strategic functions and managers who performs lower-order, routine management functions. Van Ruler (2000:412) identifies four levels of communication management, where the strategic *communication policy manager* (high level) lies at Level D. This is a person who is a communication specialist with general responsibility for communication policy and management, and who gives advice at a strategic level.

Steyn (1999:27) therefore explains that the *strategist* is responsible for the identification of the organisation's strategic stakeholders, *proactive* environmental monitoring for detecting or predicting changes, and the identification of issues that might influence the attitudes of internal and external stakeholders. This information is then presented to strategic decision makers (of which the *strategist* is a part), in order to compile the organisation's enterprise strategy (see Section 4.3.3).

According to Steyn and Puth (2000:20), the *communication manager* is responsible for developing a communication strategy, policy, and plans based on the organisation's enterprise strategy. According to Wright (1995:187), the communication manager reports to the *communication executive*, which he terms the communication strategist. The communication manager also corresponds with Van Ruler's (2000:412) Level C, which is a *senior communication officer* (middle level) whose responsibilities are strategic policy areas, such as communication advice, project management, and specialist staff duties.

Steyn's (2000:20) c*ommunication technician*'s responsibility is then to execute the communication plans. Van Ruler (2000:412) agrees with this, as she identifies Level B, which is a *communication officer* (low level) who is an expert at the executive and practical level and who coordinates production and implementation. The Level B communication officer is assisted by Level A, which is a *communication assistant* (assistant level) who provides assistance to others and carries out general implementation tasks.

It is clear from Steyn's (2000) redefinition of roles that communication practitioners fulfilling a strategic role ease the application of two-way symmetrical communication. The gathering of information about the organisation's environment and its stakeholders and the compilation of an organisational strategy according to this information promote reciprocal communication between the organisation and its stakeholders, which in turn promotes mutual understanding. Concerning this, Murray and White (2005:348–358) state that a communication practitioner who understands the complex organisational context, stakeholder requirements, and business model contributes towards guarding organisational reputation, by assisting management in understanding the impact of organisational decisions on stakeholders. A strategic management role and the application of two-way symmetrical communication thus contribute towards excellent communication management.

In order to ensure a connection between communication theory as discussed so far and its role in strategic management, it is necessary to discuss strategic management briefly and to highlight the role of the communication function in each facet.

4.3 Strategy and communication management

4.3.1 *Strategy*

According to White (2004:5–7), organisational strategy[1] combines the articulation of goals and the organisation of activities to achieve those goals. He states that strategy and a strategic orientation consider the future, aim for balance between stability and flexibility, ask new questions rather than answer old ones, are holistic and integrative, are complex, are rooted in historical experiences, and are interactive with the strategies of all other stakeholders. According to Steyn and Puth (2000:29–30), *organisational* strategy provides direction, movement, purpose, and a pattern of actions to an organisation. It furthermore ensures a proactive capability to adapt to environmental change, determines success in the achievement of an organisation's goals and objectives, and provides a framework for effective tactics and operations, in order to carry out the strategy.

Ehlers and Lazenby (2004:2–3) define strategy as

> "*the process whereby all the organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies <u>which are aligned with the environment</u>, in order to achieve the long-term objectives of the organisation and therefore gain a competitive advantage through <u>adding value for the stakeholders</u>*" (own emphasis).

One of the communication function's most important roles is environmental scanning, which aids the organisation in aligning its strategies with its environment. By adding value for stakeholders, focus falls on longer-term wealth maximisation, which includes social responsibility, media relations, community services and government relations.

In order to understand Steyn's distinction between the roles of the communication strategist, manager, and technician fully, it is necessary to consider the different levels of strategy formulation and the process of strategic management. The role of communication management at each level and in the process of strategic management is highlighted, thereby illuminating the important role of the communication strategist.

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1   *For a historical overview of the development of strategic management, see White (2004:8–13).*

4.3.2 *Levels of strategy formulation*

The levels of strategy refer to the content or focus of strategies, as strategic management takes place at several levels in every organisation (Digman, 1986:27). Although many authors on strategic management identify four levels of strategy formulation, namely the corporate, business, functional, and operational levels, Steyn (2002:8–11; 2007:151–156) identifies five levels: the enterprise, corporate, business-unit, functional, and operational strategies.

The *enterprise strategy* is not stated explicitly or formally, but it exists in all organisations (Digman, 1986:28) and is concerned with the achievement of *non-financial* goals. This strategy, also termed the societal-role strategy, is concerned with the organisation's mission, purpose, and role in society (Digman, 1986:28). The enterprise strategy influences the organisation's relationship with its environment, particularly stakeholders who have an interest in what the organisation does and how it conducts its business (Digman, 1986:28). According to Steyn (2002:9), the enterprise strategy must address questions such as "*how is the organisation perceived by its stakeholders*" and "*what are stakeholder values and expectations*". Pearce and Robinson (1999:5) add that non-financial goals include enhancing the organisation's image and fulfilling its social responsibilities. By addressing these questions, the organisation links strategy and ethics, and thus provides the reasons for the actions it takes. Strategies at the enterprise level should then be mostly stakeholder orientated (Steyn & Puth, 2000:42). Extending this view, Steyn (2007:151) adds that, regarding the triple bottom line concept[2], the focus of the enterprise strategy is on people and planet rather than profit. The communication *strategist* therefore makes an invaluable contribution at the enterprise strategy level, through environmental scanning (Steyn, 2007:155). For NPOs the development of an enterprise strategy is a legal requirement because the NPO has to be organised around a societal mission, whether it is educational, religious, or charitable (Steyn, 2002:9).

The *corporate strategy* tends to be *financially* orientated (Digman, 1986:30) and includes defining the set of businesses the organisation should compete in and the manner in which they should be integrated (Digman, 1986:28). A single-business organisation's corporate strategy is to choose to compete in only one business, rather than several (Digman, 1986:28–29). The CEO and/or the board of directors make corporate-level decisions, and they may receive input from managers at other levels (Steyn, 2002:9). At corporate level, managers attempt to exploit their organisation's distinctive competencies, by developing a portfolio approach to the management of all the organisation's businesses and formulating long-term plans for each business (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:7). According to Steyn (2007:155), communication management's role at this level is mainly supportive when it provides assistance with the production of the annual report, arranging shareholder meetings and so on.

At *business-unit level*, managers must translate the corporate level strategy into concrete objectives and strategies for each business division, in order to determine how the division will compete in the selected product-market arena (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:7). The general manager of a business-unit is responsible for developing the business-unit strategy. This strategy is usually marketing oriented (Digman, 1986:30) and focuses on the task, the macro-environment, and the support of the organisation's financial goals and objectives (Steyn, 2002:10). Communication management has a supportive role at business-unit level when they are, for instance, requested to develop and imple-

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2   *John Elkington was the originator of the term "triple bottom line" in 1994. He says that companies and organisations create or destroy value in multiple dimensions, such as economic (profit), social (people) and environmental (planet) dimensions. The concept of the "triple bottom line" implies that a company or organisation has a responsibility to all stakeholders rather than only shareholders (Elkington, 2006:523-524).*

ment communication plans to support business-level strategies (Steyn, 2007:155).

The *functional level strategy* determines what should be done in each functional area. Its main responsibility is to implement the organisation's enterprise, corporate, and business-unit level strategies, and attention is focused on "doing things right" (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:7; Steyn, 2002:10). At functional level, the communication *manager*, with input from the *strategist*, develops deliberate and emergent communication strategies for solving organisational or communication problems, in order to achieve organisational goals and to build relationships with non-financial stakeholders (Steyn, 2007:156).

At the *operational level*, strategies are translated into actions, by developing annual objectives and short-term strategies. Operational strategies are needed to manage line areas in a cost-effective manner. At both functional and operational level, the most important facet is to maximise the productivity of the organisation's resources (Digman, 1986:29–30). At operational level, communication *technicians* translate functional strategies into action, by developing communication programmes, campaigns, and relevant materials.

4.3.3   Process of strategic management

The process of strategic management refers to the phases in which strategies are formulated and/or implemented: environmental analysis, strategic thinking, strategic planning, operational/tactical planning, and control.

Environmental analysis consists of four analytical stages: scanning to detect warning signals, monitoring to gather and interpret data on trends to discern patterns; forecasting future directions of changes; and assessing current and future changes for organisational implications (Fahey & Narayanan, 1986, as cited by Steyn, 2007:149). The role of the communication *strategist* in this phase is to scan and monitor the stakeholder and societal environment, interpret this strategic information, assess its implications for the organisation, and incorporate this information into the organisational strategy formulation process (Steyn, 2007:149).

The process of s*trategic thinking* entails the establishment of the organisation's vision, which includes defining its objectives and the manner in which it will achieve its objectives in a complex and uncertain environment (White, 2004:61). Strategic thinking occurs in two different forms, namely vertical (rational) thinking about convergent problems (those with one solution) and lateral (intuitive) thinking about divergent problems (those with a number of possible solutions). Strategy demands both creativity (lateral thinking) and rationality (vertical thinking) (White, 2004:5). The outcome of strategic thinking is decisions concerning the determination of strategy; that is, what the organisation should look like in the future and what it wants to achieve (Steyn, 2007:149). The communication *strategist* in this phase interprets and synthesises information about stakeholders and societal issues, and informs top management about the consequences thereof for organisational strategy and policies and the consequences of organisational behaviour on stakeholders and/or society (Steyn, 2007:149). This information is utilised in formulating enterprise and other organisational strategies.

The *strategist* also provides the communication *manager* with strategic information, who in turn formulates the deliberate and emergent communication strategies, based on the enterprise strategy, through the strategic thinking process. The deliberate strategy refers to the process of identifying strategic goals and positions that need to be communicated and advising organisational leaders ac-

cordingly, while emergent strategy refers to the communication strategy developed within the deliberate strategy to address emerging societal and stakeholder issues (Steyn, 2007:149). Emergent strategies develop because strategy making is not a rational, linear, and sequential process, but an interactive process of learning and discovery (White, 2004:589–591).

During *strategic planning*, strategic decisions are put into practice and a strategic, long-range plan is created for each division or section (Digman, 1986:54). In other words, the organisational strategy is translated into formal and coherent written plans and action needed to realise the plans (White, 2004:61). Strategic plans have four elements: they identify specific functional tactics and actions, set a clear time frame for the beginning and completion of actions, identify who is responsible for each action, and set short-term objectives (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:288–289). Once the deliberate communication strategy has been formulated with input from the communication *strategist*, the communication *manager* formulates the strategic communication plan that breaks the deliberate strategy down into operational sub-strategies and plans. The communication plan thus specifies *how* to implement the communication strategy. Emergent strategies and plans are executed within the existing strategic communication plan (Steyn, 2007:149–150).

Operational or action plans make long-term strategies a reality. Operational plans provide short-term objectives, specific guidance for what is to be done, and clear actions needed to translate strategic vision into action (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:289). Effective operational plans consist of four elements: they identify *specific* functional tactics and actions, set a *clear time frame* for the completion of actions, clearly identify who is *responsible* and *accountable* for each action, and identify *short-term objectives* for each action as the results that the action generates (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:289). Communication *technicians* set objectives for communication plans, based on the deliberate and emergent goals identified in the communication strategy phase. The *technicians* decide on the implementation strategy, select communication activities, and implement them (Steyn, 2007:150).

Strategic control is about tracking a strategy as it is being implemented, detecting problems or changes in its underlying premises, and making necessary adjustments to it (Pearce and Robinson, 2005:366), in order to align it better with its environment, in order to improve the likelihood of successful strategy implementation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004:232). Strategic control is a continuous process of improvement that allows organisations to respond proactively and timeously to changes or new developments (Pearce & Robinson, 2005:366). The communication *manager* evaluates communication plans, and the *strategist* in turn provides top management with evaluation information (Steyn, 2007:150), in order to adjust the enterprise and/or other corporate strategies if necessary.

Building on the above theory on strategic management, several researchers have developed models for strategic communication management. In the following section an overview of three of these models is provided, which leads to a discussion of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model.

4.4   Models for strategic communication management

In order to provide a background to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, three models that were also developed to assist the communication function in *strategically* managing organisational communication are discussed, namely Grunig and Repper's (1992) model, Moss and Warnaby's (1997) model, and the model described by Likely (2003).

- Grunig and Repper's (1992:122–129) model has three stages. During the stakeholder stage, stra-

tegic stakeholders are identified through environmental scanning, after which communication is used to develop stable, long-term relationships with them. The public stage consists of the identification and segmentation of stakeholders who find organsational consequences problematic and involving them in the decision-making process. During the issue stage, issues are managed and correct media usage is viewed as important (Grunig & Repper, 1992:122–129).

Moss and Warnaby (1997:61–64) and Moss *et al.* (2000:283–284) criticise the model for failing to consider other perspectives in strategy-making and only concentrating on a linear approach. Grunig and Repper's (1992) model was subsequently improved by emphasising the environmental scanning role of the strategic communication practitioner, and thus exposing management to all relevant stakeholders and publics (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:143–147). According to this model, it is also important to manage communication on a functional level strategically, based on formative research (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:146–147).

- Moss and Warnaby's (1997:64–69) model of strategy and strategic management of communication linked the development of a communication strategy to the corporate and business/competitive strategies, by stating "*that public relations strategies should be viewed in the context of the corporate and business strategies from which they derive their essential purpose and to whose success they will ultimately contribute*" (Moss & Warnaby, 1997:67). In this model, the task of communication at corporate level is to diagnose the environment through environmental scanning and to design communication strategies for building relationships with strategic stakeholders (Moss & Warnaby, 1997:65). At business or competitive level, communication assists organisations to achieve competitive advantage through programmes enhancing the organisation's reputation and/or products. Communication management's boundary-spanning role is important here for advising management on the potential impact of strategies on stakeholders (Moss & Warnaby, 1997:65–66).

The model differs most significantly from Grunig and Repper's (1992) model in that it emphasises the strategic role that the communication function plays in compiling a corporate strategy and the communication strategy is based on adaptive and interpretive approaches instead of a linear approach (Moss & Warnaby, 1997:65).

Steyn (2002:19) criticises Moss and Warnaby's (1997) model for excluding a institutional/enterprise strategy as a higher level strategy, where non-financial goals are achieved, and for failing to link the communication function to the institutional/enterprise strategy level.

- Likely (2003:18–22) describes the strategic role of communication based on a generic model of management. There are seven stages in the generic model, namely organisational identity, landscape context, organisational story, formulation of intended strategy, strategy execution, formation of emergent strategy, and actual realised strategy. The communication function has a strategic role in each of the seven stages. Although there are differences, the seven stages broadly correspond with Steyn and Puth's model (2000). In particular, there are similarities to Steyn's (2006:28) conceptualisation of deliberate and emergent communication strategy.

Taking the above research into consideration, Steyn and Puth (2000) developed a model for strategic communication that seeks to ensure excellent communication management. The strategist, manager, and technician have separate functions, which is depicted by different levels in the model.

4.5   Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management

The focus of Steyn and Puth's model (2000) is on the communication function's participation in organisational enterprise strategy formulation, as well as strategic communication management's contribution to organisational effectiveness by building strong relationships with strategic stakeholders.

Steyn and Puth (2000:52-53) view a *communication* strategy as a framework for the strategic communication plan and the operational communication programmes. They emphasise that to create synergy the communication strategy must reflect the organisation's enterprise and corporate strategies. The communication strategy serves as a link in the alignment of communication goals with organisational goals, and is as such contributing towards organisational effectiveness (Grunig & Grunig, 2000:308–309; Steyn, 2000:4, 12; Steyn, 2002:19).

Supporting the development of a communication strategy, Grunig and Repper (1992:120) and Grunig (2001:9) state that excellent communication departments participate in the making of strategic organisational decisions; they identify strategic stakeholders and then develop strategic communication plans to communicate with them. Strategic communication management describes how communication should be managed i*n* order to contribute most to the success of the organisation (Grunig & Repper, 1992:120).

The purpose of a communication strategy is the identification of, management of, and communication with strategic stakeholders, in order to contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. The communication strategy provides an organisation with a stakeholder profile of each specific stakeholder, in order to determine which stakeholders have high priority (Steyn, 2000:12). In this way, communication practitioners can proactively manage organisational risks and stakeholders' issues, and strive towards cooperation and mutually beneficial relationships (Steyn, 2000:4). Communication with stakeholders has to take place before management decisions are made that might have consequences for stakeholders (Grunig, 2001:12), as the likelihood of resolving a conflict is slim following a crisis (Grunig, 2001:12–13). The development and implementation of a communication strategy thus leads to the *implementation of two-way symmetrical communication* that is characterised by the establishment of strong relationships, built on mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:22).

It is important to note that Steyn and Puth's (2000) communication strategy is not a linear process. Rather, it can be viewed as an "adaptive" strategy (adapting to trends, events, and stakeholders) and an "interpretive" strategy (focusing on relationships, symbolic actions, and communication, with emphasis on stakeholder attitudes). This approach therefore focuses on emergent rather than deliberate strategy formulation. Communication goals are not defined at the beginning of the strategy but emerge through a process of key issue identification and the implications of key issues for strategic stakeholders. Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to communication strategy is therefore to evolve and develope as the strategy proceeds, continuously adapting to stakeholder needs (Steyn, 2002:22). Their model is graphically represented in Figure 4.1 (Steyn & Puth, 2000).

FIGURE 4.1: Steyn & Puth's (2000) model

STRATEGIC LEVEL: Role of the *communication strategist* in developing the enterprise strategy

ANALYSE THE ORGANISATION'S/INSTITUTION'S INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
Analyse organisational profile/vision/mission/culture/values/policies
Analyse enterprise/corporate/business unit/functional strategies and internal stakeholder concerns

↑↓

SCAN AND ANALYSE THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING SOCIETAL VALUES, NORMS, AND EXPECTATIONS)
↓
Identify and prioritise strategic external stakeholders
Determine the consequences of their behaviour/expectations/concerns for the organisation
↑↓
Identify and prioritise key strategic, social, political, and societal issues
Determine their consequences/reputation risks for the organisation
↑↓
Identify the publics and activists that emerge around key issues
Determine the consequences/reputation risks for the organisation
↓
FEED THIS SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO THE *ENTERPRISE STRATEGY* FORMULATED AT THE TOP MANAGEMENT/BOARD LEVEL

↑↓

FUNCTIONAL LEVEL: Role of the *communication manager* in developing the communication strategy

DESCRIBE, DIFFERENTIATE, AND PRIORITISE KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ENTERPRISE STRATEGY, AS WELL AS AD HOC ISSUES
↓
Identify the implications of each issue for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups, and society at large
↓
Formulate the key communication themes for each issue (decide *what* must be *communicated in order* to solve the problem/capitalise on the opportunity)
↑↓
Set communication goals, based on the implications of the issues/opportunities (decide *what* must be *achieved with the communication)*
Set communication goals in support of other organisational strategies (functional, business-unit, corporate)
Integrate communication goals of all the strategies

↑↓

CONDUCT AN OVERALL COMMUNICATION MEDIA ANALYSIS (determine which kinds of media are best suited to the organisation)	DEVELOP COMMUNICATION POLICY (determine *who* is allowed to communicate *what* to *whom)*

↑↓

DEVELOP STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR ALL DIVISIONS (for example, employee/media/community/investor/customer relations).

↑↓

IMPLEMENTATION/OPERATIONAL LEVEL: Role of the *communication technician* in developing the implementation strategy

Develop and implement communication programmes/campaigns/plans

(Source: Adapted from Steyn & Puth (2000:63); Steyn (2007:164).)

4.5.1 Steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model

The first part of the model is executed at strategic level, which demonstrates the role of the communication *strategist* in developing enterprise strategy. In the second part of the model, the communication *manager* develops the communication strategy and policies, and conducts a communication channel analysis. During the final stage of the model, the communication *technician* develops and implements communication implementation strategies.

4.5.1.1 The communication function's contribution to enterprise strategy formulation: the role of the communication strategist

4.5.1.1.1   Analysis of the organisation's internal environment

ANALYSE THE ORGANISATION'S/INSTITUTION'S INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
Analyse organisational profile/vision/mission/culture/values/policies
Analyse enterprise/corporate/business unit/functional strategies and internal stakeholder concerns

During this step, the communication strategist firstly studies the organisation's micro-environment (internal environment), which includes its vision, mission, culture, values, and policies to create a clear profile of the organisation. Secondly, the communication strategist studies the existing enterprise, corporate, business unit, and functional strategies and incorporates them into the organisation's profile. Compiling an organisational profile would enable the communication strategist to align the communication strategy with the organisation's vision and mission, and thereby contribute to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives (Steyn & Puth, 2000:54–57). The communication strategy is therefore developed within the context of the organisation's vision, mission, corporate culture, policies, and strategies that form the internal environment (Steyn, 2002:22).

The communication strategist also asks employees, who form the internal stakeholders, for input and views to be included in the organisational profile, as it is the employees who are responsible for translating strategies into actions. This is in line with a symmetrical organisational worldview, which focuses on equity, autonomy, innovation, decentralisation of management, and responsibility (see Section 3.4.2). Gregory (2008:20) furthermore notes that the communication function is seen as invaluable in assisting CEOs in aligning and inspiring employees to support the organisation's goals. This is especially important in light of MacMillan *et al.* (2005:809) and Brennan and Barkensjo's (1999:333) research findings that donors often judge the NPO on the basis of the kind of contact they have with the NPOs' employees. Communication by employees, which is aligned to the organisation's vision, mission and strategies had a positive effect on building trust and retaining donors.

4.5.1.1.2   *Identification of strategic stakeholders and publics*

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SCAN AND ANALYSE THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
(INCLUDING SOCIETAL VALUES, NORMS, AND EXPECTATIONS)

↓

Identify and prioritise strategic external stakeholders

Determine the consequences of their behaviour/expectations/concerns for the organisation

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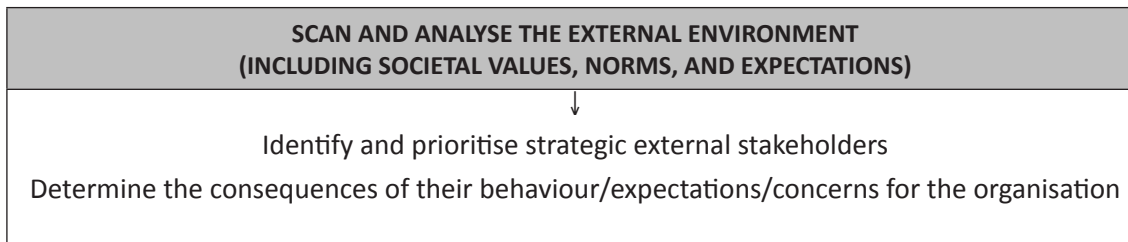
During this stage, the communication strategist uses research to gather information on the organisation's task and macro-environment. The task environment refers, amongst others, to the organisation's customers, suppliers, and competitors, while the macro environment refers to issues such as legislation, pressure groups, and technological trends (Steyn & Puth, 2000:169).

The overall strategic management of an organisation is inseparable from the strategic management of relationships, which is the function of the communication department (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64). It is therefore important that strategic stakeholders be identified (Grunig & Repper, 1992:126) and that research about them be utilised by management to arrive at detailed profiles of the organisation's stakeholders and publics. Various communication research methods can be used for profiling purposes (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64):

*   a stakeholder map (organisational linkages, public relations audit);
*   identification of organisational consequences for stakeholders or publics (social audit);
*   identification of stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, or concerns (public relations audit);
*   identification of stakeholder familiarity with the organisation (corporate image studies); and
*   identification of key stakeholder issues (relating to both organisation and communication).

By using some, or all, of the above research methods, a clear picture of an organisation's stakeholders can be formed. This information can be fed into the enterprise strategy, from which the communication strategy will be derived.

When all stakeholders are identified, it is necessary to prioritise them according to their impact or potential impact on the organisation or the extent to which the organisation might affect them. By using two-way symmetrical communication, the communication strategist 'listens', by creating dialogue, to the viewpoints, expectations, concerns, and needs of the organisation's stakeholders (see Sections 3.3 and 3.3.1). Gregory (2008:20–21) notes that CEOs view this strategic role, where the communication strategist ensures that organisational decision-makers are aware of stakeholder views and sensitivities, as "*mission critical*". CEOs furthermore need the communication strategist for a reliable early warning and intelligence system to enable them to make good decisions.

By feeding information about stakeholders' views, needs, and expectations into enterprise strategy formulation, the communication strategist assists the organisation in adapting to its environment through considering its stakeholders (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:97). Research has shown that when organisations select goals that are valued both by management and by strategic stakeholders inside and outside the organisation (see Section 4.5.1.1.1), organisations are able to achieve these goals more easily (Hon & Grunig, 1999:8). By choosing mutually beneficial goals, organisations minimise conflict and stakeholders efforts to interfere with organisational decisions, and maximise support from stakeholders (Hon & Grunig, 1999:8). Through dialogue, strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders can be built. Organisations need strong stakeholder relationships to build support and to manage conflict whenever it arises (see Section 3.5) (Grunig & Repper, 1992:127).

Although NPOs realise that communication with stakeholders is essential for the existence of their organisations, they do not always know who exactly their stakeholders are. Yet, identifying stakeholders and addressing their specific communication needs is at the core of strategic communication management practice (Dyer *et al.*, 2002:15; Naudé, 2001:265), as has been discussed in this section. Communication management in NPOs is very important because stakeholders represent a source of uncertainty for NPOs, which can influence their work positively or negatively. NPOs in particular require resources and legitimacy from their stakeholders, and this is not necessarily predictable and/or controllable (Balser & McClusky, 2005:296). Strong relationships with donors result in donors continuing to contribute funds and encouraging others to contribute to the NPO's cause as well (O'Neil, 2007:101). Two-way communication, where the communication strategist *listens* to donors to accommodate their needs, motivations, and opinions about the NPO into the organisation's enterprise strategy increases donor loyalty (MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:809). Identifying and knowing organisation stakeholders are vital to developing a strategically targeted communication strategy that can be the difference between the success and failure of the NPO (Selnick, 2005:20).

4.5.1.1.3   *Identification and prioritisation of key strategic risks or issues*

SCAN AND ANALYSE THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING SOCIETAL VALUES, NORMS, AND EXPECTATIONS)
↓
Identify and prioritise strategic external stakeholders
Determine the consequences of their behaviour/expectations/concerns for the organisation
↑↓
Identify and prioritise key strategic, social, political, and societal issues
Determine their consequences/reputation risks for the organisation

As part of the dominant coalition, it is the task of the communication strategist to conduct environmental analysis and risks or issue tracking and to incorporate the information obtained into organisational decision-making and strategy formulation (Steyn & Puth, 2000:68). The communication strategist must identify key strategic risks or issues and demonstrate in which ways communication can provide solutions to these problems (Steyn & Puth, 2000:69).

The research methods used to identify organisational issues are, according to Steyn and Puth (2000:69):
- environmental scanning to identify key strategic risks/issues in the external and internal environment;
- identification of consequences for the organisation (SWOT analysis); and
- prioritising the organisation's key strategic issues.

It is also important that the communication strategist determine whether a problem can be solved by communication alone or in conjunction with other measures. This will prevent the communication function getting the blame for failure when communication could not solve the problem at hand in the first place. It is therefore necessary that the types of strategic issues be clearly differentiated (Steyn & Puth, 2000:67–68):
- Organisational issue Type 1:
  ‣ Communication is not the cause of the problem, but it can provide a solution (for example, organisational change, such as transformation or mergers).
- Organisational issue Type 2:

- ‣ Communication is not the cause of the problem and cannot provide a solution, but it can explain the issue (for example, budget cuts or affirmative action).
- Organisational communication issues:
  - ‣ Too little or no communication with external stakeholders is the problem (for example, with the media in the case of negative publicity or with investors in the case of a low share price).
- Management communication issues:
  - ‣ Too little or no internal communication between managers and employees is the cause of the problem (for example, not telling employees about the organisation's vision or staff reductions).
- Tactical communication issues:
  - ‣ Sent messages are not reaching the target groups (for example, e-mails to factory workers; inappropriate communication channels, such as television to reach a rural population; or difficult or technical language used to reach people communicating in their third or fourth language).

In the present-day, NPOs must be managed in almost a similar manner as for-profit organisations. Amongst others, donors now demand value for their money and want proof that NPOs are fiscally responsible with their money, and board members require measurable outcomes that must be supported through research. Bowers (2000:13) clearly emphasises that as NPOs get their funds from corporations, government, and foundations, they must be able to sit "*at the table with the decision-makers", and if "you haven't done your homework, know what they want or communicate in their fashion, you won't get what you need*" (funds). Environmental scanning and research on stakeholders and issues are very important factors contributing to effective NPO management. Clear communication about the vision, mission, goals, and activities of the NPO must be aimed at board members, management, employees, volunteers, and even more importantly, external stakeholders, such as donors and activist groups (Bowers, 2000:11). Strategic communication thus plays an important role in the effective management of NPOs.

The Internet is a very useful source of information for NPOs when used for research and environmental scanning. The Internet can be used to scan the external environment constantly, to subscribe to news groups, participate through social media, and to read publications to keep informed of emerging issues (Li, 2001:14).

4.5.1.1.4   *Identification of the implications of strategic issues for stakeholders*

SCAN AND ANALYSE THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING SOCIETAL VALUES, NORMS, AND EXPECTATIONS)
↓
Identify and prioritise strategic external stakeholders
Determine the consequences of their behaviour/expectations/concerns for the organisation
↑↓
Identify and prioritise key strategic, social, political, and societal issues
Determine their consequences/reputation risks for the organisation
↑↓
Identify the publics and activists that emerge around key issues
Determine the consequences/reputation risks for the organisation
↓

By applying the research methods, environmental scanning, and issue tracking, the publics or activists emerging around key strategic risks or issues can be identified (Steyn & Puth, 2000:67). Once the publics or activists have been identified, the consequences the organisation's key strategic issues have for them can be determined, as well as the reputation risks involved for the organisation regarding these risks or issues and the possible actions of the publics and activists. The communication strategist therefore has to know the business and/or strategic risk or issues the organisation faces, and how the stakeholders are feeling about these risks or issues and organisational strategies, as well as their consequences for them. This knowledge comes from research and two-way communication with strategic stakeholders. These consequences have to be addressed in communication and relationship building with strategic stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:69–70). Sometimes more than mere communication would be necessary to address the consequences, for example taking certain actions or abandoning certain actions. By taking the viewpoints of strategic stakeholders into account, stakeholders feel part of organisational decision-making processes, and as a result, strong relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders develop. Entering into dialogue with strategic stakeholders builds trust, control mutuality, commitment, and relationship satisfaction, which are the outcomes of effective relationship building (see Sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3).

It is important to note that the steps falling under the strategic process of scanning and analysing the internal and external environment do not always follow on each other as depicted in the model. Steyn and Puth (2000:76) state that although the steps in the process of developing a communication strategy are indicated in a linear fashion, it does not necessarily always happen in this sequence in practice. The practitioner decides, according to the specific circumstances, what is to be done at a specific point in time (Steyn & Puth, 2000:76). An example would be that the strategist might begin the research and environmental scanning process by identifying the issues in the organisation's social, political, and societal environments. Thereafter the organisation's strategic stakeholders can be identified, and when the communication strategist engages in dialogue with stakeholders, to discern their viewpoints on the identified issues, more issues or organisational risks, as well as publics and activists emerging around these issues, might be uncovered.

When all the information about the internal and external environment, strategic stakeholders, strategic risks and issues, and the consequences of these risks and issues for the organisation and its stakeholders are gathered, the communication strategist feeds this intelligence into the enterprise

strategy formulation process, from which all other organisational strategies are derived. It is important though to keep in mind that environmental scanning is a continuous process as new issues develop continuously in the organisational environment. By using research, the communication function contributes to strategy formulation at the highest organisational level, and as such, is a key role player in strategic organisational management. The theory on the tasks of the communication strategist leads to the following specific theoretical statement.

4.5.1.2 Specific Theoretical Statement 7

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication strategist* is responsible for the analysis of the NPO's internal and external environment, to manage all organisational stakeholders and issues effectively (steps 1 and 2 of the model). This strategic function can be fulfilled by:
- aligning both internal and external communication with the NPO's mission, vision, and goal statements;
- using research/environmental scanning to:
  ‣ identify and prioritise all organisational stakeholders, publics, and activists;
  ‣ identify and prioritise social, political, and societal risks[3]; and
  ‣ determine the consequences and/or reputation risks of stakeholders, publics, activists, and issues for the organisation; and
- using the above strategic information in the implementation of the *enterprise strategy*.

4.5.1.3 Developing communication strategy: the role of the communication manager

The communication *manager*, with input from the strategist, at functional strategy level develops the organisation's communication strategy.

4.5.1.3.1 Identification of the implications of strategic issues for stakeholders

DESCRIBE, DIFFERENTIATE, AND PRIORITISE KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ENTERPRISE STRATEGY, AS WELL AS AD HOC ISSUES
↓
Identify the implications of each issue for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups, and society at large
↓
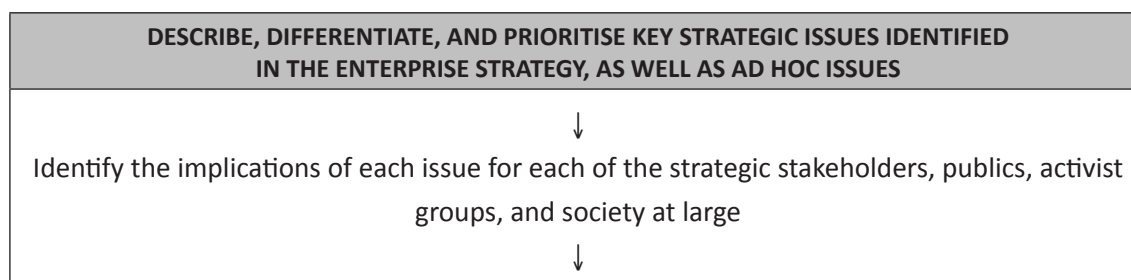
The first step in developing the communication strategy is for the communication manager to identify the *implications* that strategic organisational risks or issues have, or will have, for strategic stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:69–70). With assistance from the communication strategist, who enters into dialogue and relationship building with all strategic stakeholders, the communication manager

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3   *Although Steyn and Puth (2000) do not differentiate between the terms "risks" and "issues" in their model, in this study "risks" will refer to both organisational and reputation risks as identified by the organisation. "Issues" refer to aspects or matters that directly concern stakeholders about the organisation, and as such are identified by stakeholders themselves. In other words, issues refer to those problems/challenges that impact most on stakeholders, and which need to be addressed by organisations in order to maintain strong relationships with stakeholders. Many times an organisation's stakeholders' issues, will also be the organisation's risks, as in the case of the participating NPOs, but it might also happen that an organisation's risks might not be their stakeholders' issues.*

therefore has to identify and understand the business or strategic risks or issues the organisation faces, and then determine its implications for strategic stakeholders. The organisation always has to be open with stakeholders about the implications of organisational behaviour and decisions for them, and as such, address these implications by entering into dialogue with stakeholders. Continuing dialogue contributes to mutual understanding between the organisation and its stakeholders, and as such, negative implications for both the organisation and its stakeholders can be minimised.

4.5.1.3.2 *Decide on the communication strategy*

DESCRIBE, DIFFERENTIATE, AND PRIORITISE KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ENTERPRISE STRATEGY, AS WELL AS AD HOC ISSUES
↓
Identify the implications of each issue for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups, and society at large
↓
Formulate the key communication themes for each issue
(decide what must be communicated in order to solve the problem or capitalise on the opportunity)
↑↓

A communication strategy indicates the direction an organisation needs to take regarding its communication with stakeholders. The communication strategy must support the enterprise and business strategy of the organisation, and therefore it is also a long-term strategy. The purpose of the communication strategy is firstly to determine *what* (communication themes) should be communicated to stakeholders, to build a relationship or to solve a problem. The second purpose is to *capitalise* on opportunities presented by an issue—for example, if the organisation has complied with the Employment Equity Act (55/1998) this information can be communicated to its stakeholders and the wider public (see Section 3.5) (Steyn & Puth, 2000:70).

With reference to the NPO sector, Polonsky and Sargeant (2007:462) point out that NPOs usually lose up to 50 per cent of donors after their first or second donation. They propose that communication practitioners contribute towards donor satisfaction by segmenting donors and understanding their different needs and motives. By doing so, the communication function can target specific, individual communication messages and relationship-building activities that appeal to each unique donor or donor group (Polonsky & Sargeant, 2007:461).

Proceeding from the above, Lauer (1993:36–37) and Bowers (2000:13) state that without a specific communication strategy, plan, and policy, NPOs' messages might not be getting through to the right people. It is ineffective to release more information into an already information-saturated environment, and this might contribute to misunderstanding concerning the NPO's activities. Bowers (2000:13) observes that stakeholders "*don't want to know about your issues and needs. They want to know how you are going to meet their needs*". In a long-term communication strategy, messages become more focused and simplified, reflecting the 'heart' of the organisation, and they are sent to selected stakeholders.

4.5.1.3.3   *Setting of communication goals*

DESCRIBE, DIFFERENTIATE, AND PRIORITISE KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ENTERPRISE STRATEGY, AS WELL AS AD HOC ISSUES
↓
Identify the implications of each issue for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups, and society at large
↓
Formulate the key communication themes for each issue
(decide what must be communicated in order to solve the problem/capitalise on the opportunity)
↑↓
Set communication goals, based on the implications of the issues/opportunities
(decide what must be achieved with the communication)
Set communication goals in support of other organisational strategies
(functional, business-unit, corporate)
Integrate communication goals of all the strategies

Communication goals are developed to indicate what the organisation wants to achieve with its communication. The goals are based on the communication strategy, which identifies what should be communicated about. Goals are neither specific nor measurable. Goal setting links the communication strategy to the communication plan, as communication plans are based on communication goals. An important factor is that communication goals are derived from the organisation's key strategic risks or issues, their implications for organisational stakeholders, and the communication strategy (as indicated in the above section of the Steyn & Puth model). When communication goals are set as indicated in the model, they reflect organisational goals and contribute towards the achievement of the organisation's mission (Steyn & Puth, 2000:70–71).

4.5.1.3.4   *Conduct a media analysis*

CONDUCT AN OVERALL COMMUNICATION MEDIA ANALYSIS
(determine which kinds of media are best suited to the organisation)

The aim of a media analysis is to establish broad guidelines as to the different kinds of media that might be considered suitable for the organisation and its different stakeholders. The selected media can range from interpersonal (face-to-face), to group or organisational media (meetings), to public or mass media (radio or television; Steyn & Puth, 2000:73).

In the case of NPOs, the Internet can be a powerful tool for communicating with stakeholders, disseminating information, gaining international support, and influencing public opinion (Lauer, 1995:45–48; Li, 2001:12). It is important though to consider that the Internet is not the only way to communicate with stakeholders. Communication practitioners must link the type of stakeholder and their specific communication needs to the most suitable media to communicate with them; for instance, community radio can reach illiterate adults in rural areas, while the Internet and printed media would not be suitable for this specific stakeholder group.

4.5.1.3.5   Development of the communication policy

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION POLICY **(determine who is allowed to communicate** **what to whom)**

The most important function of a communication policy is the coordination of stakeholder engage-ment: where more than one individual engage the same stakeholder at different times, on different topics, it is necessary to coordinate engagement in terms of who in the organisation is responsible for which stakeholder, under which circumstances, and indicating all the different interfaces per stakeholder.

A communication policy is furthermore necessary to ensure that a consistent message is communi-cated to stakeholders. Balser and McClusky (2005:298) argue that, particularly in the NPO sector, consistent messages increase predictability and decrease stakeholder uncertainty about the organi-sation. When stakeholders are able to anticipate their interactions with the organisation, the organi-sation will be more likely to be perceived as accountable, responsive, and effective. Polonsky and Sargeant (2007:470) provide an example in this regard in the NPO sector: the use of acknowledge-ments of donations would decrease uncertainty for donors who might be unsure whether their dona-tions have been received. They argue that this simple act would aid the NPO in building stronger relationships with its donors. Sargeant (2001:189) adds that donors like to receive communication that is informative, courteous, timely, appealing, and convenient. This means that the donor, and other stakeholders, must be asked to select the pattern and frequency of communication he or she wishes to receive from the NPO, for example, whether the donor wants monthly updates sent to him or her by e-mail. When the NPO uses this approach, its communication efforts move away from intrusion toward invitation. This kind of communication aids in keeping donors loyal for a longer period of time (MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:809).

Steyn & Puth (2000:72) suggest that making a list of the following is a way to develop a communica-tion policy:
- what *must* be communicated to stakeholders;
- what *should* be communicated to stakeholders;
- what the organisation is *prepared* to communicate to stakeholders;
- what the organisation is *not prepared* to communicate to stakeholders; and
- what is to be communicated in *special situations* such as emergencies or crises.

The communication policy is influenced by organisational culture, values, and norms, and as such, it may differ from organisation to organisation. A communication policy should address the following aspects (Steyn & Puth, 2000:71–72):
- functional communication areas and specified communication programmes;
- functional relationships between communication and other departments;
- the hierarchical structure of the communication department;
- organisational communication goals and objectives;
- who deals with which stakeholder(s); and
- the use of confidential information.

The communication policy must be enforceable, precise and clear, with consistent messages, and the same standards applicable to the whole organisation when communicating internally or externally (Steyn & Puth, 2000:72).

After the communication policy has been developed, it is essential to submit a draft of the organisational communication strategy to management. Management should be informed about the logic that guided the formulation of the strategy, in which way communication would provide solutions to organisational problems, and on which research the strategy is based. It is important that the communication policy itself should also be approved at the highest organisational level, as all functions in the organisation needs to adhere to it. Steyn and Puth (2000:73) emphasise that if management understands the contribution of the communication function towards the achievement of organisational goals, it will be easier to obtain funds for the implementation of the communication strategy.

4.5.1.3.6 *Development of a strategic communication plan for all organisational divisions*

> **DEVELOP STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR ALL DIVISIONS**
> **(for example, employee/media/community/investor/customer relations)**

When management has approved the communication strategy, the communication manager continues to develop communication plans for each organisational division or department, such as Human Relations, Finance, and Production. The strategic communication plan serves as the framework within which communication programmes, campaigns, and plans are developed. The different communication plans are based on the organisational communication strategy, which in turn is based on the organisational and enterprise strategy.

Communication plans can be implemented in the following ways (Steyn & Puth, 2000:73–75):
- Communication programmes are used for *continuous* communication with strategic stakeholders. They are focused on two-way communication, in order to build lasting relationships with the organisation's strategic stakeholders (for example, issue management, employee relations, corporate identity, and social investment).
- Communication campaigns differ from communication programmes in that they are time-limited and designed to effect a particular result. The communication campaign is thus subject to the measurement of effect, and it entails more precise planning. The focus and outcome of communication campaigns are to build socially responsible relationships by achieving research-based goals. Communication campaigns can be a one-time effort, or they can build on and profit from previous campaigns.
- Public communication campaigns focus on an immediate objective and primarily rely on mass communication (for example, promotion of a smoke-free work environment).

In this way, the communication manager, with the assistance of the communication strategist, ensures that all communication plans contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. The above description of the tasks of the communication manager leads to the following specific theoretical statement.

4.5.1.4 Specific Theoretical Statement 8

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication manager* is responsible for developing the NPO's communication strategy, with the assistance of the communication strategist (steps 3 to 6 of the model). This managerial function can be fulfilled by:

- identifying the implications of each risk for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups and society at large;
- formulating the key communication themes for each risk and stakeholder issue;
- setting and integrating the communication goals for the organisation, as well as functional and business-units;
- selecting communication media;
- developing the communication policy; and
- developing a strategic communication plan for all divisions.

4.5.1.5 Implementation of the communication strategy: the role of the communication technician

The last phase of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model entails the communication technician implementing the organisational communication plans.

4.5.1.5.1   Development of the communication implementation strategy

> **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COMMUNICATION PROGRAMMES/CAMPAIGNS/PLANS**

Communication technicians plan in what manner communication messages should be communicated to reach the strategic stakeholders. Technicians are thus responsible for portraying all facets of the organisation to stakeholders and the society (Steyn, 2003:16). This leads to the next specific theoretical statement.

4.5.1.6 Specific Theoretical Statement 9

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication technician* is responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy (step 7 of the model). This technical function can be fulfilled by:

- developing and implementing communication programmes/campaigns/plans.

4.5.1.7 Overview of Steyn & Puth's model (2000)

Steyn's (2000:1-33; 2002; 2003; 2007:137-172; Steyn & Green, 2001:1-35; Steyn & Puth, 2000) differentiation between the roles of the communication strategist, manager, and technician, paved the way for the development of a strategic communication model in which the *strategic* role and contribution of the communication function is clear.

It is clear that Steyn and Puth's (2000) model thus provides guidelines for excellent communication, as it is informed by two-way symmetrical communication, which is particularly evident in the communication *strategist's* application of environmental scanning and regular contact with stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:63–67). The strategist is also mainly responsible for managing strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with the organisation's strategic stakeholders. The use

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of formal and informal research ensures increased credibility and a higher contribution from the communication function on the achievement of organisational goals (Steyn & Puth, 2000:144–145). A summary of the strategic contribution of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model leads to the following specific theoretical statement.

4.5.1.8 Specific Theoretical Statement 10

Should NPOs practise strategic communication management according to the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, their communication practices would:
- be supported by a symmetrical organisational worldview and culture;
- be based on formal environmental scanning and/or informal research about the consequences of stakeholders' behaviour, expectations, and concerns, as well as social, political, and societal risks for the organisation;
- include stakeholder identification and prioritisation;
- include the identification and management of organisational reputation risks and stakeholder issues;
- be based on strategic communication goals and objectives;
- be aimed at building, maintaining, and/or improving strong relationships with stakeholders;
- be practised according to the two-way symmetrical and/or the mixed motive model; and
- be characterised by alignment between communication and organisational goals (enterprise strategy).

In order to provide a more nuanced view of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism on the model is discussed in the next section.

4.6 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

Ströh (2007:200) suggests a new approach to strategic communication management in line with the postmodern approaches of the chaos and complexity theories. She argues for a more participative and nonlinear approach, opposing the structured approaches suggested by traditional communication theorists such as Grunig and Steyn and Puth. Ströh (2007:203) identified three main areas of criticism against *strategic* communication management as advocated by, amongst others, the Excellence Study and Steyn and Puth's model, namely:
- the Steyn and Puth (2000) model (as well as the models of Grunig and Repper, 1992:117-157; Smith, 2005; Grunig, L.A., 2002:145) follows too deterministic, logical, and linear steps and processes;
- when top management, or the dominant coalition, makes strategic decisions, it suggests a top-down management approach; and
- the necessity of managing stakeholder relationships by formulating communication strategies.
The above points of critique are applied to the Steyn and Puth (2000) model and are discussed in the following sections.

4.6.1 Steyn and Puth's (2000) model: too deterministic, logical and linear?

Ströh (2007:206) argues that in a postmodern world, which is characterised by chaos and complexity, it is impossible to understand the intricate relationship between systems and the environment. The interaction of all the entities of a complex system, the role of the relationships formed, and the creation of information and knowledge through these interactions leads to a very complex situation

in which modern organisations have to function. She argues further that a system will develop a self-organising process (where structure and order emerge spontaneously) through a complex interaction amongst the environment, the current state of the system, and the system's history. In other words, self-organisation occurs within an organisation, as well as between organisations and their stakeholders (Ströh, 2007:206–207). Predetermined strategies, plans, or designs are thus not relevant due to the unpredictable nature of stakeholder releationships, as long as ethical behaviour guides the building and maintenance of relationships within and outside organisations.

Ströh (2007:212) furthermore suggests that the control and linearity characterised by the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, which emphasises conflict management, discourse and participation, should be replaced by postmodern approaches that focus on anxiety, diversity, conflict, unpredictability, and paradox. In this case "*managers … ought to learn how to take action while experiencing the anxiety of unpredictability, and use the anxiety as energy for creativity*" (Ströh, 2007:212).

It is the viewpoint of this study that the modern world, in which organisations have to function, is indeed chaotic and complex. It is therefore of the utmost importance that management use a well-designed process of strategy formulation and strategic management, based on scientific research, to understand, evaluate and manage the chaos and complexity of the organisation, its environment, and stakeholder relationships. Emerging strategy or risk management will take care of unpredictable risks that are not addressed in longer-term strategic plans. Organisations cannot afford to be left to anxiety and unpredictability; it is the focus of strategic management to create order and sense out of chaos. Steyn and Puth's (2000) model provide the communication strategist and manager with steps to follow in the strategy formulation process and the management of communication. This model is especially important in light of CEOs' criticism that communication does not understand business management (see Section 4.2).

Ströh's (2007:200–203) criticism that the Steyn and Puth (2000) model follows steps and processes that are too deterministic, logical and linear is not valid, as they state explicitly that although the steps in the process of developing a communication strategy are indicated in a linear fashion, it does not necessarily always happen in this sequence in practice (Steyn & Puth, 2000:76). The practitioner decides, according to the specific circumstances, what is to be done at a specific point in time (Steyn & Puth, 2000:76). The model therefore only serves as a guideline for communication practitioners. The development of the communication strategy is also a continuous, or rolling, process in which strategy is evaluated and adjusted (see Section 4.5.1.1.4). This also leaves opportunity to create emerging strategies as issues develop.

4.6.2   Steyn and Puth's (2000) model: a top-down management approach?

Ströh (2007:208) claims that if "*a small group of powerful people claim to predict the behavioural outcomes of an organisation, they are actually trying to manipulate and control*". She argues for a more participative approach to organisational communication instead of the structured approach favoured by, amongst others, Steyn and Puth (Ströh, 2007:200). In this case, she means that all decision-making in an organisation must be co-determined by all being influenced by a decision outcome (Ströh, 2007:200). She argues that the organisation and all its stakeholders must be equal partners in a negotiation process, where the process is more important than the outcomes. Although Steyn and Puth's (2000) model contains references to two-way symmetrical communication, it does not supply clear guidelines of how this would be included in the strategic processes proposed (Ströh, 2007:210). She also views two-way symmetrical communication as real participation or involvement in strategy formulation (Ströh, 2007:210). In this case, the communication

practitioner is a relationship manager and an activist who debates alternative viewpoints and instigates conflict, in order to contribute to the creation of meaning.

With reference to this last point, Ströh (2007:212) postulates that the communication practitioner should not be part of the top management function and should not have decision-making power and influence in strategy development. The power differences between the dominant coalition, of which communication should form part according to Steyn and Puth (2000), and the internal and external stakeholders of an organisation would make successful two-way symmetrical communication and relationship building problematic.

Research has shown that the two-way symmetrical model is the ideal or norm for which professional communication practitioners strive while performing their duties (see Section 3.3). However, few organisations will appoint communication practitioners who do not put the interests of the organisation first but concede to stakeholder demands or act as an advocate on behalf of stakeholders. When communication practitioners apply the two-way symmetrical model, they aim to understand and cooperate with stakeholders (Grunig, 1992:513). That is why the mixed motive model, where two-way asymmetrical communication within a symmetrical worldview with preference to symmetrical communication techniques, is a more realistic portrayal of what practitioners should strive for. With the mixed motive model, communication is used to move stakeholders, the dominant coalition, or both to an acceptable "win-win" zone. This means that the organisation does not hold total power over the outcomes of the engagement process, and would be prepared to change its view or position, as an outcome of the engagement process. Ströh (2007:216) actually agrees to this in concluding that, *"One of the greatest tests would be to find organisations that will be open-minded enough to try out these ideas [real participation or involvement in strategy formulation] and learn through the process."*

In Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the application of two-way symmetrical communication is implied in the application of environmental scanning, formal and informal research, and regular engagement with stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:63–67). Environmental scanning and other communication research methods are fully discussed in their book (Steyn & Puth, 2000). This point of criticism is thus, according to the researcher, not valid.

Research has shown that if communication practitioners do not have the ability or mandate to participate in strategic management, the communication function is delegated to the technical side, where communication merely implements decisions and strategies made by "non-communicators" (see Section 4.2) (Broom & Dozier, 1983:6; Broom & Dozier, 1986:42; Steyn, 1999:39; Steyn & Green, 2001:15; Van Ruler, 2000:403–423). The communication function's participation in strategic management is vital for top management's understanding of stakeholders' needs and for stakeholders to understand organisational strategies and decisions through the facilitation of two-way communication. Steyn and Puth's (2000) model provides guidelines for the strategic communication management, and as such, assists communication practitioners to accentuate communication's role in achieving organisational goals. When the notion exists that there is a power difference between the communication strategist or the organisation and internal or external stakeholders, it needs to be addressed and managed sensibly to build and/or restore relationships and trust.

4.6.3   Steyn and Puth's (2000) model: can relationships with stakeholders be managed by formulating communication strategies?

Ströh (2007:209) claims that the Steyn and Puth (2000) model does not focus on the process of relationship building, but rather on determining what should be *communicated* to stakeholders. This means that stakeholders do not participate in the formation of the messages, and as such, the model does not implicate two-way symmetrical communication. Stakeholders are thus involved when the communication strategist conducts research and environmental scanning, but they do not have any true participation in the decision-making process. Thus, the strategic managers of the organisation control the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders. Ströh (2007:211) furthermore states that a bottom-up approach to strategic management should be followed by

> *"taking a step back, to where diverse stakeholders are part of a network of relationships, and decisions resolve and flow naturally out of discourse and constant change. The emphasis is on the relationships, not on the decision-making processes. If the relationships are strong, the outcomes of decisions ought not matter because whatever they are, their consequences should work out to the benefit of the organisation in the long run."*

Ströh (2007:210) strengthens her argument further, asserting that stakeholders "*do not merely want to be identified, described, researched, and communicated to … instead, they want to be part of strategy formulatio*n". This is particularly valid for internal stakeholders for whom higher participation increases productivity, work satisfaction, and overall more positive relationship with management.

Although the above criticism is, seen from a postmodern perspective, theoretically valid, it is not always practically feasible. Not many modern organisations, which have to make profits to survive, can afford not to strategically plan their relationships with stakeholders. NPOs in particular, which operate in environments characterized by social, political, and economic issues, can little afford this luxury. Steyn and Puth (2000:64) explicitly state that strategic management of an organisation is inseparable from strategic stakeholder relationship management (see Section 4.5.1.1.2). An organisation must identify its stakeholders and the issues concerning them, as well as the organisation's risks; research the implications of strategic organisational risks and management decisions for the organisation; and then engage accordingly to stakeholders, in order to build lasting mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. Continuous, open and ethical two-way communication from both the organisation and its stakeholders, in which a win-win situation is the top priority, will ensure that healthy relationships will form.

This study does agree that participation in every-day management decisions is very important for internal stakeholders, such as employees. Participative management implies that employees are respected and are free to provide input into the organisation, have self-autonomy, are encouraged to be innovative, and must take responsibility for their behaviour and decisions. Therefore employees must also be able to provide input into strategy development, even if it is in an informal manner. This is in-line with an organisation with a symmetrical worldview (see Section 3.4.2).

Although it might seem as if some of Ströh's (2007:199-220) criticism on Steyn and Puth's (2000) model is not valid, no study has been conducted to determine whether postmodern communication theory is already in practice in the NPO sector. Ströh's (2007:199-220) views on strategic communication management will therefore be explored in this research project, which leads to the next specific theoretical statement.

4.6.4 Specific Theoretical Statement 11

Considering Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, it can be argued that a new model for strategic communication management by NPOs should be developed, which includes Ströh's suggestions for communication management, in cases where the NPO's communication practices suggest that the communication function/practitioner:

- does not need to have predetermined communication strategies and plans;
- relies *only* on ethical behaviour to build and maintain internal and external stakeholder relationships;
- should not form part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
- has an activist role in which alternative viewpoints are debated and conflict instigated, in order to contribute to the creation of meaning;
- strives for fully participative decision-making in strategy formulation in all communication issues, by the organisation and all its stakeholders; and
- does not strategically manage relationships with internal and external stakeholders but cultivates relationships in such a way as to allow all stakeholders to form part of strategy formulation.

All the above points of criticism have to be in practice to conclude that the NPO has a postmodern approach to communication management.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the different communication practitioner roles, which depict the main tasks of the communication practitioner, have been discussed. Steyn's contribution towards strategic communication management theory by the differentiation between the roles of the strategist and the manager has been pointed out. Strategic communication management contributes towards enterprise strategy formulation, as well as the achievement of organisational goals, by practising environmental scanning and research to identify organisational risks, stakeholders, and stakeholders' issues. This research enables the communication function to plan communication with the aim of building strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders proactively.

Steyn and Puth's (2000) strategic communication management model therefore provides the communication function with a framework to guide the organisation's communication management process. Following this model would enable the communication function to engage in dialogue with stakeholders, which would result in relationship building.

Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism on Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management, and their model, can be divided into three main points:

- the Steyn and Puth (2000) model follows too deterministic, logical, and linear steps and processes;
- when top management, or the dominant coalition, is making strategic decisions, it suggests a top-down management approach;
- it is not necessarily the case that relationships with stakeholders can be managed by formulating communication strategies.

Ströh's approach to strategic communication management has been discussed and although it does have theoretical merit, it seems difficult to implement when compared to the Excellence theory and strategic communication management according to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model. However, Ströh's (2007) criticism will be taken into account when NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa's communication practices are investigated.

This chapter, and the previous chapter, explained the theoretical foundations of the research at hand. In the following chapters, the specific theoretical statements will be applied to the empirical data. Before the empirical part of the research can be reported on, it is necessary to explain the research methodology followed in this research project.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1   Introduction

The research question and the subsequent research objectives, as stated in Chapter 1, require an in-depth, qualitative study of the strategic communication practices of five NPOs as case studies in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. This chapter focuses on the research methodology as applicable in this study. A brief overview of the qualitative research approach used in this research was given in Chapter 1 (Section 1.8.2), and it is discussed in more detail in this chapter. The theoretical assumptions and statements made in the previous chapters have been applied to the content of the in-depth interviews that have been conducted with NPOs.

5.2   Qualitative research

5.2.1   Characteristics of qualitative research

Qualitative research involves studying phenomena in their full complexity, portraying an issue fully in its multi-faceted form, and therefore rarely tries to simplify what was observed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:101–102, 147). Lindlof (1995:56) states that the aim of qualitative research is usually to understand a phenomenon, not to predict or control it.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:148) state that qualitative research is typically used for one or more of the following purposes:
*   *description* to reveal the nature of certain situations, settings, systems, or people;
*   *interpretation* to enable a researcher to:
    ‣   gain insights into the nature of a particular phenomenon;
    ‣   develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon; and
    ‣   discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon.
*   *verification* to enable a researcher to test the validity of certain assumptions, claims, theories, or generalisations in a real-world context; and
*   *evaluation* that provides a means through which a researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovations.

In the study at hand, the researcher:
*   *describes* how strategic communication management is practised in NPOs in the adult education sector;
*   *interprets* the communication processes in the selected NPOs and attempts to develop and adapt the theoretical model of Steyn and Puth (2000) for strategic communication management specifically for NPOs in the adult literacy sector;
*   *verifies* and *evaluates* whether:
    ‣   the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is applicable to NPOs in the adult literacy sector in its original format;
    ‣   two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management principles are sufficiently represented in the Steyn and Puth (2000) model; and

‣ Ströh's (2007) approach to strategic communication management are in practice in the participating NPOs;

‣ the assumptions of Ströh's approach, if practiced by the participating NPOs, can enhance the Steyn and Puth (2000) model for strategic communication in NPOs in the adult literacy sector.

The qualitative research process is holistic and "emergent" with researchers often formulating general research problems about the phenomenon they are studying. As the study proceeds and the researcher learns more about what he or she is studying, more specific questions develop, and the researcher can better specify which specific methods to use to answer those questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:101–102, 148).

Because little is known about strategic communication practices in NPOs in the adult literacy sector, a *general* theoretical statement was formulated in advance. As the study proceeded, more specific theoretical statements were formulated, based on the literature study.

Inductive reasoning methods are usually applied in qualitative research. The researcher would start with basic, but well-established assumptions, base interviews, and/or observations on these assumptions, and end with descriptions of what was researched (Du Plooy, 2002:83). However, Mason (2002:7) warns that qualitative research should always be strategically, systematically and rigorously conducted. This means that qualitative researchers should make decisions based on a sound research strategy, but that they must be sensitive to changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place (Mason, 2002:7). Qualitative research that is conducted systematically and rigorously supports the previous statement with Mason (2002:7), arguing that qualitative research is no excuse for a casual or ad hoc approach. Above all, qualitative research should be accountable for its quality and its claims.

Some qualitative researchers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:147) are of the opinion that qualitative research is subjective, but an objective approach to studying human events (for example, interpersonal relationships, social structures, and creative products) is neither desirable nor even possible. In qualitative research, the researcher's ability to interpret what he or she sees is critical for an understanding of any social phenomenon. It is also accepted in qualitative research that there may be multiple perspectives on a single subject of study, held by different individuals, with each of these perspectives having equal validity, or truth. Seen from this perspective, the researcher is an instrument in the research process because data collection and its interpretation depend on the researcher's personal involvement in the research process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:102, 147). It is for this reason that the researcher must carefully document the research process.

Lindlof (1995:22) adds that because humans are the primary research instruments in qualitative research, it involves the application of *reflexive analysis*; in other words, the researcher reflects on what he or she observes and then presents his or her own interpretation of the phenomenon. This action leads to 'thick', detailed descriptions that allow readers to draw their own conclusions from the data presented. 'Thick' descriptions allow the researcher to draw inferences about a phenomenon; that is, to discern the true meaning of a performance or practice from other potential meanings (Lindlof, 1995:228). 'Thickness' of description means that research is described with such detail that the understanding of the research object becomes more multidimensional, and the reader derives more meaning from each described element (Lindlof, 1995:20). According to Lindloff (1995:20), meanings are the "value-added" component of thick description. The descriptions of a phenomenon can then be measured against concepts, constructs, and theories. In this way, the researcher can

determine the limits of a theory's interface with the empirical world, after which the theory may require revision (Du Plooy, 2002:84). This is supported by Mason (2002:7-8), who emphasises that qualitative research should produce explanations or arguments, rather than offering mere descriptions of a phenomenon. This illustrates that the researcher has truly reflected on what he or she has observed.

Reliability refers to whether a research instrument, testing the same concepts or variables in the same way, will yield the same results each time (Lindloff, 1995:237); in other words, whether a measurement instrument yields consistent results when the characteristic being measured has not changed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:99–100). Rubin and Rubin (1995:85) simplify the above definitions further, stating that if research is reliable, two different researchers studying the same topic will come up with compatible observations. Sarantakos (2005:88) adds that reliability is a measure of objectivity, stability, consistency, and precision in research.

Morse *et al.* (2002:3–4) argue that trustworthiness, which includes reliability, must be a continuing process of verification during the study. If it is not, the researcher runs the risk of missing serious threats to the reliability and validity of the study until it is too late to correct them. Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain of facts and processes followed in a study. Morse *et al.* (2002:9) postulate that qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, which means that the qualitative researcher moves back and forth between the design and implementation of research, to ensure correspondence amongst question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. In this way, errors can be identified and corrected before they are built into the research process and before they subvert the analysis. Morse *et al.* (2002:12–13) identify five *verification* strategies with which to ensure reliability and validity of a qualitative study.

The first verification strategy is the aim of *methodological coherence*, which ensures congruence between the research question and the components of the method. This implies that the research method must match the research question, as well as the data and its analysis (Morse *et al.*, 2002:12). In this study, in-depth interviews were employed for obtaining information about NPOs communication management practices. This method enabled probing for more information, or explanations, if necessary. This would not have been possible with a quantities questionnaire-based survey. The same basic interview schedule was used for all interviews and any deviations from the interview schedule was carefully documented and described.

Morse *et al.*'s (2002:12) second verification strategy states that the *sample must be appropriate*; in other words, it must consist of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic. In this study, the communication practitioners and/or the CEO or manager from each participating NPO were interviewed. In all but one of the cases, the CEO or manager also performed the communication function. This ensured that the sample consisted of interviewees who best represented the communication function and who subsequently had the most knowledge of communication management as performed in each NPO.

The data were *collected and analysed immediately thereafter* as the third verification strategy suggests. In this way, what was known already and what additional information was needed could be determined (cf. Morse *et al.*, 2002:12–13). In cases where more information was needed, the interviewees were contacted by e-mail, as was previously arranged with them.

Morse *et al.* (2002:13) identify the fourth verification strategy as *thinking theoretically*. This means that ideas emerging from data are reconfirmed in new data; which gives rise to new ideas that, in

turn, must be verified in data already collected. For this study, all new information in information already collected was reconfirmed and/or verified. An example is the Optimus Foundation's mention of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Charter's influence on funding (see Section 10.3.2.1). The Optimus Foundation was interviewed last, and none of the other NPOs mentioned the BEE Charters. Subsequently, more information in literature on the BEE Charters was searched for, in order to verify the new information.

The last verification strategy identified by Morse *et al.* (2002:13) is that of *theory development.* By this, they refer to moving with deliberation between a micro-perspective of the data and a macro conceptual/theoretical understanding. According to Morse *et al.* (2002:13), theory is then developed through two mechanisms, namely as an outcome of the research process, rather than being adopted as a framework to move the analysis along, and as a template for comparison and further development of the theory. As little is known about communication management in NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa, this study is an exploratory study. All the gathered data for this study was gathered and interpreted to add to theory development on communication management as applied in the context of NPOs.

Rolfe (2006:304–310) argues that the quality of qualitative research cannot be assured by the rigorous application of a set of previously agreed strategies and procedures as identified by, amongst others, Morse *et al.* (2002:1–20), but that the quality of a research study is not only revealed in the writing-up of that research, but it also resides in the research report, subject to the wise judgement and keen insight of the reader. Although Rolfe's (2006:304–310) viewpoint that each qualitative study is unique is acknowledged, Morse *et al.*'s (2002:1–20) strategies were an aid to ensure reliability in this study.

The subjective nature of qualitative research might present internal validity problems to the researcher. Internal validity of a research study is the extent to which its design and the resulting data allow the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about the researched phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:103–104). Applying triangulation, by collecting data from more than one person in the organisation and then comparing it, to find similarities or differences in the data, heightens the internal validity of a research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:106). 'Thick', detailed descriptions of the research phenomenon, where research findings are presented in such a way that conclusions can be followed and tested (argumentative validation), further add to the internal validity of a research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:106; Sarantakos, 2005:86). Applying a combination of research methods also adds to the internal validity of a research project. Another way to ensure internal validity is to ask the respondents to validate the accuracy of the data (communicative validation) (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:106; Sarantakos, 2005:86).

In the study at hand, the research phenomena are described in as much detail as possible, thus providing 'thick' descriptions from which meaning can be derived. Combining a document analysis of the selected NPOs' annual reports, other official documents, and web pages with in-depth interviews also enhanced this study's internal validity. The content of the results chapters (Chapters 6 to 10), derived from the interviews and additional sources of information, were referred back to the different NPOs for factual verification. The interviewees could only verify the factual content related to their organisations, as interpretation of the data is the researcher's prerogative.

External validity is the extent to which the conclusions of a research project can be generalised to other contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:105; Du Plooy, 2002:84; Sarantakos, 2005:85). As a result of the use of small samples, the external validity of qualitative data is often problematic for some

researchers. Qualitative researchers, in contrast with quantitative researchers, seldom aim to make generalisations about the phenomenon they are researching. In order to reach a full understanding of a phenomenon, qualitative researchers often rather select a few participants who can best illuminate all facets under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:102). Lindlof (1995:57) notes here that although qualitative interpretations result from an intensive analysis of a single, or small sample, the research is recorded in such a way as to disclose the researcher's insight into the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers must therefore document all procedures followed carefully, in order for other researchers to follow the argumentation line and to understand the data-gathering methods, data-analysis, and the conclusions reached (Naudé, 2001:97). Careful documentation would therefore enable other researchers to repeat the study, even from a quantitative approach. From the 'thick' description and intensive analysis of a phenomenon, the researcher may observe patterns or themes that can allow him or her to generalise to other cases of the same problem in the larger culture (Lindlof, 1995:57; Mason, 2002:8). This procedure not only ensures external validity, but also enhances the reliability of the study, as mentioned in previous paragraphs.

The small number of NPOs included in this study makes it impossible to generalise the research findings to all NPOs, or even those in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. It is, however, possible to understand more about each organisation and their specific problems and circumstances if the sample is smaller (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:102). A larger sample would have the possible danger of reductionism, where the focus would not be on an in-depth study, but rather on a synopsis of the sample as a whole (Naudé, 2001:98). The aim of this study is to achieve depth and understanding of the strategic communication practices of the selected group of NPOs and not just a superficial analysis of surface comparability between large numbers of respondents (cf. Mason, 2002:65). The outcomes of this study might be tested on larger scale in future.

Qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, in the 'real world' (ecological validation) (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:147; Sarantakos, 2005:87). It is for this reason, as well as to enhance the internal validity of the study, that the interviews were conducted in the organisations' 'natural' settings, namely at the organisations themselves.

The research method used in this study will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

In-depth interviews are often used in qualitative research as part of field research. Naudé (2001:104) and Babbie (2001:291–292) emphasise that the interview in qualitative research should not be viewed as just a list of questions to be asked. Qualitative interviewing is a *guided conversation* or a *conversation with a purpose* in which the interviewer establishes the general agenda for the conversation, but also pursues specific topics raised by the respondent (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:7; Mason, 2002:67). The questions asked are merely one element of the interview, as the main purpose is the creation of dialogue. The difference between ordinary conversations and interviews are in the intensity of listening to the content of what is being said. The interviewer has to listen to keywords and ideas, important omissions, and non-verbal cues that indicate emphasis and emotions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:7), and in doing so "conversational depth" is created to obtain as much information as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:125). Another difference between a qualitative interview and a normal conversation is that the researcher keeps a record of what is said, whether it is by taking notes, recording the conversation, or both (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:125–128).

Qualitative interviews can be loosely/semi-structured or structured[1]. The difference between loosely or semi-structured and structured interviews is that a semi-structured interview is more like a "*conversation with a purpose*", while strict adherence to an interview schedule is required during a structured interview (Mason, 2002:67; Sarantakos, 2005:268). With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a list of specific, open-ended questions to ask, but the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview allows him or her to alter the sequence of the questions if necessary (Mason, 2002:65; Naudé, 2001:105; Sarantakos, 2005:268). Mason (2002:64) points out that the flexibility of the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to take cues from the ongoing dialogue with the interviewee about what to ask next, to follow up on their responses, which are relevant to them and their specific context, and by adding questions if necessary. This might include reformulating questions as necessary and employing neutral probing (Sarantakos, 2005:268). Sarantakos (2005:268) adds that restrictions are minimal in the case of semi-structured interviews,[2] and in most cases, take the form of guides rather than rules (Sarantakos, 2005:268).

Open-ended questions are mostly used in qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Sarantakos, 2005:271). This allows the respondent to answer questions in his or her own words (Babbie, 2001:240). The interviewer can also ask additional questions that might not be on the interview schedule (Babbie, 2001:240). Because open-ended questions do not have structured answers, they can elicit underlying ideas, feelings, sentiments, and suggestions from the interviewee. This means that the interviewee might present more information that the researcher had planned to ask for (Babbie, 2001:291–294; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:159; Du Plooy, 2002:143; Mason, 2002:64). According to Mason (2002:64), semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions provide maximum opportunity for the construction of "*contextual knowledge by focusing on relevant specifics in each interview*". This is not possible if the interviewer takes a 'one-size-fits-all' structured approach to interviewing.

In this study in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviewing was chosen as research method because the emphasis of the study was to delineate the selected NPOs' strategic communication practices, as well as their experience of the role of strategic communication in stakeholder management. The focus was on depth, nuance, complexity, and roundedness in data, and not on broad surveys of surface patterns, which questionnaires might provide (cf. Mason, 2002:65). This information was not always readily available in other formats, particularly in smaller NPOs that did not have a communication department.

The researcher plays an observer-as-participant role since he or she conducts the interview (Du Plooy, 2002:187). The researcher might also want to play a more responsive role by, for example, answering questions the interviewee asks, and giving information and support (Mason, 2002:66). The interviewer determines the general direction of the conversation, by listening carefully to answers to questions, interpreting the answers, and then framing another question to either probe deeper or to redirect the interviewee's attention to an area more relevant to the inquiry (Babbie, 2001:292). Probing assists and/or stimulates interviewees to answer questions, without affecting the direction of their thinking and without causing bias or distortion (Sarantakos, 2005:278–279). Interviewers must be careful not to appear rude when probing the interviewee for more information or redirecting the conversation. Interviewers thus have to "think on their feet" to ensure that the interview actually generates relevant data,

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1   Mason (2002:62) considers the term unstructured interviews a misnomer because no research interview can be completely lacking in some form of structure. Rubin and Rubin (1995:5) and Sarantakos (2005:268) define an 'unstructured' interview as an interview where the researcher suggests the subject for discussion, but has few specific questions in mind. "A few specific questions" suggests that the interview is not completely unplanned or unstructured.

2   Sarantakos (2005:268–269) differentiates between structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. His definition of unstructured interviews corresponds with that of Mason's (2002:62) loosely structured interviews.

which means that interviewers must control both the intellectual and social dynamics of the interview (Mason, 2002:67). For this reason Babbie (2001:292–294) and Mason (2002:75) stress the importance of excellent listening skills when conducting interviews.

In this study, the interviews were tape-recorded, for later reference and assistance with interpretation. Permission of the interviewees to do so was obtained, as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995:127) and Sarantakos (2005:277). The research procedure followed is described in more detail in Section 5.4.2.

5.3 Research design

In establishing the research design, emphasis was placed on insight and understanding of the context in which strategic communication management took place in NPOs in the adult literacy sector. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to:
* obtain general background information on each NPO;
* determine the communication model practised and gain an indication of the organisational culture and worldview;
* investigate the methods of two-way symmetrical communication methods applied by each NPO, if any; and
* gather information on the role of stakeholder relationship management as part of strategic communication management by the NPOs.

To improve the study's internal validity and to describe the NPOs' approach to communication management in as much detail as possible, the selected NPOs' annual reports, other official documents, and web pages were analysed.

Data obtained by means of semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used in order to:
* compare the communication model practised to existing theory;
* determine whether the communication model practised corresponds with the organisation's reported culture, worldview, and methods of symmetrical communication methods applied; and
* determine whether communication with stakeholders is managed strategically.

The specific procedures followed were carefully documented and will be described in the following sections.

5.3.1 Research questions, aims, and theoretical statements

As each specific research objective was derived from a research question, answering the research questions implies the fulfilling of the objectives set for this study (see Section 1.6). The first two research questions are concerned with the theoretical background of this study, while the third research question addresses the background to communication practices in NPOs in the adult literacy sector. Questions 4 and 5 address the outcomes of this research project because they are concerned with the findings and recommendations of the study.

The relation between the research questions, the specific theoretical statements, and the research methods used is indicated in Table 5.1. The specific theoretical statements are repeated in Text box 5.1 for easy reference.

Table 5.1: Research questions and research methods

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ADDRESSED BY:
1. What are the implications of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management for strategic communication management? (Specific Theoretical Statements 1 to 5)	• Literature study • Chapter 3
2. What is the nature of strategic communication according to Steyn and Puth? (Specific Theoretical Statements 6 to 10)	• Literature study • Interview: Questions 1 to 17
3. How do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication management within their unique context? (Specific Theoretical Statements 1 to 5)	• Literature study (selected NPOs' annual reports, documents and information available on web sites) • Interviews with NPO representatives • Interview: Questions 1 to 17
4. To what extend do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication according to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management? (Specific Theoretical Statements 6 to 11)	• Analysis of research findings
5. How can strategic communication management best be practised by NPOs, to enhance the achievement of their goals?	• Analysis of research findings

TEXT BOX 5.1: Specific theoretical statements

Specific Theoretical Statement 1

The communication model practised by NPOs could be determined by:

- the purpose of communication (for example, to inform, distribute information, persuade, or build relationships); and
- the direction of communication (one-way or two-way communication).

Specific Theoretical Statement 2

- NPOs that practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in dialogue with their different stakeholders, which include listening to stakeholder needs. The goal of practising two-way communication with stakeholders is to reach mutual understanding, which will lead to strong, lasting relationships.
- NPOs that practise the asymmetrical communication models will not view dialogue as an integral part of their communication efforts. They would tend rather to address one-way monologue towards their stakeholders.

Specific Theoretical Statement 3

A NPO's choice of a communication model will be directly influenced by its organisational worldview:

- An asymmetrical worldview (characterised by an internal orientation, a closed system, efficiency, elitism, conservatism, tradition, and a central authority) will lead to the practising of an asymmetrical communication model (press agentry/publicity model, public information model, or two-way asymmetrical model). A NPO with an asymmetrical worldview will view communication management as a mere technical function, and it will be more likely to practise an asymmetrical communication model.
- A symmetrical worldview (characterised by interdependence, an open system, a moving equilibrium, equity, autonomy, innovation, decentralised management, responsibility, conflict resolution, and interest-group liberalism) will enable the practising of the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model. A NPO with a symmetrical worldview will view communication management as a managerial function, and it will be more likely to practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

Specific Theoretical Statement 4

A NPO's view on its social role, from which the social role of communication management can be derived, are linked to its organisational worldview and will influence its choice of communication model:

- Those NPOs that view communication management as having a pragmatic, radical, or a neutral social role will be more inclined to practise an asymmetrical model.
- Those NPOs that view communication management as having an idealistic or critical social role will practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

Specific Theoretical Statement 5

The model practiced by a NPO, as well as the role played by its most senior communication practitioner can be determined by examining:

- the expertise of the communication practitioner;
- whether the communication practitioner is part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
- whether the practitioner has a strategic role; and
- the organisational worldview and culture of the NPO.

Specific Theoretical Statement 6
- NPOs' use of two-way symmetrical communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with their strategic stakeholders.
- These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.
- By building and maintaining strong relationships with strategic stakeholders, the communication function assists the organisation in achieving its goals, and therefore in being excellent.

Specific Theoretical Statement 7

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the communication strategist is responsible for the analysis of the NPO's internal and external environment, to manage all organisational stakeholders and issues effectively (steps 1 and 2 of the model). This strategic function can be fulfilled by:
- aligning both internal and external communication with the NPO's mission, vision, and goal statements;
- using research/environmental scanning to:
    ‣ identify and prioritise all organisational stakeholders, publics, and activists;
    ‣ identify and prioritise social, political, and societal risks; and
    ‣ determine the consequences and/or reputation risks of stakeholders, publics, activists, and issues for the organisation; and
- using the above strategic information in the implementation of the enterprise strategy.

Specific Theoretical Statement 8

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the communication manager is responsible for developing the NPO's communication strategy, with the assistance of the communication strategist (steps 3 to 6 of the model). This managerial function can be fulfilled by:
- identifying the implications of each risk for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups and society at large;
- formulating the key communication themes for each risk and stakeholder issue;
- setting and integrating the communication goals for the organisation, as well as functional and business-units;
- selecting communication media;;
- developing the communication policy; and
- developing a strategic communication plan for all divisions.

Specific Theoretical Statement 9

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the communication technician is responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy (step 7 of the model). This technical function can be fulfilled by:
- developing and implementing communication programmes/campaigns/plans.

Specific Theoretical Statement 10

Should NPOs practise strategic communication management according to the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, their communication practices would:
- be supported by a symmetrical organisational worldview and culture;
- be based on formal environmental scanning and/or informal research about the consequences of stakeholders' behaviour, expectations, and concerns, as well as social, political, and societal risks for the organisation;
- include stakeholder identification and prioritisation;
- include the identification and management of organisational reputation risks and stakeholder issues;
- be based on strategic communication goals and objectives;
- be aimed at building, maintaining, and/or improving strong relationships with stakeholders;
- be practised according to the two-way symmetrical and/or the mixed motive model; and
- be characterised by alignment between communication and organisational goals (enterprise strategy).

> **Specific Theoretical Statement 11**
>
> Considering Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, it can be argued that a new model for strategic communication management by NPOs should be developed, which includes Ströh's suggestions for communication management, in cases where the NPO's communication practices suggest that the communication function/practitioner:
> - does not need to have predetermined communication strategies and plans;
> - relies only on ethical behaviour to build and maintain internal and external stakeholder relationships;
> - should not form part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
> - has an activist role in which alternative viewpoints are debated and conflict instigated, in order to contribute to the creation of meaning;
> - strives for fully participative decision-making in strategy formulation in all communication issues, by the organisation and all its stakeholders; and
> - does not strategically manage relationships with internal and external stakeholders but cultivates relationships in such a way as to allow all stakeholders to form part of strategy formulation.
>
> All the above points of criticism have to be in practice to conclude that the NPO has a postmodern approach to communication management.

With the research design set to fulfil the aims of the study, the next step was to identify five NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa to use as a sample for the research.

5.3.2   Sampling

The SANGONeT Prodder Directory was consulted to obtain information on NPOs in the adult literacy sector. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the acronym Prodder stands for Programme for Development Research. It was established in 1987 and is an information medium that collects and disseminates information on all Southern African development issues and role-players. Prodder was previously compiled, produced, and maintained by the Human Sciences Research Council, and was available in book format until 2001. SANGONeT has since acquired the rights to the directory[3]. Prodder's vision and mission is to facilitate access to information, raise awareness of important issues affecting the development agenda, enhance the reach and impact of development activists, and link people and organisations through the use of information and communication technology in Southern Africa.

SANGONeT was founded in 1987, and has developed into a civil society organisation whose history is closely linked to the social and political changes experienced by South Africa during its transition to democracy. SANGONeT is a NGO involved in Africa in the field of information communication technologies (ICTs), and it continues to serve civil society with a wide range of ICT products and services. SANGONeT aims to assist Southern African NGOs to use, manage, implement, and integrate ICTs into all their activities.

The SANGONeT NGO Portal was established on 24 October 2005, which gives access to a wide range of websites and online resources that they have developed, in order to highlight development issues in South Africa, the wider Southern African region, and the African continent in general.

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3   From 2008, NGO Pulse is SANGONeT's NGO and development information portal. It is a one-stop Internet information resource for and about the NGO sector in South Africa and is a recognised and respected gateway to the development community.

http://www.ngopulse.org/

According to SANGONeT, their ongoing challenge is:

"to strengthen its role and contribution through the relevance of its products and services, customizing its ICT services to the specific needs of the NGO sector, improving its interaction, relationship and response to the needs of current and potential NGO clients, building relationships and partnerships with strategic role players in the NGO, government and private sectors; and to provide leadership and guidance to the Southern African NGO sector as far as ICT issues are concerned."

The SANGONeT NGO Portal's four main objectives are:
- to develop the institutional capacity of the NGO sector through the provision of information that is intended to support stronger management practices;
- to map NGOs and their activities through Prodder;
- to create a community space for civil society exchange; and
- to promote the benefits of ICTs in support of the work of civil society.

Various lists of development stakeholders can be found in the SANGONeT Prodder Directory, such as:
- non-government organisations;
- donors;
- community-based organisations and projects (CBOs);
- academic institutions;
- development consultants; and
- parastatals.

Information covered in entries include the following:
- name and acronym of the organisation;
- contact details (postal and street address, telephone, fax, e-mail and website address);
- contact persons;
- type of organisation;
- programme areas;
- date founded;
- head office;
- mission and vision statements; and
- areas served.

For the purposes of this study, the 2007 SANGONeT Prodder Directory was searched for NPOs whose main function is the upliftment of adult illiteracy, operating in Gauteng and the North-West Province. Twenty-two NPOs operating in Gauteng were found. No references to NPOs working in the adult literacy sector in North-West were found. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that although many NPOs stated 'adult literacy' or 'adult education' in the SANGONeT Prodder Directory under their programme areas this was not their main focus. Based on this, it was decided to extend the sampling frame to the rest of South Africa. Sixty-eight references to NPOs working in the adult literacy sector in South Africa were found. The same problem arose amongst these references, where 'adult literacy' or 'adult education' was stated under the organisations' programme areas in the Directory but was not their main focus.

Farrell Hunter from the national office of the Adult Literacy Network (ALN) provided the contact details of ALN regional offices in the Eastern and Western Cape, Gauteng, the North-West Province,

the Free State, the Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal. The names of adult literacy organisations and their contact details were then obtained from the regional offices. However, none of the contacted regional offices responded to e-mails or telephone calls.

It was therefore necessary to revert to more easily accessible sources to obtain a sampling frame of NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. The Cape Gateway website (Cape Gateway, 2007) provided a directory of ABET and community learning centres operating in the Western Cape. Although the majority of the references were to community learning centres, the website provided reference to the SHARE Adult Education Centre.

Through word of mouth it came to the attention of the researcher that an ABET Centre operated in Potchefstroom at the Army Support Base.

The process described above enabled the researcher to compile a list of NPOs whose main function is the upliftment of adult illiteracy as sampling frame. The five NPOs to be included in the sample were selected from the list of organisations according to the following criteria.

5.3.2.1 Selection criteria

As explained in the previous section, the main selection criteria applied were that the elected NPOs were working mainly towards the upliftment of *adult illiteracy*.

A non-probability sampling method was used because of the qualitative nature of this research. Because the study did not aim to compare the selected NPOs with each other, a case study approach was taken.

The following selection criteria was applied to select NPOs for the sample:
- main focus on adult literacy upliftment;
- size;
- geographical area; and
- type of NPO.

The NPOs were selected purposefully by hand to ensure that both smaller and larger NPOs were included. The reason for this is that larger NPOs are more likely to be able to afford a communication practitioner or department, while smaller NPOs are likely not to be able to afford such luxury but still need to communicate with stakeholders.

Because no references to NPOs whose main function is uplifting adult illiteracy operating in the North-West Province were found on the SANGONeT Prodder Directory, the Army Support Base Potchefstroom Adult Basic Education and Training was included in the sample. The sample was thus compiled to include NPOs from the Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, and North-West. By including the ABET Centre at the Army Support Base in Potchefstroom not only large and small NPOs in different provinces, but also a different in kind of NPO (an organisation within an organisation), working towards the same goals as the other NPOs sampled. More than five NPOs were selected, to increase the likelihood that five NPOs willing to partake in the study could be found. The following NPOs were selected:
- SHARE Adult Education Centre;
- READ;
- JET Education Services;

- Molteno Project;
- AFS;
- Operation Upgrade;
- Maryland Literacy Programme;
- Project Literacy;
- Family Literacy Project;
- Optimus Foundation; and
- Army Support Base Potchefstroom Adult Basic Education and Training Centre.

The selected NPOs were contacted by e-mail to explain the research project and determine whether they were willing to take part in the project (see Appendix A).

5.3.2.2 Initial and final response

The organisations that responded to the initial e-mail are given in the following table:

Table 5.2: Initial response

SHARE Adult Education Centre	agreed to take part
READ	do not focus mainly on the upliftment of adult illiteracy
JET Education Services	do not focus mainly on the upliftment of adult illiteracy
Molteno Project	no response
AFS	do not focus mainly on the upliftment of adult illiteracy
Operation Upgrade	no response
Maryland Literacy Programme	declined to take part
Project Literacy	agreed to take part
Family Literacy Project	agreed to take part
Optimus Foundation	agreed to take part
Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre	no response

Those organisations that did not respond to the initial e-mail, Operation Upgrade, Molteno Project and the Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, were contacted by telephone and the e-mail was resent. They were asked to either respond by e-mail or fax to indicate whether they wanted to take part in the research project or not. Finally, the following five NPOs were included in the sample:
- SHARE Adult Education Centre;
- Project Literacy;
- Family Literacy Project;
- Optimus Foundation; and
- Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre.

After the NPOs had agreed to take part in the research, they were contacted by telephone to arrange the interviews.

5.4   Interviews

5.4.1   The interview schedule

The interview questions covered three main topics. The first topic questions covered the communication function in the organisation, as well as the organisational structure and culture. These questions sought to determine the organisations' approach to communication, in order to link them to specific communication models. The second topic questions covered the organisations' specific communication and stakeholder management practices, in order to determine whether these practices were in-line with the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model. The third topic questions sought to determine whether Ströh's (2007) postmodern approach to strategic communication management was already practised in the organisations, and if not, whether the approach was considered feasible. It should be noted that the questions in parenthesis were intended as follow-up or prompting questions for the interviewer only and were not posed as questions to the interviewees.

TEXT BOX 5.2: Semi-structured interview schedule

1.   Do you employ a full-time communication practitioner?

2.   If you do have a communication practitioner/department, which qualifications do he/she/they have?

3.   Please explain your organisation's structure. (*Where does communication fit in? Is communication part of the dominant coalition? To what extent is the communication practitioner/department involved in the strategic planning process?*)

4.   How would you explain your organisation's culture? *(Is the culture for example authoritarian/participatory/democratic/transparent? Illustrate with examples.)*

5.   I know that your organisation focuses on adult literacy. Broadly speaking, how would you describe your organisation's role in the society in which it operates?

6.   How do you usually pick up important issues in society that can impact on your organisation and its work? *(Is any formal scanning/research being done?)*

7.   What are the most critical risks that your organisation is facing at the moment?

8.   What role/s do your stakeholders play in these risks?

9.   Who do you regard as your organisation's most important stakeholders? *(How do you define stakeholders for your organisation? Are they any different from other organisations' stakeholders? How do you determine which stakeholders are more important than other stakeholders?).*

10. How do you manage your relationship with these most important stakeholders? *(How are formal/ informal relationships managed? Do you have stakeholder management or communication strategies and/or plans? Do you conduct research on stakeholder perceptions and opinions? What are the most important challenges related to stakeholder relationships that your organisation currently faces? What is the importance of two-way communication and how does your organisation apply it?).*

11. How would you describe your current relationship with your key strategic stakeholders? *(What is the quality of, and satisfaction with current relationships?).*

12. In general, do you think stakeholders should participate in an organisation's strategy development process? *(What is your view on participative strategy development? Why, how, and what would the advantages/disadvantages be? Discuss internal and external stakeholders separately).*

13. How practical would such participation of stakeholders be for your organisation? *(To what extent has it been applied in the past? Why did you apply stakeholder participation in the way you did? Do you have any ideas for the future and what are your reasons for it?).*

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14. Do you think an organisation such as yours needs a communication strategy?

15. To what extent do you think communication with stakeholders can or should be planned beforehand? *(Can it be planned at all? If not, why not? And if so, why and how?).*

16. In an ideal world, please tell me what would be the five steps to successful management of stakeholder relationships? *(Probe into the sequence of steps; the prerequisites for success; level of stakeholder participation; the ideal level of participation; conflicting interests of stakeholders; any of the steps in the Steyn and Puth's (2000) model that might be left out, but without referring to the model).*

17. Do you apply these five steps in your organisation? *(If not, why not? What are the challenges in applying the steps? What are the outcomes of applying them/not applying them?).*

In order to make sure that the interviewees did not answer questions with what they thought the 'correct' answer might be, or that they did not provide answers that they thought would place their organisation in a favourable light, interviewees were asked to illustrate their answers with examples, and provide reasons for their responses. In this way, whether the interviewees understood the question and whether they knew what they were talking about could be ascertained. Illustrative examples also ensured that their answers were understood correctly. Thus, an interview schedule was used, but additional questions were asked to clarify answers.

The first aspects covered by the interview were whether the organisation employed a full time communication practitioner or not, and what the practitioner's qualifications was. With this knowledge, the researcher would know how to ask the communication-related questions. Research has revealed that formal communication qualifications are important for the practice of excellent two-way symmetrical communication.

By asking Questions 6 and 7, the researcher tried to ascertain the different issues and risks faced by each organisation, as well as whether they made use of environmental scanning or research to uncover issues. Questions 8 to 11 served to determine the organisations' stakeholder management practices and the role of two-way communication in these practices.

Questions 12 to 15 sought to determine whether Ströh's (2007) approach to strategic communication management were in practice in the organisations, and if not, whether the interviewees deemed Ströh's (2007) ideas feasible.

Lastly, Questions 16 to 17 served to determine the extent to which the organisations' communication practices corresponded with the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication, and how feasible interviewees regarded the "ideal" in terms of stakeholder relationship management, in their current situations.

5.4.2 Procedures followed during the interviews

Interviews were conducted with the communication practitioner(s) of the selected NPOs. Some of the NPOs did not have a communication practitioner or department. The interviews were then conducted either with the CEO or with the specific person responsible for the communication functions in the organisation. Each organisation was requested to provide one interviewee. Table 5.3 provides a list of the interviewees and their positions in the organisations they represent.

Table 5.3: Interviewees

NPO	PERSON(S) INTERVIEWED	POSITION(S)
SHARE Adult Education Centre	Lin Helme	Centre Co-ordinator
Project Literacy	Andrew Miller and Yvonne Eskell-Klagsbrun	CEO Fundraising and Communications Practitioner
Family Literacy Project	Snoeks Desmond	Director
Optimus Foundation	Claire Jenvey	CEO
Army Support Base Potchef-stroom ABET Centre	Casper van Tonder and Hannah Dreyer	ABET Centre Manager Teacher

The interviews were conducted at the offices of the NPOs, except in the case of the Family Literacy Project. The Family Literacy Project's Director, Snoeks Desmond, attended a conference at the North-West University in Potchefstroom and asked to be interviewed at her guesthouse.

The interviews were conducted over a period of six months, depending on the availability of the interviewees. Interviews were spaced to allow for the transcription of the interviews directly after they were conducted. In this way, the context and other cues present during the interview could be captured (cf. Rubin & Rubin, 1995:126).

The interviews took between 90 and 120 minutes each, with most interviewees cooperative and willing to answer questions. Every interview was tape-recorded, with the permission of the interviewee. In this way, the interviews could be conducted without dialogue interruption by extensive note taking.

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the interview and the way in which the organisations could benefit from the project findings were stated. The interviews commenced following this introduction. During the interviews, questions that were easier to answer were asked first, in order to put the interviewees at ease. Asking general questions about the organisations' structure, culture, and their social role in society served this purpose.

Because the interviews were semi-structured and dialogue was created, not all interviewees were questioned in the same sequence. Sometimes when the interviewees elaborated on certain questions, they automatically proceeded to other questions. The researcher did not interrupt the interviewees, but made sure that all aspects were covered as thoroughly as possible in the interview. Interviewees were probed when their explanations were unclear, or regarded as inadequate by the researcher. Whenever the interviewees did not understand a question, the researcher tried to explain it without influencing the interviewee's response.

5.4.3 Literature review

To improve the study's internal validity and to describe the NPOs' approach to communication management in as much detail as possible, the selected NPOs' annual reports, other official documents, and web pages were analysed.

5.5   Problems experienced during the interviews

No major problems were experienced with conducting the interviews. All interviewees were willing to partici-pate in the study. Some of the contacted interviewees arranged for another interviewee to be present during the interview. This was the case for Project Literacy, where the Fundraising and Communications Practitioner arranged for the CEO to be present; and the Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, where the Cen-tre Manager asked a teacher, who had many years' service at the Centre, to be present at the interview because the Centre Manager had only recently joined the Centre.
Not all the interviewees were available at the times arranged, and some of the interviews had to be resched-uled. The interview with the Optimus Foundation had to be rescheduled twice; the first rescheduling was due to the researcher falling ill, and the second rescheduling was due to the interviewee's work obligations.

A few of the interviewees had problems understanding some of the questions in the interview schedule. Most interviewees were not familiar with the term *stakeholders* as used in Questions 8 and 9. The researcher had to explain the term by providing a standard definition. Questions 16 and 17 proved difficult because none of the interviewed organisations had a communication strategy in place. The interviewees' lack of formal com-munication qualifications possibly contributed to their problems understanding these questions. Following the first interview, it was decided that the researcher would provide some explanations and/or probe for more information on the organisations' communication practices, without leading the interviewees.

5.6   Data analysis

An interpretative approach to data analysis was followed in this study. The theoretical statements, as formu-lated in Chapters 3 and 4, were used to guide the analysis of the data obtained during the interviews and data analysis of the selected NPOs' annual reports, official documents, and web pages. The theoretical statements represent the *ideal or norm* of how strategic communication management should theoretically be applied. The reality of the NPOs' application of communication management was therefore compared to the ideal or norm as represented in the theoretical statements.

 The aim of an interpretative approach to data analysis is to determine how far the reality (how the selected NPOs practice strategic communication management) is removed from the ideal or norm (as represented in the theoretical statements). However, this does not imply that an "all or nothing" approach are followed, because, as in this study's case, ***the reality contains elements of the ideal***. The researcher therefore summarised a subjective interpretation of each NPO's approach to strategic communication management, and presented it in a graphical format. It is important to note that these graphical presentations are ***not*** a quantitative analysis of the data, but represent an ***overview*** or ***summary*** of the data analysis.

5.7   Conclusion

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of the communication prac-tices of NPOs in the adult literacy sector. The data obtained from the interviews was managed as separate case studies, which will be described in Chapters 6 to 10.

The description of each NPO led to the integration of the data with the theoretical assumptions underlying this study to evaluate each NPO in terms of its approach to strategic communication and stakeholder man-agement. The conclusions and recommendations that will be presented in Chapter 11 are the results of this evaluation. It was not the aim of the study to compare the NPOs with each other, but rather to identify general trends with regard to their strategic communication practices, compared to Steyn & Puth's normative model.

Part II:
NPOs in the adult literacy sector: communication management analysis

In part II the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa are described. The theoretical points of departure discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 are utilised throughout to simultaneously describe and evaluate the strategic communication practices of the NPOs.

The interviews were conducted over a period of six months (May 2007 to October 2007), depending on the availability of the interviewees. The procedures followed were described in Chapter 5. All information concerning each NPO included in this study is discussed separately in a chapter, which implies that a specific NPO is dealt with completely before a next NPO is dealt with.

The first NPO to be studied was identified randomly, and thereafter NPOs to be analyzed were chosen according to their representatives' availability.

Four of the interviews were conducted in English, and one in Afrikaans, according to the preferences of the interviewees. The interviews were paraphrased for the purpose of the study, and the researcher is in possession of the complete recorded interviews. The Afrikaans interview was translated into English. Whenever the interviewees' direct words were quoted, it was placed in quotation marks. Direct quotes from the Afrikaans interview were translated, and placed in quotation marks to indicate the specific opinion of the interviewees.

In Chapters 6 to 10 theoretical statements 1 to 4 are discussed under the heading *Organisational structure, management & role in society,* while theoretical statements 6 to 9 are discussed under the heading *Communiation management.* The heading *Strategic communication analysis* refers to theoretical statement 10.

It is important to note that the aim of the figures in which the NPOs' communication management practices are *roughly* plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as well as against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, are to provide a synopsis of the NPOs' practices. The aim is therefore *not to measure* the NPOs communication management practices, but provide the reader with a summary of the findings on a specific NPO's communication practices.

CHAPTER 6

SHARE ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

Interview with Lin Helme, Centre Co-ordinator, on 14 May 2007

6.1 Background

6.1.1 Organisational overview

The SHARE Adult Education Centre (hereafter SHARE) has been operating in the Helderberg region of the Western Cape since 1990. The organisation serves the various communities in the area with adult basic education, skills training, and community development. SHARE expanded from core ABET work into broader skills development to serve community needs, and thereby added sewing, computer literacy, and community development into its strategic plan (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:2).

Helderberg is a semi-urban/rural area, with light industries, farms, and suburbs. It is situated approximately 50 km from Cape Town. Learners have a wide range of income levels, with many living on or below the poverty line. Unemployment, crime, alcoholism, and other social issues are prevalent in their communities. Learners include those living in informal settlements and those who are domestic workers in more affluent suburbs, as well as farm workers. Learners travel from a radius of 15 km to the main centre in Somerset-West. Many people within the communities have low levels of education and are subsequently unaware of their rights as citizens, and are unable to access services (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:2).

SHARE is registered with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Learners write examinations supervised by the WCED and therefore have access to an accredited General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). SHARE is a member of the Adult Learning Forum Western Cape, acting also as the office base for the Forum. SHARE's co-ordinator, Lin Helme, is the co-ordinator of the Forum and also serves as director on the Learning Cape Initiative Board, the Adult Learning Network Board, the South African Reflect Board, and the WCED's ABET Board (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:2–3).

Although ABET and skills training classes have been SHARE's core work in realising its vision, there has also been a realisation that adult learning needs to have more relevance for the issues that confront learners in their everyday lives. The REFLECT approach (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2 on emancipatory adult education) to learning has thus been introduced into one of SHARE's projects, the Reflect Community Development Course. According to the REFLECT approach, adult learning is seen as a range of different learning experiences, which can result in actions that will have greater impact within the community and in the lives of individuals and their families (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:2). The Reflect Community Development Course started in 2003 and operates as part of the national REFLECT network. Women in the Casablanca community are trained to work on issues that they have identified as important to their community. They are trained as fieldworkers and work with children in a learning programme that is linked to local schools (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:3).

Due to a good relationship with the local library service since the inception of SHARE, learners have access to library facilities. In addition to this, the library arranges functions during Adult Learners' Week and Library Week (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:3). A partnership with the Helderberg Society for the Aged has enabled elderly residents of the Lwandle and Garden Village communities to have English classes (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:3).

6.1.2 SHARE's vision

SHARE's vision is "*to develop skills that will empower learners and will equip them for employment, add value to their lives, families and communities, thus making them aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens*" (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2007:2). Achieving their vision will enable learners to support their families and communities.

6.1.3 SHARE's objectives

SHARE's objectives are (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2003:1):
- to develop both academic and life skills that will empower adult learners;
- to offer ABET courses;
- to promote good practice in the field of ABET;
- to serve the communities of the Helderberg region;
- to encourage interest in and support for the development of ABET amongst the communities of the region;
- to support adult education activities that contribute to the development of a democratic civil society;
- to advocate the importance of adult learning for which greater public support is needed; and
- to encourage networking and dissemination of information with similar organisations in the Western Cape and South Africa.

6.1.4 SHARE's activities and projects

In summary, SHARE presents the following courses:
- ABET Level 1 to 3 classes in Xhosa, English, Afrikaans, and Numeracy;
- ABET Level 4 classes in four learning areas per year;
- ABET English Communication Course for Helderberg Society for the Aged;
- Educare Course NQF 1;
- Educare Course NQF 4;
- Computer Literacy classes;
- Beginner's course: Introduction to Computers;
- Advanced course: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Publisher;
- Internet and E-mail Course;
- Sewing Skills Course; and
- Reflect Community Development Course.

6.2   SHARE's organisational structure, management & role in society

A Board of Trustees and a Management Committee consisting of the Centre Manager, the Educational Co-ordinator, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, two trustees, four learner representatives, three educator representatives, a community representative, and four additional members manage SHARE. The *Centre Co-ordination* consists of the Centre Co-ordinator, Educational Co-ordinator,

and an administrator. The *Educators and Trainers* consist of educators, an educare facilitator, computer trainers, a sewing trainer, and Reflect facilitators. Although SHARE's organogram (see Figure 6.1 below) depicts a tiered structure, the interviewee insists that SHARE has a flat organisational structure. She refers to the *Centre Co-ordination's* structure, and adds that the *Board of Trustees* and *Management Committee* do not "interfere" with SHARE's management. Figure 6.1 demonstrates this organisational structure by way of an organogram.

Figure 6.1 SHARE'S organogram
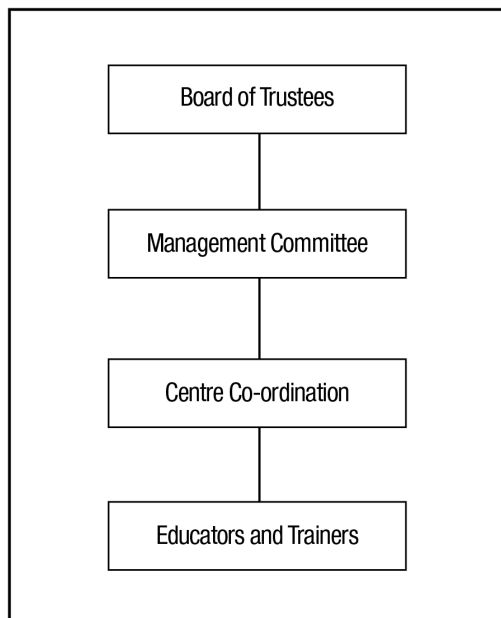
The interviewee pointed out that the Management Committee formulates organisational policy and thus policy-making has a broad stakeholder representation. Despite this, the interviewee believes that there still is not enough participation in management and policy formulation because "many people feel that if you [the Centre Co-ordination] do something, just get on with it". This implies that especially the community representatives do not make always make use of the opportunity to influence policymaking. As a result, SHARE is "mostly managed in the same way as in previous years", meaning that the existing management style is used every year, without major changes because generally the system is "quite good and has worked well". However, the interviewee would prefer to have more participation and input from learners, educators, and the community.

SHARE does not have a full-time communication practitioner; rather the Centre Co-ordinator is responsible for all organisational communication. The Centre Co-ordinator is qualified as a teacher, and has a postgraduate Advanced Diploma for Educating Adults from the University of Cape Town. The Centre Co-ordinator's teaching qualifications were obtained in the United Kingdom, but are not recognised in South Africa. Although the Centre Co-ordinator does not have any qualifications in communication management, she "picked [it] up through years of experience". The Centre Co-ordinator's lack of a communication qualification might be the reason for SHARE not realising the potential of communication management to build strong relationships with stakeholders and manage stakeholder issues.

The interviewee described the organisational culture as participatory; problems and/or issues are discussed until consensus is reached. Everybody in the organisation has equal opportunities and equal input into decision-making. As management is very learner-orientated, learners and educators are encouraged to discuss problems with the Centre Co-ordinator. In this way, SHARE tries to

convey a participative culture to learners, which is essential in the workplace.

The interviewee misunderstood participative management as stakeholders being involved in *all* decision-making. The idea is that stakeholders are involved in strategy formulation, following which the organisation is responsible for strategy implementation. Stakeholders are thus not supposed to be involved in all operational decision-making.

The interviewee continued by saying that participatory *communication* strategy formulation can be problematic because the Centre Co-ordinator cannot always contact all stakeholders to consult on what and when to communicate to whom. Because it is too time-consuming to contact each stakeholder by fax or telephone, those who have e-mail facilities (mainly committee members) are contacted for advice. The interviewee stressed that participation in all decisions concerning organisational communication is not always practical, particularly because other stakeholders also do not have time to participate in every decision. The interviewee feels that it is for this reason that the organisation has structures and systems in place.

Although SHARE's Centre Co-ordination members, as well as the educators and trainers do not have *equal* status as they are not functioning on the same organisational level, all have equal opportunities and potential equal input into decision-making. However, most of the management *responsibility* resides with the Centre Co-ordinator, as staff members expect her to "just get on with it [managing SHARE]". In this case, staff members, according to the interviewee, prefer the asymmetrical management style, where efficiency presides over responsibility.

The interviewee views SHARE's role in society as empowering people to become more meaningful members of their families and community. SHARE believes that everything the adult learner learns is taken back to their families and society as a whole. SHARE is thus a supporter of *interest-group liberalism* (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2), which adds to its *idealistic social role* because they are building and empowering society through education. Interest-group liberalism and an idealistic social role are characteristic of a symmetrical worldview. In addition to this, SHARE views being critical of government's handling of adult illiteracy as part of their social role.

6.3   Communication management

6.3.1   Stakeholders

The interviewee defines stakeholders firstly as people that have an *intimate* stake in the organisation, such as learners, educators, staff, and the Management Committee (internal stakeholders). Secondly there are *broader* stakeholders, such as government (in particular the WCED), the communities from which learners originate, the Chamber of Commerce, donors, and the Rotary. The *broader* stakeholders form a circle around the organisation.

According to the interviewee, SHARE's most important stakeholders are the learners ("that's what we're here for"); the donors that provide the funding that allows SHARE to operate; and government, particularly the WCED who controls assessment procedures, gives the organisation legitimacy, and provides funding. Although the interviewee indicated that all stakeholders are given equal respect and consideration, learners are viewed as SHARE's most important stakeholders.

6.3.2   Environmental analysis

The interviewee said that because of a lack of funds SHARE is not able to conduct formal research or environmental scanning for determining the most important risks in their environment affecting them, as well as stakeholder issues that could affect the organisation. Risks are uncovered in an informal fashion, by using the Internet and reading widely to trace developments in the sector. The interviewee uses the several boards she serves on as sources of information (see section 6.1); she gathers information at different functions and meetings, and is involved in the community. She is, however, of the opinion that she does not have enough time to be more involved in the community to be really well informed about issues that might influence SHARE or the community SHARE serves.

The interviewee identified three major risks confronting SHARE, namely difficulty to obtain funding, low success rate of adult education, and the lack of qualified or well-trained adult educators or teachers . These risks are discussed in the following section.

6.3.2.1 Consequences of risks for the organisation

Concerning the difficulty to obtain *funding*, the interviewee admits that there is "no security with donors". The National Lottery temporarily ceased to operate (in 2007), and this had a huge effect on SHARE's finances. Many donors change their criteria to rather support, for instance, mathematical and science education, and others choose to support HIV/AIDS causes. The interviewee believes that "people are much more drawn to little babies [who have HIV/AIDS]", and that "adult education doesn't have the same appeal". Another problem that affects funding is that adult education's success rates are not high because of dropout rates and attendance problems.

The interviewee noted that nobody on the Management Committee has "connections" with possible donors, as most large donors are situated in Johannesburg or elsewhere in Gauteng. It is difficult to build good relationships with donors in Gauteng because of the distance between the Western Cape and Gauteng. The interviewee has found that donors in Gauteng tend to give funding to organisations situated in Gauteng. Another problem is that once a good relationship with a person working at a donor has been built up, the person leaves the donor, and donor identification and relationship building has to be begun again.

Although SHARE is given a grant from the WCED, it only makes up approximately one fifth of what SHARE requires to operate. The interviewee believes that governmental literacy programmes are not well planned and funds are not utilised to full capacity. This situation adds to SHARE's frustration in terms of finding operational funds.

As mentioned previously, the low success rate of adult education impacts negatively on funding. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.2, the government's drive for the formalisation of ABET and learners' personal problems contribute to poor learner retention in ABET (SHARE Adult Education Centre, 2005:3). School subjects do not answer to adults' everyday needs because their learning and educational needs are not similar to those of children. However, the interviewee stated that despite adult learners' disinterest in school subjects, most adult learners prefer to receive education with "information poured into them". They want to sit in a classroom and be taught something. For this reason, many adult learners do not view library visits as part of learning. This perception of learning as something that can only be done in a classroom leads to a situation where adult learners do not have the ability to be adaptable, inquisitive, and lifelong learners. In order to counteract this problem, SHARE is always searching for relevant, meaningful programmes for adult learners, which are

recognised by the Department of Education and which will lead to higher retention rates in ABET. Higher retention rates might in turn affect funding positively.

The third major risk for SHARE is the *lack of qualified or well-trained adult educators or teachers*. According to the interviewee, ABET is mostly taught by teachers who are trained to teach children and who do not understand how to facilitate learning differently for adults. This adds to the poor results the adult learners obtain, which in turn effects funding negatively. Adult educators do not gain recognition from the Department of Education, and sometimes months pass without them receiving salaries. This discouraging situation affects the morale of adult educators negatively, and qualified teachers then rather seek alternative employment.

It is clear that the risks SHARE faces have a domino effect: the one affects the other one, and all three have to be managed carefully for SHARE to be effective and sustainable. It is also evident that SHARE's risks are directly linked to its stakeholders. If SHARE does not manage its risks well, it will affect its stakeholders negatively, and the organisation will not be able to attain its goals.

6.3.3 Communication strategy

The interviewee believes that a formal communication strategy would "probably add to what we can do", but there is simply no time or resources to plan and compile such a strategy. The Centre Co-ordinator does not even have enough time to compile newsletters and other means of communication. SHARE can also not afford to outsource the communication function because then the Centre Co-ordinator would have "to raise the funds to pay such a person".

As a result of time and resource constraints, SHARE does not have a formal communication strategy or communication plan that stipulate the manner in which communication and strategic stakeholders must be managed. The interviewee believes that communication with stakeholders should definitely be planned but that sometimes there is unexpected, "off-the-cuff-stuff" that must be communicated immediately.

According to the interviewee, information about organisational risks is provided to the Board of Trustees and the Management Committee. She has found however that they do not always understand SHARE's problems and challenges, and it is thus difficult to reach solutions if the extent of problems and challenges are not understood. This leads to a situation where the Centre Co-ordinator often feels solely responsible for finding a solution to SHARE's risks and addressing stakeholder issues, particularly regarding funding.

SHARE does however operate according to an annual schedule/plan, which stipulates that certain information must be communicated at certain times to specific stakeholders. Examples are:
- meetings:
  - the Management Committee's quarterly meetings;
  - the annual general meeting (AGM), where learner's reports, the financial report, and a report from SHARE are presented to stakeholders;
  - quarterly learners' meetings, where learners elect their representative to sit on the Management Committee; and
  - quarterly educators' meetings, where the educators elect their representative to sit on the Management Committee, and where they workshop various issues of relevance to them.
- financial reports;
- mid-year reports to donors;

- monthly reports to the WCED (although monthly reports are expected by the WCED, the Centre Co-ordinator can only manage to deliver these quarterly due to time constraints); and
- "messages for teachers" (which are produced weekly and include messages for learners, as well as general information).

The interviewee said that it is essential that these meetings, formal reports and "messages" be planned because "then everybody knows where they stand, what to expect, and what they have to prepare themselves".

The scheduled reports and various meetings form part of SHARE's formal communication system. Stakeholders, such as the learners, educators and the community, thus communicate formally with SHARE through their representatives. Although SHARE has an annual schedule/plan according to which they communicate with their stakeholders, this communication is not planned strategically with specific outcomes regarding mutual understanding and strong relationships with stakeholders in mind. Communication is not viewed as a tool with which to build strong relationships with stakeholders, but merely as a way to convey information about SHARE's activities to stakeholders.

SHARE's communication practices are focused on *one-way tactical communication*, where the distribution of information is the most important goal. SHARE therefore applies the asymmetrical public information model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27) (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 & 3.3). Strategic communication implies that SHARE should determine what it wants to achieve *strategically* with all its communication efforts in terms of mutual understanding and relationship building with specific stakeholders.

6.3.3.1 Stakeholder relationships

Although the interviewee views *learners* as SHARE's most important stakeholders, the organisation does not formally plan relationship building initiatives with learners. The Centre Co-ordination personnel encourage everybody to make use of formal communication channels because it is common workplace practice, as well as the way democracy functions. However, the SHARE Centre Co-ordination operates an open-door policy that allows learners to speak freely to them about problems and/or successes. The interviewee values this informal communication system through which learners can speak directly to the Centre Co-ordination personnel about problems, frustration, or successes.

SHARE does their utmost to understand and accommodate learners' constraints, and to promote the value of education in the community. SHARE's system of learner representatives and their open-door policy contributes to symmetrical communication between SHARE and its learners. As a result, the interviewee considers SHARE's relationship with its learners satisfactory.

Regarding relationships with *donors*, the interviewee believes that these relationships are not satisfactory. The interviewee stated that it is very difficult to build a personal relationship with a donor, as the management of funding at large organisations is often outsourced to "outside organisations"[1]. This results in an impersonal situation, in which donor relationships are not always clear. Adding to the frustration is that the same external companies manage funding of many large donor organisations, and if funding applications are made to several organisations, the same external company receives all such applications. Physical donor distance and a lack of personal contacts in significant

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1 *Many organisations or companies outsource the management of donations to 'donor organisations'. It may then happen that a NPO applies to different companies or organisations for funding but all applications go to one donor organisation.*

donor areas also hamper the building of good donor relationships.

However, the interviewee said that SHARE has a good relationship with the private German funder of the Reflect Community Development Course (see Section 6.1.1). The Centre Co-ordinator knows him well through the various boards they both sit on, and he is based in Cape Town. This implies that the Centre Co-ordinator has built a strong relationship, by means of two-way symmetrical communication, with this donor, and because of this, she knows his needs and expectations from SHARE.

Despite the problems experienced with donors, SHARE does not have a formal communication plan for donors, nor do they plan relationships with donors. In light of SHARE's problems with donors and funding, the interviewee said that it would be "wonderful" to plan relationships with donors.

The interviewee expressed frustration about the *government* being autocratic and not always open for participatory input from the ABET sector. Although SHARE and others in the ABET sector raise such issues at meetings, the WCED does not always listen to their input. The WCED forces SHARE and others to adopt their systems, for example, the assessment system. SHARE thus feels that the government has a top-down management style. SHARE tries to challenge the above government practices through the Adult Learning Network and the Adult Learning Forum.

Despite these problems and SHARE's lack of a communication plan for government, the interviewee views SHARE's relationship with government, in particular the WCED, as fairly successful. According to the interviewee, SHARE is known as being ethical, well managed and honest, and it is well known that the Centre Co-ordinator is outspoken about "what is right and what is not right" in the ABET sector. SHARE is critical about government actions and policies, but needs to be cautious in their criticism because they receive funding from the WCED.

The unsatisfactory state of SHARE's relationship with its donors, and to a lesser extent with government, is mainly due to its lack of *strategic* relationship-building goals and efforts concerning these stakeholders. SHARE does not aim to build strong relationships with specific persons that might assist them with attaining their strategic goals, but rather aims communication at government or a donor organisation. On the whole, SHARE does not plan specific interaction with specific stakeholders, in order to attain strategic goals and build mutually beneficial relationships with a stakeholder or stakeholder group by addressing their issues.

Although the interviewee did not consider the *general public* as an important stakeholder, she expressed frustration at the their lack of knowledge about SHARE's work, in spite of reports in the local newspapers, posters in the local library, and her address at several public meetings regarding SHARE. The interviewee would like the "general public" to become more involved in voluntary work at SHARE and contribute to funding.

In order to solve the above problem, the interviewee said that SHARE needs to develop a website, in order to increase their overall visibility. A website is currently being developed by the computer trainer who is doing so voluntarily, as there are no funds available for professional website development. It is "taking quite a while" to finish because the computer trainer "is busy with other things at the moment". The Centre Co-ordination staff can make suggestions regarding information they wish to have on the website, but because it is being done voluntarily, they feel that they cannot be too demanding.

From a communication management perspective, it is unrealistic to target the *general public* as stakeholders. SHARE did not do stakeholder profiling in this stakeholder group, in order to identify specific civil society groups that it wishes to reach. Furthermore, SHARE did not identify any organisational and/or relationship goals with *specific* civil society groups or opinion makers as part of the general public. It is thus not surprising that SHARE's communication efforts with the *general public* have not yielded results.

When the interviewee was asked to describe the five steps to successful stakeholder management in an ideal world, she answered that these are:

- to employ a full-time fundraiser responsible for building relationships with donors;
- to employ a full-time staff member to manage newsletters and other means of communication with stakeholders; and
- to make time for more communication with local community leaders, the town council, and political leaders because this is very time consuming and adult education is not always viewed as important as crime or housing.

The interviewee was not able to indicate any other steps to be taken because "SHARE already has systems in place". The interviewee's views show that she realises the need for relationship building, but that she does not have time or capacity to do it effectively. Strategic communication management and relationship building is therefore hindered by especially a lack of funding.

6.4   SHARE: Strategic communication management analysis

6.4.1   *Application of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model*

In the next figure, the communication management practices of the FLP are roughly plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 10.

Figure 6.2: Compliance of Project Literacy's communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)
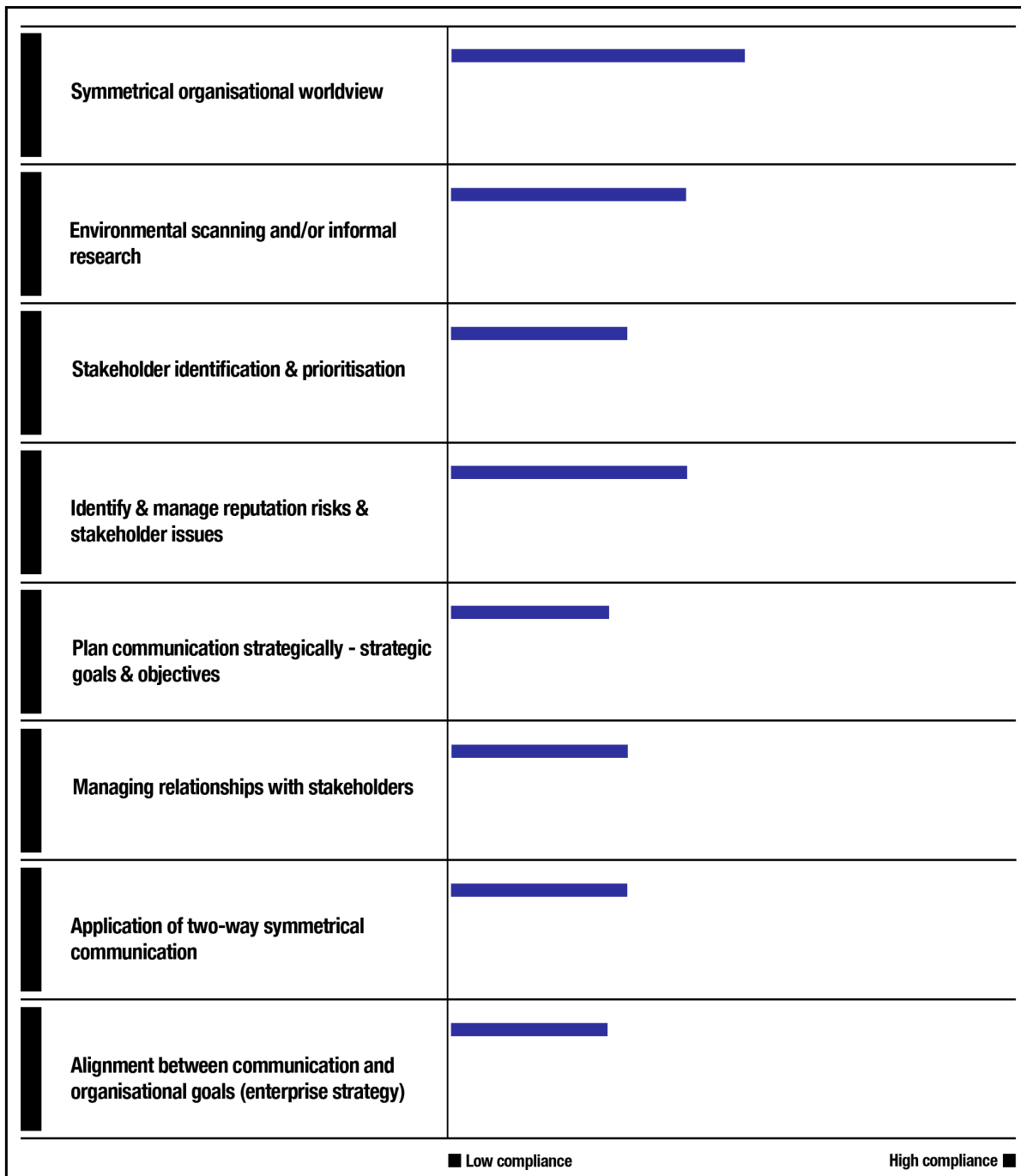
SHARE's communication practices do mostly not correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management, particularly because it does not have a communication management strategy and relationship building programmes aimed at any of its stakeholders. Al-

though SHARE does not have a communication strategy, all communication and relationship efforts are aimed at attaining its vision and objectives. The lack of a formal communication strategy prevents an alignment between organisational and communication goals, and therefore hinders the organisation in obtaining its objectives effectively.

SHARE does not conduct formal environmental scanning to analyse its external environment, in order to identify its strategic organisational risks and its stakeholders' issues, particularly not from a strategic communication point of view. Although the interviewee gathers information *informally*, by reading widely, using the Internet, and serving on several boards, she still feels that SHARE does SHARE's communication practices do mostly not correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management, pratically because it does not not gather enough information from the community they serve because she does not have enough time to be more involved. This implies that SHARE might not be aware of specific and/or changing needs of the community from which its potential learners come. This might add to their difficulty in developing relevant, meaningful programmes for learners, which the interviewee identified as a major risk faced by SHARE.

SHARE's most important stakeholders are its learners, donors, and the government, in particular the WCED. SHARE's main organisational risks include a difficulty to obtain funding, the low success rate of adult education, and the lack of qualified or well-trained adult educators or teachers. Unknowingly, SHARE has linked its most important stakeholders to its main organisational risks. Unfortunately, SHARE does not effectively employ communication management as a tool with which to build strong relationships with its stakeholders and in the process manage these risks. Without applying two-way communication, SHARE does not exactly know its stakeholders' specific needs and issues, and how to engage with them in order to build strong relationships and address their issues. Without strong relationships, SHARE cannot achieve its objectives successfully. It is for this reason that SHARE is frustrated with the quality of its relationships with some of its stakeholders and its risks are difficult to manage.

As mentioned in Sections 6.3.3 and 6.4, SHARE's Centre Co-ordinator communicates according to an annual schedule/plan, but it is merely a technical, one-way distribution of information. The first reason for this might be the Centre Co-ordinator's lack of communication training. The second reason might be that the practical implementation of the strategic steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model is hindered by the time and resource constraints facing SHARE. The interviewee said that SHARE could not afford to appoint a communication practitioner because the funds to pay such a person will have to be raised. The interviewee added furthermore that the scientific research that forms the base of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is too costly for SHARE to implement.

Although SHARE mostly applies the one-way public information model, it is evident from the interview that SHARE is mostly managed according to a symmetrical worldview, with emphasis on participative management. This worldview can actually enable SHARE to make use of strategic communication management on a higher level, in order to obtain its objectives more effectively. This implies that SHARE would be able to practice strategic communication management, if they receive training in this regard.

6.4.2   Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

In the next figure, the communication management practices of SHARE are roughly plotted against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 11.

Figure 6.3: Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRöH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	■	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	■	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	■	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	■	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	■	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	■	Relationship management strategically planned

In terms of Ströh's (2007:199–220) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6) postmodern approach to strategic communication management, it was found that although SHARE does not plan their communication and stakeholder relationships strategically, the interviewee believes that it might be useful to do so (see Section 6.3.3). It is also evident from the interviewee's view on the steps necessary for successful stakeholder management that she feels SHARE requires an additional staff member to raise and manage funding and attend to other communication matters. Although SHARE does not have a communication management strategy, this is due to time and resource constraints and a lack of knowledge, and not due to the Centre Co-ordinator's belief in "experiencing the anxiety of unpredictability" (Ströh, 2007:212).

As mentioned in Section 6.3.3.1, the interviewee noted that SHARE is known as being ethical, well managed, and honest. The interviewee did however emphasise that it is important to plan communication for stakeholder relationship building, and because of this, the interviewee's point of view is not the same as Ströh's (2007), who asserts that only ethical behaviour is necessary for relationship building.

Concerning Ströh's (2007:200) viewpoint that communication practitioners should not be part of the dominant coalition, it can be concluded from the interview that the interviewee would not agree with Ströh. The Centre Co-ordinator expressed a definite need for a communication practitioner, and with SHARE's participative management approach, it can be argued that the communication practitioner would have a dominant coalition position.

Ströh (2007:210) views a communication practitioner as both a relationship manager and an activist who debates alternative viewpoints and instigates conflict in order to contribute to meaning making

(see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2). SHARE's Centre Co-ordinator is outspoken against government's ABET policies, but she has to be careful not to disadvantage the organisation by instigating conflict and thus potentially losing funding from, or harm the already fragile relationship with the WCED. SHARE's Centre Co-ordinator therefore rather focuses on building harmonious relationships with all stakeholders.

Ströh (2007:209) asserts that stakeholders cannot be managed top-down by formulating communication strategies but by all stakeholders participating fully in all strategy formulation. Although the interviewee misunderstood the concept of participative management (see Section 6.2), she stressed that although SHARE is a champion for participative management, it is not always feasible to include all stakeholders in strategy formulation due to time constraints, a lack of understanding of issues, and a lack of interest from stakeholders.

It is clear from the above discussion that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication management are not in practice at SHARE.

CHAPTER 7

PROJECT LITERACY

Interview with Andrew Miller and Yvonne Eskell-Klagsbrun, on 13 July 2007

7.1   Background

7.1.1   Organisational overview

In 1973, the founder of Project Literacy, Jenny Neser, started to teach live-in domestic workers and gardeners in Brooklyn in Pretoria to read and write. Project Literacy has grown from these humble beginnings to one of the largest ABET providers in South Africa.

According to the interviewees, Project Literacy has survived for so long because the organisation has transformed according to the market and society. The biggest shift for Project Literacy, after 1994, was from being donor funded to mainly government funded. The CEO, Andrew Miller, asserted that Project Literacy's survival is especially due to them being more service delivery orientated than politically orientated.

As mentioned above, Project Literacy is a NPO that is mainly funded by running government projects. Project Literacy's work can thus be divided into three distinct segments, namely government, corporate, and rural development projects. For corporate development projects, Project Literacy presents literacy courses to employees of businesses and organisations that pay for the training and as such are paying *clients* of Project Literacy (see Section 7.1.3.1). Project Literacy runs the *HIV/AIDS Counselling and Care Project* and the *Run Home to Read Project* as examples of its rural development projects. The rural development projects are funded by donors, and participants do not pay for the training (see Section 7.1.3.2).

According to the interviewees, it is important for Project Literacy to survive, but also to maintain their integrity and adhere to their principles. They offer the same level of service to a small community based organisation (CBO) as they do to a large government department. The CEO thus states that Project Literacy's character is difficult to describe: "*donor-funded, compete with commercial providers, run like a abusiness, but have the heart of a NGO*" (Project Literacy, 2007a:7). It is for this reason that they have adopted a new international acronym, BONGO (a business-orientated NGO).

Project Literacy is thus a multifaceted organisation dealing with a broad interpretation of ABET on a national scale (Project Literacy, 2007a:8). Project Literacy is also a broad based "*Black Empowerment Company*" because they have a majority black staff, majority black management, and "*100% black beneficiaries*" (Project Literacy, 2007:8). In this regard, Project Literacy has received an above average BEE rating from the Department of Trade and Industry (Project Literacy, 2007a:8). Project Literacy has furthermore registered as a BEE Investment company, in order to pursue investment opportunities that could have long-term financial benefits for the organisation (Project Literacy, 2007a:7).

Project Literacy is accredited with both the ETDP SETA and Umalusi, which is the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education (Project Literacy, 2007a:9). Umalusi is the statutory organisation for monitoring and improving the quality of general and further education in South Africa. This means that learners' qualifications are acknowledged by the NQF. Project Literacy has registered assessors in place to assess learners and participants (Project Literacy, 2007b). Project Literacy also has a quality assurance division that monitors classroom delivery and other practices in the organisation (Project Literacy, 2007a:9).

After analysing the examination results for English ABET Level 4 and Mathematics ABET Level 4 of learners from Project Literacy, the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), and the Department of Education (DoE) for the years 2004 to 2006, Project Literacy's learners performed best of all, except for English 2004 (Project Literacy, 2007a:18). These results highlight the quality of Project Literacy's training.

The following are some key areas in which Project Literacy is active (Project Literacy, 2007b):
- the development and provision of a wide range of education and training programmes for learners and educators from ABET Level 1 to NQF 6;
- the development of materials for large civic education campaigns, such as the Independent Electoral Commission and the European Union Commission for Human Rights;
- the development of a comprehensive range of learning material at ABET Levels 1 to 4 for the current GETC;
- the development of learner and training material for clients who require customised interventions;
- the training and management of community-based educators throughout the country;
- the management of adult education centres in which over 200 000 adults have become literate through the provision of ABET services;
- working in partnership with government departments, corporate clients, other NGOs, CBOs, and educational bodies; and
- running national SETA grant and National Skills Fund projects for several SETAs.

Project Literacy's ability to write accessible, relevant materials for adults and its success in linking educator training and learner materials has been made use of by both government and the private sector. Three provincial educational departments (Northern Cape, Northern Province, and Mpumalanga) appointed Project Literacy to train ABET educators. Project Literacy's corporate and industry clients include the Department of Labour, the Department of Correctional Services, several provincial Departments of Education, SETAs, and private companies, such as Nestlé (Project Literacy, 2007b).

7.1.2   *Project Literacy's vision*

Project Literacy's vision and mission is to "*deliver a wide range of Adult Basic Education and Training programmes to educationally disadvantaged adults by way of adult education centres, teacher training, curriculum development and community outreach*" (Project Literacy, 2007b).

7.1.3   *Project Literacy's activities and projects*

In addition to running government projects, Project Literacy's activities and projects include corporate and rural development projects. These are discussed in the following sections.

7.1.3.1 Corporate development projects

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1.2, companies and organisations in the private sector are taxed according to the SDA (97/1998) and the SDLA (9/1999), which require employers to pay one per cent of their payroll to fund the skills development and training of their employees. These levies are paid over to the SETAs, which in turn issue tenders to ABET providers, such as Project Literacy, to train staff in the private sector, such as Nestlé (Project Literacy, 2007b).

Project Literacy currently provides training in over thirty-five different courses, ranging from ABET Educator training to higher-level Assessor, Moderator, and Mentor courses, as well as courses in Afrikaans, English, Natural Sciences, and other school subjects. Courses leading to full qualifications can take up to two years to complete. Project Literacy also offers short workshops on topics, such as HIV/AIDS, as well as skills courses, such as Basic Banking, Rights at Work, and Buying a Home (Project Literacy, 2007b).

Project Literacy trains educators in a company, who in turn train adult illiterates. Project Literacy uses an outcomes-based methodology for all courses it runs. Training is conducted through interactive groups and uses a problem-solving approach. Training events draw on the experience and practical knowledge that participants bring with them to the classroom. This methodology encourages educators to use the same approach when they, in turn, train adult learners (Project Literacy, 2007b). Project Literacy's training courses and educator guides are aligned to unit standards as set by the Department of Education and incorporate all critical cross-field outcomes.

7.1.3.2 Rural development projects

7.1.3.2.1   HIV/AIDS Counselling and Care Project

Project Literacy's *HIV/AIDS Counseling and Care Project* plays an important role in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and in the Limpopo Province regarding HIV/Aids education. The Canadian International Development Aid (CIDA) and the Aid Programme managed by the New Zealand High Commission fund the project.

As anti-retroviral drugs are more readily available to HIV-positive people, Project Literacy feels that it is now possible to spread a message of hope rather than just one of despair. They have found that it is easier to persuade people to be tested for HIV/AIDS when some medical intervention rather than a death sentence can be offered. Owing to the remoteness of the areas, many people have limited access to printed or electronic sources of information about HIV/AIDS. Without knowledge, people cannot make informed decisions about their health (Project Literacy, 2006:29).

Project Literacy started training adult educators in HIV/AIDS counselling and care in 2005. According to the 2007 Annual Report (Project Literacy, 2007a:29), 200 adult educators and 1 616 700 adult learners in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Limpopo Province have been trained in HIV/AIDS since the inception of the project in 2005.

The nature of adult educators' work allows them to form strong relationships with adult learners. The relationships that adult educators build with their learners contributes to their ability to connect with learners in a way that healthcare workers cannot (Project Literacy, 2006:28). Because of these strong relationships, adult educators can raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, present accurate information, and provide an open and safe forum for discussion within the classroom. Over and

above the mentioned provision of information, adult educators are trained to provide related information on aspects such as nutrition, home-based care, discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS, testing, counseling, and treatment (Project Literacy, 2006:29). Project Literacy thus decided to use the adult education centres managed by communities and provincial education departments to reach learners and community members, even those in the most rural and poorest communities (Project Literacy, 2007a:10–11).

Before training of the educators was undertaken, HIV/AIDS materials were tested in-house and reworked where necessary to ensure effective training. Project Literacy has subsequently designed a high quality educator manual to guide educators through HIV/AIDS training workshops with participants (Project Literacy, 2007b).

Gender issues played a role in recruitment, particularly in attracting men to attend HIV/AIDS workshops. As 35 per cent of Project Literacy's trained educators were male, this assisted in recruiting males to attend the workshops. As a result of the training, male learners stated that they now felt more comfortable discussing HIV/AIDS issues (Project Literacy, 2007b). In order to further address gender issues relating to HIV/Aids, both female and male condoms were utilised as part of demonstrations during workshops (Project Literacy, 2007b).

7.1.3.2.2 *Run Home to Read Project*

Project Literacy's second rural development project, *Run Home to Read*, focuses on children who are between one and seven years old, as well as their caregivers, which include parents, grandparents, and older brothers and sisters. It was found that there is a need for pre-schools in the poorest rural areas of South Africa. Parents of children from these areas are mostly domestic workers and farm workers. They earn very little money and cannot afford to send their children to pre-schools. The children are left at home alone, or older siblings are kept from school to attend to younger children (Project Literacy, 2007a:26). The aim of the project is for children to be better prepared for school and for their caregivers to understand the role they play in the development of their children's early literacy skills (Project Literacy, 2006:30). Although the project focuses on pre-school children, everyone in the family benefits from it, as the caregivers and elder brothers and sisters also improve their reading skills.

Project Literacy launched the first *Run Home to Read* project in June 2006 in the Limpopo Province. They trained twenty Reading Champions who reached 600 families, with limited or no access to reading material, during 2006. The Reading Champions played a critical role in providing support to caregivers and children who possess little prior experience with reading. From March 2007, a further 400 families were targeted in the Limpopo Province (Project Literacy, 2007b).

The Reading Champions provide intensive training to caregivers in these families on how to read to their children, as well as other activities to engage and develop children's early literacy skills (Project Literacy, 2006:30). Besides the training, each family receives a *Run Home to Read* starter pack that includes a Caregiver's Manual, Activity Book for children, four storybooks, crayons, and T-shirts. The materials in the starter pack guide the caregiver on how to read to and engage the child(ren) through a series of four storybooks and a variety of stimulation exercises (Project Literacy, 2007b).

Exclusive Books, in contribution to the *Run Home to Read* project, has donated hundreds of books to local libraries where the project is run. In this way, Exclusive Books has helped to cement Project Literacy's relationship with libraries, and library orientation has been incorporated into the pro-

gramme. The Reading Champions facilitate the borrowing and returning of books on a monthly basis by taking out a block loan of ten to twenty books per month. The Reading Champions explain the process of borrowing books to the families, and they receive a library orientation to familiarise them with the library concept. In this way, the Reading Champions serve as the link between the libraries and the families, ensuring that the families have access to books on a continued basis. Once the families complete the three-month intervention period, they have continued access to books in the local libraries. Libraries also increase their membership and serve poor families in the remote villages of their municipal area (Project Literacy, 2007b). Thus, most caregivers and their families have joined their local libraries, and they have developed the learning skills of reading, listening to, and telling stories (Project Literacy, 2007a:25–26). At the time of the study, the project has been expanded to Soshanguve in Pretoria, targeting another 100 families (Project Literacy, 2007a:25; Project Literacy, 2007b).

7.2 Project Literacy's organisational structure, management & societal role

According to the interviewees, Project Literacy has a flat organisational structure. There is a *Board of Trustees*; *Board of Directors*; a *CEO*, and the *Corporate Department* (which forms the dominant coalition of Project Literacy)*; the four *departments*, namely the Materials Development, Quality Assurance, Finance, and Training; and the *staff* in each department (Project Literacy, 2007a:20–21). Project Literacy employs 72 full-time staff members and about 400 part-time adult educators. There are provincial offices in the Free State, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Limpopo Province, the North-West Province, and Mpumalanga (Project Literacy, 2007a:21). According to the CEO, the provincial offices are relatively autonomous, and they "run their own provincial show, without much interference". Project Literacy's head office in Pretoria provides resources and back-up for the provincial offices. Figure 7.1 on the following page shows the Project Literacy's organogram.

Figure 7.1 Project Literacy's organogram
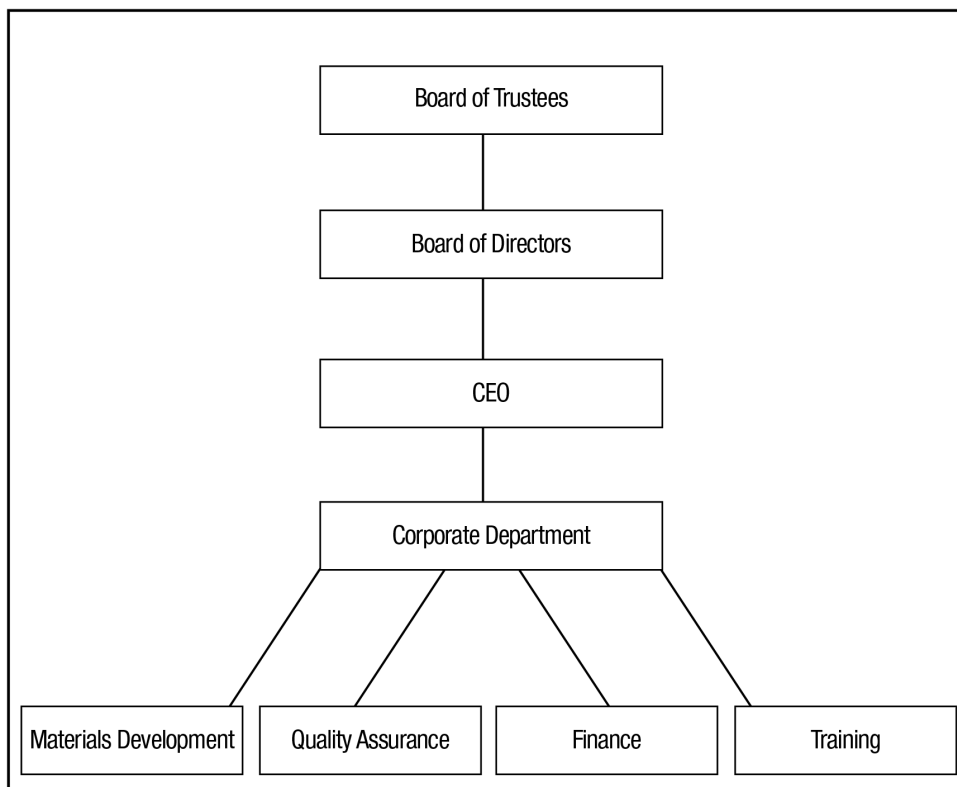
The interviewees described Project Literacy's organisational culture as open and creative. The CEO emphasised his open-door policy through which all staff is encouraged to give their own input into organisational management. According to the interviewees, many NPOs started out with "that founder vision" that might curb creativity. Therefore the current CEO tries consciously to steer away from the previous "leader dominated way of management", and now focuses more on a participatory management style. The interviewees believe that this open, creative organisational culture has led to very good staff retention at Project Literacy, even through difficult times. The CEO supports the above statement in the 2007 Annual Report (Project Literacy, 2007a:10) in saying that individual achievement, dedication, and extra effort is always recognised.

Project Literacy makes use of a PLEASE (Project Literacy Employment and Staff Equity) Committee which represents all divisions in the organisation. This committee considers issues such as staff's conditions of service and procurement. Project Literacy also has a whistle-blower box in which staff can anonymously report mismanagement or other misbehaviour. Only one less serious anonymous comment has been received in the past year. These tools add to openness in the organisation.

The interviewees pointed out that upper and middle management are responsible for strategic planning and strategy formulation. Project Literacy did attempt participative strategy planning and formulation, including all staff ("even the tea lady"), a few years ago. Although this practice sounds "politically cool", it was unsuccessful in that lower-level staff could not really contribute, and this made them feel inadequate.

The interviewees asserted though that all stakeholders participate informally in strategic planning and strategy formulation. Staff has a say in all matters because of the CEO's open door policy. External stakeholders participate informally because information gathered from them is considered in strategy formulation, but they are not formally present when strategy is formulated. The CEO termed this informal participative process "osmosis", because strategic information is gathered through management's personal relationships with different stakeholders. Management then presents all stakeholders' views into the strategic planning and formulation process. Those in management who maintain relationships with stakeholders are these stakeholders' voices. Strategic information from stakeholders is "shared in the family, but we don't have the next-door neighbours at the family party", meaning that not all stakeholders are present during strategic planning and strategy formulation.

Project Literacy previously had a whole communication department, but staff had to be cut down for financial reasons. Project Literacy employs a Fundraising and Communications Manager, but she only has a half-day position. This practitioner, who also serves as the manager of the department, has a marketing qualification from the Institute for Management and Marketing. The Fundraising and Communications Manager forms part of the organisation's dominant coalition, and according to her, she has a strategic role and reports directly to the CEO. She works closely with the CEO on what Project Literacy's "corporate image, brochures, and annual report should look like".

According to the interviewees, Project Literacy's social role is twofold. Firstly, they have a supporting role, where Project Literacy is a broad supporter of government policies and programmes. They implement government programes, for instance the nationally deployed Ikhwelo programme (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2). Government owns the programme, but Project Literacy implements it. Concerning the government's new *Kha Re Gudi* mass literacy campaign, Project Literacy forms part of the campaign's research group; they will take part in the campaign, and they have seconded a staff member to the education department to assist with the implementation of the programme. Secondly, Project Literacy has a social transformation role and aids social transformation by building

up and giving back to society. Project Literacy therefore provides most of their training to the unemployed free of charge, especially in the Run Home to Read Project. Sometimes they even provide small incentives to retain the learners, for example, lunch or a warm meal. Project Literacy does, however, sometimes charge a small fee for courses to help retain learners attending ABET courses. The interviewees emphasised that these fees go to the community centres hosting the ABET courses and not to Project Literacy. Included in Project Literacy's social transformation role is the provision of citizenship education. People are taught that they have social power and that they must use their votes "to get things done rather than reverting to violence". Project Literacy also plays an increasingly intermediatory or provider role, where they provide training and books to people from within the community to teach and train others from the community, thus following a "train the trainer" approach. In this way, skills remain in the community.

Considering the above, it is clear that Project Literacy is mostly managed according to a symmetrical worldview (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2). Although they do not make extensive use of *formal* research for strategic purposes, dialogue is at the core of their relationships with stakeholders, and used to create an understanding of the importance of adult literacy. Project Literacy has a symmetrical worldview of organisational communication, and it can be illustrated with the presuppositions that characterise this worldview (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2).

The main reason for Project Literacy's survival is that the organisation functions as an *open system* in which information is used to adapt to the changing environment. In this way, the organisation has a *moving equilibrium* because of its mutual and cooperative adjustments to other systems, such as the changing donor landscape, the Department of Education, and the SETAs (see Section 7.1.1). Project Literacy has realised that to survive there has to be *interdependence* between them, government, and other stakeholders, such as donors and clients. This interdependence is celebrated by their adapted AGM meeting, "Celebrating Partnerships" at which Project Literacy acknowledges their partnerships with clients, donors, and other stakeholders.

All employees are *equal* in that they are encouraged to provide their own input into organisational management. Both interviewees emphasised that *innovation*, *creativity*, and *responsibility* for own actions and decisions are encouraged and rewarded. *Conflict resolution* within Project Literacy is handled through dialogue and the PLEASE committee (see Section 7.2). The symmetrical worldview is reinforced in the *decentralization of management*, for instance the *autonomy* of the provincial offices.

Project Literacy serves the needs of adult illiterates, by serving as a "spokesperson" for them. In this way, Project Literacy is a supporter of *interest-group liberalism*. Interest-group liberalism adds to Project Literacy's *idealistic social role* because they aid social transformation by building up and giving back to society. Through Project Literacy's constant communication about and criticism of government's legislation and actions regarding adult illiteracy, they aim to set a *norm* for both communication about and addressing adult illiteracy in South Africa.

Adding to Project Literacy's symmetrical worldview is the Fundraising and Communications Manager, who forms part of the dominant coalition, has a (supposedly) strategic role, and reports directly to the CEO. However, the Fundraising and Communications Manager views technical communication tasks, such as compiling brochures and the annual report, as strategic communication tasks. She does not strategically analyse all information obtained from formal and informal research or environmental scanning to identify and prioritise strategic organisational risks and stakeholders' issues and to feed this information into Project Literacy's enterprise strategy. The Fundraising and

Communications Manager should also be responsible for developing Project Literacy's communication strategy. Technical communication tasks could be outsourced or delegated to other staff members. The Fundraising and Communications Manager's lack of formal communication qualifications might add to Project Literacy's lack of strategic communication management.

7.3 Communication management

7.3.1 Stakeholders

The interviewees said that Project Literacy has different layers of stakeholders. Firstly, there are the Board of Trustees, Board of Directors, staff, facilitators and teachers, and the learners. Secondly, there are the donors, corporate clients, and the general public. The different layers do not indicate the most important stakeholders, but only show that Project Literacy has stakeholders with different "types of stakes" in the organisation..

According to the interviewees, Project Literacy's most important stakeholders are government (which includes the SETAs), which provides Project Literacy with contracts without which they would not be able to survive; donors and corporate clients; and the learners. Project Literacy determines its most important stakeholders with: "I suppose it's the people who pay us the most", indicating government and donors.

7.3.2 Environmental analysis

Project Literacy does not conduct formal research or environmental scanning to determine their most important risks and stakeholders' issues because it is too costly. Formal research is done though when they are embarking on big projects, for example, a project for the National Development Agency in the Eastern Free State, where Project Literacy spent six months evaluating community and local government's perceptions, and conducting feasibility studies. In such cases, the costs for formal research are included in the project's budget.

Risks are exposed informally through extensive reading of newspapers, using the Internet, and "keep[ing] our ears on the ground" (see Section 7.2). Managers from the provincial offices report to Project Literacy's head office every two months, which ensures that management is kept updated on what is happening in each provincial office, as well as the challenges each provincial office faces.

The interviewees identified three major risks facing Project Literacy, namely fluctuation of funding for projects, being unable to plan for the future, and a lack of well-trained teachers.

7.3.2.1 Consequences of risks for the organisation

According to the interviewees, the fluctuation of *funds* is the greatest weakness of Project Literacy. They find fundraising very hard because donors change their criteria for funding without letting them know about the changes in advance. Project Literacy would count on funding, the criteria would change and then they would no longer receive the funding. This leads to a "feast and famine" situation where there is more than enough money in one year, and in the next year, there is a shortage of funds.

Project Literacy was successful in replacing the pre-1994 donor-funded work with work directly or indirectly linked to government funding. They have found though that over-dependence on work

from the government sector left them financially vulnerable. Government contracts are characterised by a lack of long-term planning and time delays between conceptualisation, implementation, and payment (Project Literacy, 2006:4). Both government and the SETAs fail to recognise that ABET is a long-term process, where funding must enable learners to follow training through to its conclusion (a Level-4, NQF 1 qualification) (Project Literacy, 2006:4).

The temporary cessation of the National Lottery also negatively affected Project Literacy's funding. This is evident from their donor list in the 2006 and 2007 Annual Reports, where the National Lottery donated R2,5 million in 2006, while no donation was made in 2007 (Project Literacy, 2006:36; Project Literacy, 2007a:30).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1.2, the skills levies obtained from the private sector for funding the skills development and training of staff, according to the SDLA (9/1999) is paid over to the SETAs. The SETAs in turn issue tenders to ABET providers, such as Project Literacy, to train staff at for instance a municipality or large company. The interviewees emphasised the high costs of ABET, and said that the one per cent of a company's pay roll is not enough to pay for their staff's training. Despite these high costs, many companies and businesses expect Project Literacy to provide training free because they already pay skills levies to the SETAs.

Another problem regarding these skills levies is that companies or corporations do not want to donate funds for other ABET projects to organisations such as Project Literacy because they are already paying skills levies to the SETAs. They then view these skills levies as their contribution to ABET, which they view as time-consuming, costly, and more social redress than workplace "upskilling" (Project Literacy, 2006:4–5). For this reason, it is easier to request funding from the private sector for the HIV/AIDS Counselling and Care Project and the Run Home to Read Project that focuses on children.

Because Project Literacy does not always know beforehand about changes in funding criteria, they find it difficult *to plan for the future.* The CEO illustrated the situation with Project Literacy's current R36 million project for the Department of Labour to implement ABET to unemployed people in four provinces, Gauteng, the Free State, the Limpopo Province, and the Western Cape. At the time of the interview Project Literacy did not know whether the project will be continued in 2008[1]. There is no indication from the Department of Labour whether the project is going to be "rolled over, extended, or if is it a once-off". The CEO took the officials from the Department of Labour out for lunch to get information on the duration of the project, but even they did not know whether the project would be extended.

The composition of many government projects reveals a total lack of understanding of the way in which adults learn. Adding to this dilemma is a lack of foresight concerning the continuous funding of government projects. This situation negatively influences learners' progress, for example, a learner may complete one level of education, and then Project Literacy has to wait another twelve months to resume the project while waiting for government to draw up, adjudicate, and award a new tender. The demotivated learner has then lost most of the learning gained by the time the project can continue (Project Literacy, 2007a:8).

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1   *The Department of Labour has reappointed Project Literacy to implement the second phase of its project. The project has commenced in May 2008, and will continue for eighteen months. The second phase will cover the training of 11 000 learners in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, the North-West Province and the Western Cape (Project Literacy, 2008:23).*

The lack of funds and the difficulty of planning for the future leads to a situation where staff can be hired one year, and then they have to go the next year. In 2006, Project Literacy's management engaged the assistance of professionals to help them design a model in which the number of full-time staff remains small and professional project managers are brought in on a task-by-task basis (Project Literacy, 2006:7). This instability has implications for retaining skilled people, for building staff morale, and for long-term planning (Project Literacy, 2006:7). Besides the high cost of hiring and training staff, it is difficult to elicit loyalty from staff appointed only for the period of the contract. The unpredictability of funding also adds to the difficulty of finding trained teachers.

It is very difficult for Project Literacy to find *well-trained teachers*, particularly teachers trained to teach Mathematics. They can usually only get teachers that cannot obtain jobs in schools. Project Literacy has also found a high staff turnover with younger teachers because younger teachers are more likely to move than older teachers are. They are also able to get other jobs more readily (Project Literacy, 2007b). It is for this reason that Project Literacy is increasingly making use of expatriate-Zimbabwean teachers whose training is of a higher quality than local teachers are.[2]

It is clear from the above discussion that all the risks facing Project Literacy are interconnected: the one affecting the other, and in turn affecting Project Literacy's existence and sustainability as an organisation. The above-mentioned risks could become major stakeholder issues, as a lack of funding influences, amongst others, the quality of learning materials, staff retention, the hiring of competent teachers, and the completion of courses to obtain full literacy. It is thus clear that Project Literacy should utilise strategic communication management to manage its risks and potential stakeholder issues successfully.

7.3.3 Communication strategy

Project Literacy does not have a formal strategy and communication plans to communicate with and manage their different stakeholders. They usually decide informally what needs to be communicated and thus all "communication is done on an ad hoc basis". Despite this, the interviewees emphasised that all Project Literacy's communication campaigns are aligned to the organisation's vision and strategic goals.

The interviewees pointed out that Project Literacy needs a communication strategy, but "they need a dedicated person for that". The reason why the organisation would need a dedicated communication practitioner is that "communication strategy formulation and the ongoing process of relationship building take a lot of time, which we don't have". It takes time to build a relationship with a specific stakeholder at, for instance, a donor organisation but when the person leaves the organisation, the whole process has to be begun again. The interviewees stated that despite the necessity of having a dedicated person for communication management and relationship building, Project Literacy does not have enough money to appoint such a person. It can be argued that Project Literacy already has a dedicated person for strategic communication management, namely the Fundraising and Communications Manager. However, neither the CEO nor this manager saw herself fulfilling this role. This person should be responsible for compiling Project Literacy's overarching communication strategy, which would enable all persons responsible for communicating with stakeholders to do so efficiently. With an overarching communication strategy as a guideline, Project Literacy can continue its practice of the CEO, Fundraising and Communications Manager, and members of the Corporate Department communicating and building strong relationships with strategic stakeholders.

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2   *The Department of Education currently has a recruitment drive in Zimbabwe to recruit a thousand Mathematics teachers for South Africa (ANON, 2006:28; Webster, 2007:8).*

The interviewees believe that a lack of communication strategy and plans are a huge shortcoming for Project Literacy, particularly with the media in mind, as "we could do a lot more with the media". The problem, according to the interviewees, is that Project Literacy lacks the funds for advertising. Project Literacy also tries to have messages published in newspapers, but there is never a guarantee that it will appear. The interviewees identified the problem with newspapers being "how do you make an adult learner more appealing?" in terms of news coverage (to compete with, for example, news articles about development programmes focusing on children). For this reason, Project Literacy sometimes uses paid advertisements, but it is very costly.

Although the interviewees did not state the *media* as an important stakeholder, it became evident from the interview that Project Literacy is frustrated with the media coverage they receive. The Fundraising and Communications Manager feels that it is part of newspapers' social role to report on the activities of NPOs/NGOs, particularly when a donor present funds to an organisation. When a newspaper covers the event, it would encourage other potential donors to donate money to NPOs. Unfortunately, journalists do not see it as part of their duty, and they are "moeg" of "photos of people giving a cheque to an organisation".

Project Literacy has also taken journalists out to their projects to "show them what we do". Recently Project Literacy took a journalist on a three-day paid tour to projects, including those in Kwa-Zulu Natal. No article was published though, and according to the interviewees, the money was wasted. When media are invited to events, such as the "Celebrating Partnership" Function, they attend the event, but they do not publish a story on the event. The media have often been invited to but have not attended Project Literacy's events.

Having a good relationship with the media and stories published might lead to an understanding of the nature and importance of Project Literacy's work, and subsequently to more funding. In the 2007 Annual Report (2007:27), the project manager of the *Run Home to Read* Project mentioned that Project Literacy had to overcome the suspicion many of the families had regarding their intentions. Many people believed that they were government officials coming to verify whether they warranted a RDP house, or that the *Run Home to Read* Project was a mere scam. Only when the local radio stations aired a programme on the project did families realise that the project was for their benefit.

Proceeding from the above is the CEO's comment in *Literally News* (Project Literacy, 2007b): "The idea that all illiterate people are jumping at the bit to become literate is not true. Unless people see real benefits, which are quickly explained to them, they don't attend classes. Poor and unemployed people need to see an immediate benefit and see it quickly!" Despite Project Literacy knowing that they need the media to communicate to specific segments of the public, they do not have a formal communication and stakeholder relationship management strategy for the media.

Project Literacy focuses on two main annual events, namely the "Celebrating Partnerships" Function and the annual International Literacy Day on 8 September. The AGM was changed to the "Celebrating Partnership" Function at the Rand Club in Johannesburg. The annual report is presented during this event, but the main focus is on acknowledging the various partnerships with their diverse range of clients from government departments, industry, CBOs and donors (Project Literacy, 2006:14; Project Literacy, 2007b).

In general, the main aim of Project Literacy's communication is to tell and remind stakeholders what they are about: "We are the biggest, the best, the oldest, we are reliable, trustworthy, we understand

the market, we push quality, we are the Woolworths [of ABET provision], not the Checkers, we're a one-stop shop". The aim of their communication is thus to "be the preferred supplier of literacy and adult education". The interviewees emphasised that it is very important to convey to stakeholders "that we have ethics" and that adult education is not a "quick fix" because it takes time to see results. In this instance, Project Literacy makes use of the two-way asymmetrical model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27) (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3), by using scientific research on the benefits and quality of its ABET provision to *influence* potential clients (that is, the marketplace and employers) to make use of Project Literacy's ABET programmes, despite the high costs thereof.

Project Literacy's main mode of communication is the annual report that is sent to all stakeholders and other interested parties. Newsletters are also sent to all donors, clients, and supporters, where communication is mostly by e-mail. Project Literacy's communication is therefore mostly one-way in nature.

7.3.3.1 Stakeholder relationships

The interviewees pointed out that Project Literacy has both formal and informal relationships with stakeholders. They emphasised that it is very important to build *personal* relationships with stakeholders. The CEO, the Fundraising and Communications Manager, and other members of the Corporate Department are responsible for building relationships with those clients and donors they work with. In other words, Project Literacy has identified specific "stakeholder relationship owners" to build relationships with specific stakeholders. Despite the lack of a formal stakeholder management plan, the interviewees said that stakeholder communication should definitely be planned beforehand, otherwise "people fall off the radar system" and not all stakeholders are communicated with.

The interviewees stated that a lack of funds influences stakeholder management negatively. Project Literacy previously had breakfasts with small groups of stakeholders at a time, such as the SETAs and corporates from certain sectors, to obtain feedback on Project Literacy's quality of work and to build personal relationships with these stakeholders. Although this practice was very successful, it had to be cancelled because it was very expensive. The small number of staff also makes it difficult to keep on building personal, close relationships with all stakeholders.

The interviewees indicated *government*, including the SETAs, as their most important stakeholders. They said, "without government contracts in some guise, even for the SETAs, Project Literacy would not be able to survive". Local and, mostly international donors provide funds to the government, and instruct government to subcontract an organisation, such as Project Literacy, to work on a specific campaign or project (see Section 7.1.3.1 and Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1). It is thus imperative for Project Literacy to have good relationships with government and the SETAs.

As mentioned in Section 7.3.2.1, the CEO is responsible for building personal relationships with the various government departments for whom Project Literacy runs projects. At the time of the interview, Project Literacy had ABET contracts with the Departments of Education, Labour, and Correctional Services. The CEO believes that a personal relationship with government officials is very important because "people give money to people they know, like and trust". The interviewees said that building relationships with government is not always easy because it involves a fair amount of politics.

Project Literacy's CEO mostly applies the two-way asymmetrical model in efforts to build a relation-

ship with government, create an understanding of the importance and cost of excellent quality adult literacy education, and win tenders for ABET provision. The CEO makes use of statistics, pass rates, learner feedback, and Project Literacy's good reputation to win tenders for ABET provision. However, no mention was made in the interview of creating dialogue to understand the needs of government better.

Project Literacy is critical and outspoken about government policy regarding ABET, particularly because government can be tardy in drawing up and awarding tenders and shows a lack of understanding regarding the high costs of adult education (Project Literacy, 2007a:8). In this "political game", Project Literacy has to be very careful not to alienate government who provides them with their livelihood. Project Literacy views its relationship with government as fairly successful.

Regarding the relationship with *clients*, the interviewees believe that this relationship is relatively successful. The Client Relations Officer, who forms part of the Quality Assurance Department, phones all *clients* once a month to find out whether they are satisfied with services rendered. Project Literacy thus has constant feedback from clients, and they can solve problems as soon as they arise. Project Literacy has found that clients would rather speak to the Client Relations Officer than to management because she is more neutral, "nearly like an ombudsman". Personal contact is used to build close relationships with clients. Listening to the needs of clients, solving their problems and thus applying two-way communication is also characteristic of a symmetrical organisational worldview. It is important though to continuously *listen* to clients needs to create mutual understanding and not just apply two-way communication asymmetrically to protect Project Literacy's reputation and to promote their educational programmes.

In the 2006 Annual Report, the CEO states that Project Literacy has difficulty in communicating the costs of "really good", educationally sound adult literacy programmes to the marketplace and employers (Project Literacy, 2006:6). These are *potential* clients that may contract Project Literacy for ABET, but Project Literacy does not formally plan any relationship building initiatives with this stakeholder group.

The interviewees mentioned several times that it is very difficult to obtain funds from *donors*. It is thus crucial to build personal, close relationships with donors. This is, however, not an easy task, as many donors, such as the National Lottery, are not open for building a relationship. Project Literacy has invited donors to come out to projects to see Project Literacy's working conditions and further needs several times, but donors have shown no interest in doing so. It might serve Project Literacy better to utilise all communication opportunities with donors to gain an understanding of donors' needs and individual situations, and to adapt their expectations and communication efforts accordingly.

Project Literacy's next group of key stakeholders are the *learners*. The interviewees viewed Project Literacy's relationship with its learners as good. Feedback on training, as well as learners' successes and problems, are obtained from the provincial offices, and the Client Relations Officer obtains feedback on learners' progress from Project Literacy's clients. This feedback enables Project Literacy to act immediately on any problems that might arise.

Project Literacy aims to know the learners' circumstances and "stories" so well as to use them to find individual case studies to strengthen their plea for more funding. When Project Literacy applies for funding, they would usually present an in-depth case study of one illiterate adult and what becoming literate meant to him or her. Because the officials of the different government departments that use

Project Literacy for training are not always aware of what illiterate adults' real needs and hardships are, Project Literacy use these stakeholders to tell government officials about their problems, such as unemployment and hunger. Learners also test recently developed teaching materials, such as books.

Many learners expect too much, too soon from training. For instance, learners expect to find good jobs the minute they can read and write, but this is not always possible, particularly in rural areas. This implies that Project Literacy must also strategically plan communication with *potential* learners before a project is launched, to clear suspicion and set realistic expectations. These communication opportunities can also serve as informal research to ascertain the needs of potential learners and the communities they come from.

Project Literacy's trainers and educators have good relationships with their learners, and good relationships can only be built with two-way communication or engagement. This is best illustrated by the fieldworker for the *Run Home to Read* Project who says: "I've created a good relationship with my colleagues, the Reading Champions, and I am friendly to the caregivers and children that I visit. They trust and respect me" (Project Literacy, 2007a:26). Another example is the *HIV/Aids Counselling and Care Project*, which builds on the assumption that adult educators form very strong, trusting relationships with adult learners, and therefore adult educators are best suited to provide HIV/AIDS training to adult learners (see Section 7.1.3.2).

The interviewees emphasised the good relationship between Project Literacy and their *Board of Trustees* and *Board of Directors*. The Board of Directors has three sub-committees, namely the Human Resources sub-committee, the Finance sub-committee, and the Audit and Risk sub-committee. The Board of Trustees meets three times a year, and they play a crucial role in ensuring that Project Literacy stays true to their mission (Project Literacy, 2007a:8). The Board of Directors meets once a month, and they have a hands-on role, guiding and helping Project Literacy's management with governance and financial management. The CEO pointed out that Project Literacy focuses on good corporate governance, especially regarding financial management, which has contributed to their survival, as to date there have been no cases of fraud that would have damaged Project Literacy's reputation.

In terms of Project Literacy's communication to stakeholders, it is evident that Project Literacy mostly applies the asymmetrical public information model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27) (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3), that does not form part of a symmetrical organisational worldview. Conversely, Project Literacy's Corporate Department, especially the CEO and the Fundraising and Communications Manager, communicates on a personal level with different stakeholders to build strong relationships with these stakeholders. In doing so, they practise symmetrical two-way communication. Each member of the Corporate Department is responsible for specific stakeholders, for instance, the CEO is responsible for relations with government departments and officials. However, none of this communication and stakeholder relationship management is strategically planned with specific goals to be attained, and it takes place randomly.

When the interviewees were asked to describe the five steps to successful stakeholder management in an ideal world, their answer was:
- to communicate with all stakeholders and deliver on promises by providing excellent quality of service;
- to build personal relationships with stakeholders, by calling them and sending e-mails and letters to give them "little bits of information, telling them what's happening in the ABET world";

and

- to communicate to stakeholders what is happening on their projects, to inform them whether things are working well or if they are failing and how the project can be developed further.

It is clear from the above that Project Literacy views one-way communication as a tool with which to build strong relationships. They need to focus more on creating dialogue, with significant emphasis on listening, in order to understand the needs and issues of stakeholders. Only by applying two-way communication can Project Literacy manage its organisational risks and stakeholders' issues, build strong, lasting relationships with stakeholders, and effectively attain organisational goals.

The CEO ended the interview with his view on the role of communication in NPOs/NGOs:

"NGOs often underplay the communication function, because they think people will see that we do good work through "osmosis", and that doesn't happen because we are competing in a commercial world, against commercial providers, other NGOs and government. Project Literacy has not spent enough money on communication. More money and more staff would enhance the achievement of the organisation's goals."

7.4 Project literacy: strategic communication management analysis

7.4.1 *Application of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model*

In the next figure, the communication management practices of the FLP are roughly plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 10.

Figure 7.2: Compliance of Project Literacy's communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)

| | Low compliance | High compliance |
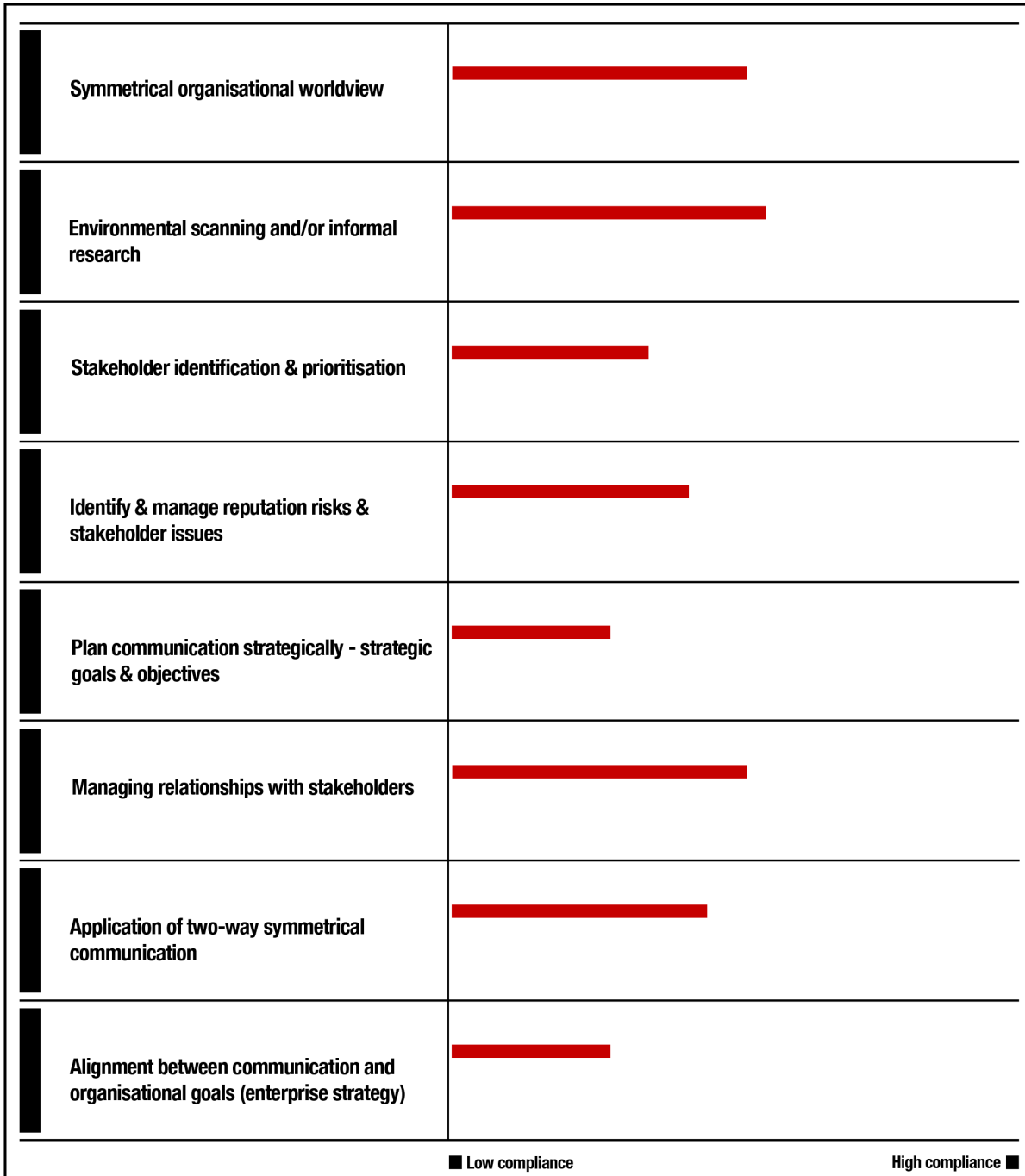
Project Literacy's intuitive approach to communication management mostly do not correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management, primarily because there is no overarching communication management strategy to manage relationships with stakeholders. Although the interviewees insisted that all communication is aligned to Project Literacy's vision and

strategic goals, this might prove difficult if communication is not managed strategically. All persons interacting with stakeholders, particularly those interacting with key strategic stakeholders, should know what relationship goals the organisation wants to achieve, and align their communication with stakeholders accordingly. If relationship goals are set to support organisational goals, in order to build strong relationships with stakeholders, it will assist Project Literacy to achieve its organisational goals more effectively (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5).

Project Literacy does not conduct *formal* research or environmental scanning to determine potential organisational risks, and consequences of these risks for the organisation, except when embarking on large projects (see Section 7.2). Project Literacy also does not *formally* apply research or environmental scanning to determine their strategic stakeholders' issues and the consequences or reputation risks of these issues for the organisation. However, the CEO and other members of the Corporate Department use strategic information gathered through *informal* personal relationships with different stakeholders in the strategic planning and formulation processes. Other forms of *informal,* or *intuitive* environmental scanning include reading newspapers, using the Internet, and utilising information from staff members (see Sections 7.2 and 7.3.2).

Project Literacy *informally* applies environmental scanning and relationship building to such an extent as to have survived through many changes and challenges (see Section 7.1.1). It would therefore be beneficial for Project Literacy if the CEO, Fundraising and Communications Manager and members of the Corporate Department were sensitised to the value of strategic communication management in building strong, mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders.

The CEO, Fundraising and Communications Manager, and members of the Corporate Department (the dominant coalition) are responsible for communication and relationship building with government, clients, and donors. They mostly apply the one-way public information model to distribute information about the organisation and its activities, or otherwise engage in *two-way asymmetrical* communication with a strong focus on persuasive tactics (see Section 7.3.3). Project Literacy's largest drawback is that it does not use two-way communication sufficiently in order to attain its organisational goals by building strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders.

It is clear from the interview that Project Literacy's senior management mostly does not truly *listen* to learn about stakeholders' issues and apply communication and relationship building efforts to address issues effectively. The exception to this practice is the Client Relations Officer who calls all clients once a month to determine whether they are satisfied with Project Literacy's services. Communication to and relationships with Project Literacy's third most important group of stakeholders, namely learners, is not directly handled by senior management, which might not be beneficial to both the organisation and the particular stakeholder group.

It is also clear from the interview that Project Literacy is mostly managed according to the presuppositions characteristic of a symmetrical worldview. This implies that Project Literacy would be able to practice strategic communication management, if they are trained accordingly. Currently there are no alignment between organisational goals and communication and relationship building goals. Therefore, communication and relationship building efforts do not contribute to attaining organisational goals and effectivity.

7.4.2 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

In the next figure, the communication management practices of the FLP are roughly plotted against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, as summarised in Specific Theoretical 11.

Figure 7.3: Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRöH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	■	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	■	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	■	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	■	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	■	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	■	Relationship management strategically planned

From the interview, it can be deduced that the interviewees disagree with Ströh's (2007:199–220) (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.6.2 & 4.6.3) approach to strategic communication management. They believe that it is a necessity to have a communication strategy. In fact, the interviewees regarded Project Literacy's lack of a communication and relationship management strategy as a huge short-coming (see Section 7.3.3). Although Project Literacy's communication is not planned ("done on an ad hoc basis") and ethical behaviour is regarded highly, the interviewees disagreed with Ströh's (2007) view that such communication practices on its own, are successful. They said that unplanned communication and relationship building efforts lead to "people fall[ing] off the radar system" and not all stakeholders being communicated with (see Section 7.3.3).

The Fundraising and Communications Manager forms part of the dominant coalition, and she has Project Literacy's best interests at heart. She does not take an activist role or instigate conflict between Project Literacy and their stakeholders to contribute to the creation of meaning, as suggested by Ströh (2007:210; see Section 2.6.2.2). Rather, she uses communication to build relationships and to reach win-win situations. Although Project Literacy, in particular the CEO, is outspoken against the government's ABET policies and actions, they are careful not to disadvantage the organisation by alienating its stakeholders through instigating conflict. It is thus evident that Ströh's (2007) opinion in this regard is not viewed as feasible.

It was found that although Project Literacy's CEO encourages managerial input from all staff members, and that they utilise information gained from all their stakeholders in strategy formulation, formal strategy formulation is reserved for Project Literacy's top management (see Section 7.2). The interviewees feel that it is not in Project Literacy's best interests for strategic information to be available to all possible stakeholders. They furthermore found it not feasible for all staff members to participate in strategy formulation because not all staff members have the insight to do so and might

feel inadequate as a result. In this regard, the interviewees' practical experience also differed from Ströh's (2007:208–216) advice to include all stakeholders in all strategy formulation processes and decision-making.

The following figure illustrates Project Literacy's communication practices' compliance with Ströh's (2007) recommendations, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 11. It is apparent that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication management are not in practice in Project Literacy nor are they viewed as feasible.

CHAPTER 8

THE FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

Interview with Snoeks Desmond, on 19 September 2007

8.1   Background

8.1.1   Organisational overview

The Family Literacy Project (hereafter FLP) began in early 2000 under the leadership of Snoeks Desmond, the current Director of the organisation. The FLP wanted to address the concerns raised by research findings of Khulisa Management Services that showed there was no improvement in the early literacy levels of pre-schoolers, despite the training and support provided by the Department of Education (Desmond & Dlamini, 2007:1; Family Literacy Project, 2007). A participatory rural appraisal conducted late in 2000 showed that adults also wanted to improve their own literacy, and the FLP developed programmes to improve the mother tongue and English literacy skills of the women who joined their groups (Aitchison, 2006:94; Family Literacy Project, 2007) and assisting them to help their young children read. It is mainly women who join the FLP's groups. The FLP believes that young children need their parents' or other adult caregivers' support to become competent and enthusiastic readers.

The FLP is active in the Sisonke District Municipality and the neighbouring area of Lotheni in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The facilitators work in the towns of Bethlehem, Come and See (near Bulwer), Mahwaqa (near Underberg), Mathendeni (near Donnybrook), Mpumlwane (near Centocow), Ncwadi (near Bulwer), Ndodeni (near Centocow), Stepmore (near Underberg), Lotheni (near Underberg) and Reichenau (near Underberg) (Aitchison, 2006:98; Desmond, 2005:6; Family Literacy Project, 2007). They use school classrooms, community halls, churches, and community libraries for their meetings (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

This area is not only characterised by great beauty, but also by poverty and a lack of infrastructure. Roads are poorly maintained and most households have neither electricity nor running water (Desmond, 2003:11). Most houses are built of mud and thatch (Desmond, 2004:351). There are few job opportunities apart from short-term contracts with building projects, road repair work, or the government's Working for Water projects (Desmond, 2003:11). Many men are absent from home for long periods because they work in cities, such as Durban or Pietermaritzburg (Desmond, 2003:11). Despite the lack of accurate figures, Desmond (2003:11) notes that grandmothers run more and more households as parents become ill and die of AIDS.

Because of underdevelopment and poverty there is little in the area to support literacy development. There are few opportunities for children to see print around them in the form of newspapers, books, magazines, signs, street advertising, signposts, or even food packages (Desmond, 2003:11). The only books available are older siblings' schoolbooks and adult literacy workbooks (Desmond, 2003:11).

The FLP's slogan is 'Masifunde Njengomndeni', which means 'Families reading together'. The main aim of the project is to encourage members to view reading as a shared pleasure and a valuable skill

(Desmond, 2003:12). The FLP believes that for young children to become literate, they must enjoy reading and writing, and their parents or caregivers should guide them by example in this (Desmond, 2003:12). In other words, the FLP's underlying principle is that parents, or other adult caregivers, are the first and most important teachers of their children (Desmond, 2005:6).

The FLP has received many awards since their inception in 2000 (Desmond, 2005:72; Family Literacy Project, 2007):
• 2001: shortlisted for the UDV/Guinness Adult Literacy Award;
• 2003: shortlisted for the UDV/Guinness Adult Literacy Award second prize;
• 2004: Mpumlwane Family Literacy Group judged by the Adult Learning Network as the Most Outstanding Adult Literacy Group in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as third best nationally;
• 2005: Renneth Molefe judged by the Adult Learning Network as the Most Outstanding Adult Learner in KwaZulu-Natal;
• 2005: Florence Molefe judged by the Adult Learning Network as the Most Outstanding Adult Educator in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as in South Africa;
• 2006: Best Project in KwaZulu-Natal;
• 2007: Breakthrough Ideas in Education Award.

8.1.2   The Family Literacy Project's vision

The FLP's vision is to assist parents or other adult caregivers, such as grandparents, to improve their own levels of literacy and providing them with information on how they can assist their young children to develop early literacy skills and to support them while they do so (Desmond, 2003:11).

8.1.3   The Family Literacy Project's goals

The FLP's goals for the project are to:
• improve the lives of the people they work with;
• encourage people to join their groups;
• develop everyone's confidence;
• see young children ready to read and write; and
• see more adults reading and writing (Desmond, 2005:8).

8.1.4   The Family Literacy Project's activities and projects

At the time of this study there were eleven facilitators, chosen by the communities where they operate, running family literacy groups for FLP. The FLP requires the facilitators to have a matriculation certificate and to be fluent in English as well as their mother tongue, Zulu (Desmond, 2003:12). The facilitators were trained in participatory rural appraisal techniques, adult literacy, and early childhood literacy. Some facilitators have successfully completed a certificate course in early childhood development, and all have completed a certificate course in adult basic education (Desmond, 2003:12). Four of the facilitators have completed a Higher Diploma in Adult Basic Education and Training from the University of South Africa (UNISA)) (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

Each of the eleven FLP groups meets twice weekly for a two-hour session. Seven to eight sessions form a unit, and each unit covers a topic of interest to the group members (Desmond, 2003:12).

Using the REFLECT[1] approach to adult literacy, each unit begins with a session to determine the

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1   *According to the South Africa Reflect Network (SARN) REFLECT "is an innovative approach to adult learn-*

group members' existing knowledge about the topic, for example, about budgets. After using participatory learning activities and active discussions, the group members write down the main points from the session. Those that recently started writing are given a few words to practise their writing. One of the sessions of each unit is dedicated to ways in which parents can assist their children's early literacy development through activities linked to the topic, for example storytelling to practise sequencing and recall, and games to distinguish between shapes (Desmond, 2003:12). The facilitators use materials developed or acquired by the FLP, such as posters, leaflets, workbooks, and readers (Desmond, 2003:12). After completing six to seven lessons on a topic, an action point is reached. During the action point, what the group members are going to do with the newly gained knowledge in a family set-up and in the community is discussed. This included practical ideas, such as to plan for family expenses, or to apply the budgetary skills in church as a treasurer.

The FLP's way of integrating early and adult literacy becomes clear from the following figure.

Figure 8.1: Integrating early and adult literacy
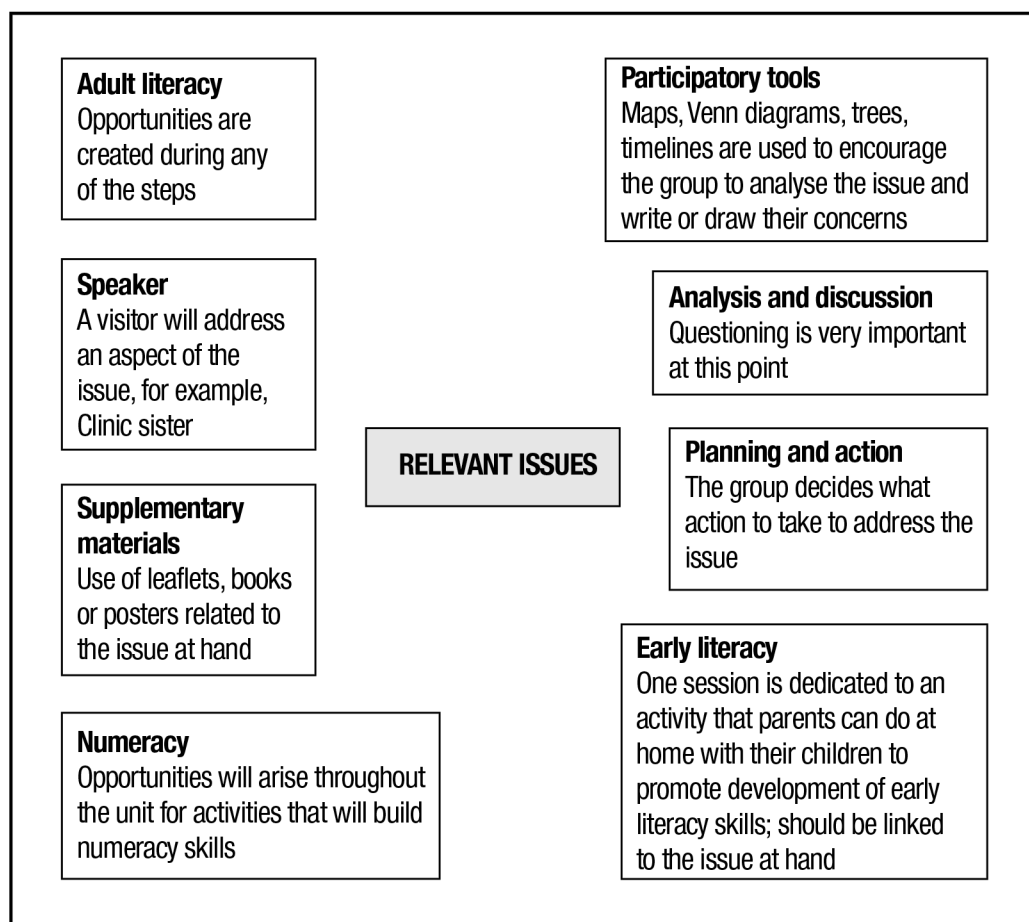
The group members are encouraged in writing activities, such as making notices for the community notice board, contributing letters to the FLP newsletter, writing stories about their own childhood,

having pen friends in other groups, and keeping a journal called 'Umzali Nengane' ('Parents and Children') (Desmond, 2005:36–44; Desmond, 2003:12). They cut pictures from magazines or use those provided by the FLP, glue them into a journal and talk to their children about it. They have to record these conversations with their children in their journal (Desmond, 2003:12). In this way, the FLP guides the group members on talking to children, to develop early literacy skills such as recall, speculation, sequencing, and colour and shape recognition (Desmond, 2003:12).

In addition to the groups meeting twice a week, the FLP also has several other activities that are discussed in the following sections.

8.1.4.1 Community libraries

In 2003, a container and books were donated by a NGO, Biblionef, for use as a community library in Stepmore. Another community library was established in 2003 in Mpumlwane when the FLP received a UDV/Guinness Award (Desmond, 2005:32; Family Literacy Project, 2007). This monetary prize for achievement in the field of adult literacy enabled the FLP to build a one-roomed community library next to a church and crèche at Mpumlwane (Aitchison, 2006:100).

In 2006, a two-roomed library built by the Exclusive Books Trust was opened in Ndodeni. The Trust stocked the library with 2500 books written in Zulu and English. The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library and Information Services also donated books and furniture and gave support to the FLP community libraries (Aitchison, 2006:101). Costs related to the maintenance of the libraries, as well as books and shelving that have not been donated, are being raised by the FLP (Aitchison, 2006:101).

The local FLP facilitator and one of the group members run each library. The community libraries are open to the whole community and are well used by adults and primary school children. It has been difficult though to draw secondary school children into the libraries (Aitchison, 2006:102).

The FLP previously ran a programme in which boxes of books were placed in eight pre-schools, and the teachers were encouraged to allow children to borrow the books. The project was not very successful, and all children are now encouraged to make use of the FLP's community libraries (Desmond, 2005:16).

8.1.4.2 Home-visiting

The group members' desire to spread the message of early literacy gave rise to the home visiting scheme. The group members take books with them to read to children and to talk to parents about their role in their children's development (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

8.1.4.3 Child-to-child groups

Primary school children meet once a week with facilitators to read, draw, and discuss different topics, which often mirror those of the family literacy groups. In this way, links between the family members are nurtured. The groups are multi-aged with Grades 3 and 4 children helping Grades R, 1 and 2 children. Children from several primary schools attend these groups (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

8.1.4.4 Teenage sexuality groups

These groups are run separately for boys and girls to discuss issues of sexuality, particularly how sexuality relates to HIV and AIDS (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

8.1.4.5   Health support groups

These groups began in 2004 as a response by the FLP to the numbers of women caring for orphaned children. Information regarding childhood illnesses is provided to the women (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

8.1.4.6   Community projects

The FLP has been approached by other NGOs who have provided skills training and materials for members of some of the family literacy groups. Some FLP groups manage community projects, such as a sewing group, a vegetable tunnel, and a chicken project (Family Literacy Project, 2007).

8.1.4.7   Partnerships

The positive results achieved by the FLP led to the extension of their work into new areas. Five organisations working in the area were offered the opportunity to start family literacy groups. The FLP trained and supported the facilitators of these groups and supplied them with materials over a two-year period (Desmond, 2005:22; Family Literacy Project, 2007).

The five partner organisations were:
- Woza' Moya a Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo;
- Centocow Leadership and Training Project;
- Women's Leadership and Training Project in Ndawana;
- Boston Family Literacy Project; and
- Faithway Christian School in Himeville.

The Farm Family Literacy Project and Edzimkulu in Ndawana also maintain close links with the FLP.

In the next section, the FLP's organisational structure and management is discussed.

8.2   The Family Literacy Project's organisational structure, management & societal role

The interviewee pointed out that the small size of the FLP does not necessitate a large management structure. The FLP has a *Board of Directors* who do not "interfere" in the management of the FLP. Previously the FLP's staff consisted of only the *Director* and five *facilitators*, but six more *facilitators*, as well as a *Project Development Manager* to manage the programme and the facilitators, were appointed in 2006. The Director and the Project Development Manager are the only full-time employees, with the facilitators employed part-time.

Figure 8.2: The FLP's organogram
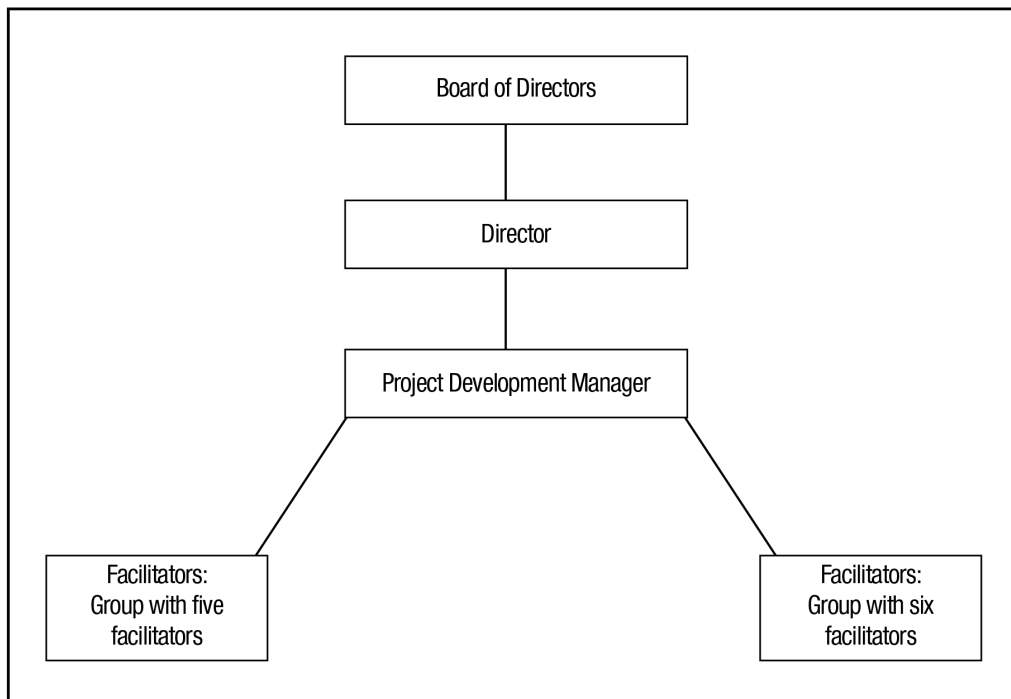
The FLP recently acquired a small office in Durban, intended as a venue for meetings as the organisation believes that meeting in an office is more professional than meeting in the Director's house as was previously done. According to the interviewee, the FLP does not have an open-door policy to management though, because of the office's large distance (about a two to three hours' drive) from the rural sites in which the facilitators work. The facilitators work from their homes in the rural areas. Because of this, the facilitators are quite isolated, except for contact by cell phone. Every facilitator has a cell phone, for which the FLP provides airtime. The arrangement is that the facilitators send the Director or Project Development Manager a SMS, and they will call the facilitators back. The facilitators can SMS whenever there is a problem, or they need advice.

The FLP performs *informal* research or environmental scanning in the form of an Annual Strategic Evaluation (Frow, 2006; Frow, 2007) annually. A specific facet concerning the FLP programme is evaluated, for instance the focus of the 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluation (Frow, 2007) was to determine whether the FLP is making the community a better place for children. The group members and facilitators provide their views about the topic. Included in the evaluation are questionnaires regarding the needs of the group members and facilitators, as well as the evaluator's recommendations. This information is used to plan for the next year. The gathered information is useful to identify organisational risks and stakeholders' issues. Unfortunately, the evaluations have so far not focused on stakeholders' communication needs. The FLP also does not view strategic communication as a tool with which to manage their risks and stakeholders' issues.

The interviewee pointed out that participation of all strategic stakeholders in strategic planning and strategy formulation is difficult "because the FLP runs a [set] programme". Therefore, the Director herself mostly develops strategy. The FLP had to develop policies when the Project Development Manager and six more facilitators joined the FLP in 2005. Previously, the Director decided what had to be done. When developing policies, the Director does not consult with all the board members, facilitators or group members. She usually asks board members who are part of other NGOs for their existing policies, and then develops her own policy from that. According to the interviewee, the facilitators do not yet have enough workplace experience to participate in management.

When the Director thinks of a new idea, the person who does the Annual Strategic Evaluation would test the idea, during the evaluation process, amongst the group members and the community, and then recommend or reject the idea. If the idea is accepted, it is introduced to the facilitators at their quarterly training weeks during the holidays. The Director would then indicate to the facilitators what their role in the implementation of the idea would be.

The FLP developed a personal development course on "What is your dream for the FLP?". The aim of the course was to encourage a more participatory approach amongst the facilitators because they previously did not contribute much to generating new ideas and just accepted what they were told. The reason for this was that they had not had exposure to participative workplace decision-making before. Now, the facilitators have the confidence to say: "What about …?" or "Why don't we …?" and therefore they participate more. When it was decided to appoint a Project Development Manager, the Director asked the facilitators what kind of person they would like to be their manager. In this way, the facilitators had a say in the management of their affairs.

The interviewee pointed out that there is no direct participation in strategic planning and strategy formulation from group members because it is too difficult to contact them. The FLP relies on the facilitators, as well as the Annual Strategic Evaluation, to provide feedback from the group members. The Annual Strategic Evaluation is participatory in nature because it has stories from the group members, the group members write reports on what they have learned and how they experience the FLP and the facilitators.

The facilitators' perceptions about the FLP, what they like and/or dislike, their need for personal growth, what they would like to be, or what they wish to learn is also determined by means of the Annual Strategic Evaluation. If possible, the FLP attempts to assist facilitators in further training. The FLP uses the Annual Strategic Evaluation results to determine whether "they are on track" and to guide their planning for the next year. This allows the indirect participation of the group members and facilitators in the FLP's management.

The interviewee asserted that participative management is necessary when an organisation is large but that it is more easily applied when an organisation is small. This was stated as one of the reasons the FLP does not want to expand nationally.

The Director's management style, as discussed above, is indicative of the existence of a *central authority*, which is a presupposition of an asymmetrical worldview to organisational management. It is clear from the interview that the Director has most of the decision-making power, and she generates all new ideas. Although the viability of new ideas is tested in the Annual Strategic Evaluation, the Director *informs* the facilitators on their role when the ideas are accepted. The Director thus applies one-way communication in this case. This might be due to the facilitators' lack of managerial experience, but two-way communication, where the facilitators are encouraged to provide their views on new ideas, would lead to them taking ownership of the implementation of the idea. The Project Development Manager's authority and decision-making power regarding strategy and policy formulation was not mentioned. It also seemed as if there is a lack of communication between the Director and the Project Development Manager because the interviewee stated more regular and formal communication with the Project Development Manager as a step to more successful stakeholder management in an ideal world (see Section 8.3.3).

With reference to the above, it was recommended in the 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluation that the FLP trains and equips the facilitators to manage other functions, in order to lighten the new direc-

tor's work load (Frow, 2007:49). It was also recommended that the FLP follow up on the facilitators' suggestions on improving monitoring tools and the Home Visiting Programme. This implies that the facilitators have grown familiar with the FLP programme and that they might be ready for more decision-making responsibilities. This might lead to the facilitators having more authority, and a subsequent *decentralization of authority*, which is indicative of a symmetrical worldview of organisational management.

The FLP does not employ a full-time communication practitioner. The Director is responsible for all communication, fundraising, and "raising the FLP's profile". The Director has a Master's Degree in Education (Adult Education) and she is a D.Tech candidate in education (Family Literacy Project, 2007). She has no formal communication qualifications but completed a six-month management course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, "which included some communication".

According to the interviewee, the FLP has "quite an impact" on society. Although the FLP was initially set up to help children and to reach the family and community through the child, they now mainly work with adults to reach children. As already discussed in Section 8.1.3, the group members must reflect on how they are going to apply their newly gained knowledge in the family, as well as in the community. The FLP also encourages group members to speak to other women about early childhood development and health issues regarding children.

The FLP encourages the group members, who are mainly women, to join community development forums and school governing bodies to have a larger impact on their communities. As a result, the women started to take leading roles in community organisations. According to Desmond (2005:46), in 2004, out of 100 group members, 47 belonged to community groups, 21 were committee members, and 4 served on their local development committees. In addition to the above, the FLP manages three community libraries (see Section 8.1.3.1), which is open to the whole community.

Although the FLP mostly works with women, their community projects do have an impact on the wider community. For instance, the Farm FLP Programme uses the exact FLP programme, and the FLP trains the facilitators. The Farm FLP Programme works mainly with men.

The FLP's *idealistic social role* is characteristic of a symmetrical worldview of organisational management. The FLP serves the needs of adult illiterates, and they campaign for family literacy and early childhood development. Thus, the FLP aids social transformation by building up society and encouraging women to join community development forums and school governing bodies.

In the next sections, the FLP's communication management practices are discussed.

8.3   Communication management

8.3.1   Stakeholders

According to the interviewee, the FLP's most important stakeholders are the donors ("without donors we're nothing"), group members ("without group members we haven't got a project either"), and the facilitators ("in some ways you're only as good as your facilitators").

8.3.2   Environmental analysis

The FLP does not conduct formal research or environmental scanning to determine the organisation's most important risks. The Director informally notices risks at meetings, by reading extensively, using the Internet, and interpreting the results of the Annual Strategic Evaluation, which evaluates the FLP's programme.

Although the interviewee said that the FLP does "not actually [have] any critical [risks]", she identified a lack of continued funding, the impact of her retirement, and group members' unrealistic expectations of literacy training as the FLP's main risks, and added that it would most probably also form part of the organisation's stakeholders' issues.

In contrast with the Director's above statement, it was recommended in the 2006 and 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluations, amongst others, that the FLP should attract more adults, teenagers, and men from the community to the libraries; that the FLP should attract more people into the FLP groups; that teachers should be encouraged to refer school children to libraries for assistance with schoolwork; and to supply the libraries with more books, newspapers, and popular magazines (Frow, 2006:44; Frow, 2007:48–49). The facilitators stated losing group members to ABET classes and attracting new group members to the FLP groups as their main concerns, in addition to aims for the future (Frow, 2006:54).

8.3.2.1   Consequences of risks for the organisation

Although the interviewee stated that *continued funding* "is always a worry", she also said that the FLP "does have the name of a good fundraiser!" meaning that the FLP makes use of a fundraiser. The interviewee added that the FLP fortunately does not have to raise many funds because their budget is not so large. Despite funding not threatening the existence of the FLP, the interviewee said "you never know from a funder, they wake up one morning and they change their thing, not because you are bad, but because they want to". Whenever they do lose a donor, the FLP can search for another donor in the adult literacy, family literacy, or early childhood literacy field. The interviewee stated that it helps that the FLP can apply for both adult literacy and early childhood literacy funds, of which the latter are more readily available. The interviewee said that the FLP cannot rely on funding from the National Lottery because "[you] never know what will happen, will you get the funds or not". The National Lottery has not even acknowledged receipt of their current application for funds.

The Director always looks for opportunities to promote the FLP, for instance by entering competitions. The FLP has won nearly all available awards in the adult literacy field (see Section 8.1.2). The FLP has been invited by UNESCO to New York, Mali, and Germany to speak about their approach to adult literacy. The Director also ensured that the FLP was taken up in an international survey on adult literacy, where the FLP is featured as a case study. The FLP showcases their awards and international acknowledgement when applying for funding.

The Director *planned to retire* at the end of 2007, but she intended to stay on for another four months to assist the new Director. There are concerns that the change in leadership might negatively affect funding, but the Director has let the donors know by means of the monthly *Update* (see Section 8.3.3 for a discussion of the *Update*) to ensure that her retirement does not come as a shock for donors. Some donors have phoned the Director to "talk it through", and as such it is not a great concern, because "the FLP is very highly regarded nationally and internationally".

The interviewee said that many group members have *unrealistic expectations* about literacy training. The group members expect that once they become literate and can speak English, they will immediately be able to get jobs. The reality though is that there are no jobs available, particularly in the remote rural areas. Furthermore, the group members' literacy level is low, at about Grade 3 or Grade 4, and their ability to speak English is that not good. They must improve significantly before they can be employed at, for instance, an office. The FLP encourages the group members to go to official ABET providers to further their education as it is not the organisation's aim to become an official ABET provider. In order to counter this, the FLP provides food vouchers to group members that visit their neighbours to teach them about childhood development or health issues, and read to children. In this way, the group members feel that being literate does help them to earn something.

As mentioned in Section 8.3.2, the interviewee's identification of organisational risks and stakeholder issues differed from those stated by the facilitators and the FLP's evaluator. These differences in views about the FLP's risks are alarming, and it indicates a lack of communication between management and the facilitators. It is also interesting that the risks, as identified by the facilitators and the evaluator, concern *building stronger relationships* with stakeholder groups. It therefore seems as if the interviewee, who is the current Director, does not acknowledge the risks, or is unaware of them. The FLP has furthermore not determined the consequences of these risks for the organisation or the manner in which they will affect their strategic stakeholders, nor do they have a communication strategy in place to manage the consequences of the named risks before they become issues for the stakeholders.

8.3.3   Communication strategy

The FLP does not have a formal strategy or plan for communicating and managing relationships with their stakeholders. The interviewee believes that the FLP does "not really" need a communication strategy, although "it is important to let people know what you're doing", especially because "[the FLP] believe[s] in family literacy". The interviewee also believes that a communication strategy "might be good, but I'm not very good at working to plans". According to the interviewee, "the whole project has developed as needs [have] arisen, and [if] things [such as communication] seem important, we do it". The interviewee pointed out that the FLP never had a long-term strategy, but that the newly appointed Director might work differently. The interviewee said further that the FLP "is still small, [therefore it is] not really necessary for a communication strategy until the organisation gets bigger".

 Despite the above view on strategic communication, the Director took it upon herself in 2007 to raise the profile of FLP "even more than I had already". She presented papers and attended ten conferences during 2007, has written several journal articles, and has done training in family literacy. The interviewee said that presenting conference papers is a way of "communicating what we do, so that people can learn from us". The interviewee emphasised that "the networking opportunities are great" at conferences, but many donors are not interested in financing conferences. Therefore, the Director raised the money to attend conferences herself by doing additional contract work.

The Director however did not realise that presenting papers at conferences to raise the FLP's profile is not strategic communication, as it is not targeted at any of the FLP's strategic stakeholders. These communication efforts thus do not serve to strengthen relationships with any of the FLP's stakeholders, nor do they address any organisational risks or stakeholders' issues. Seen from this perspective, it is understandable that donors are reluctant to finance conference attendance.

Although the interviewee admitted that "it is important to let people know what you're doing", the FLP has not "thought of applying for funding for communication purposes". According to the interviewee, "funding communication would only be a priority after the FLP programme has been financed", indicating a disregard for the importance of communication management.

The interviewee's view that the FLP does not need a communication management strategy is characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview of organisational management, where communication is seen as a *technical, marketing function* without a strategic management role. The FLP views the function of communication as a one-way distribution of information, inherent to the asymmetrical public information communication model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27) (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 & 3.3). The Director's lack of formal communication qualifications might add to the FLP's lack of strategic communication management, as well as the disregard for communication's role in managing the organisation's risks and its stakeholders' issues.

The FLP's main modes of communication are meetings and the monthly *Update* that is e-mailed to the FLP interest group, which includes donors. The FLP's Board of Directors meets four times a year. If there is an urgent matter that needs attention, the Director either meets with one of the board members, or contacts (a) board member(s) by e-mail. They also receive the monthly *Update*.

The facilitators meet once a month on their own to discuss any issues they deem important. They then send their questions and/or decisions to the Director and the Project Development Manager. The Project Development Manager and the Director meet with every group individually once a month (except during school holidays) to give information and discuss problems and achievements. In addition to the mentioned meetings, all the facilitators meet for a week during every school holiday (four times a year) for staff development. At these quarterly meetings, the facilitators must hand in a completed report on their activities (facilitators received training on report writing). The reports must be finished before the meeting starts. In this way, the facilitators learn discipline that is necessary in the workplace. During the meeting, the facilitators verbally report highlights of what is happening in their groups. This allows them to learn to solve problems together, and they are proud of each other's achievements.

As mentioned previously, the other important mode of communication for the FLP is the monthly *Update*. The Director keeps the *Update* short, one to two pages, and the tone is "very light, very chatty". The interviewee emphasised that the *Update's* contents is always "very honest". When something is wrong, this is mentioned and/or explained, and the donors especially appreciate the honesty. Two donors said that the *Update* is "the most honest reports they ever get". Another advantage of the *Update* is that it provides quick feedback instead of a "long, boring end of the year report".

Regarding an annual report, the interviewee said that she is "not very keen on [annual reports] because they're boring". Instead a document, "The Family Literacy Project: now we are almost six", (Desmond, 2005) was compiled, summarising six years of the FLP's activities.

The FLP's monthly newsletter was initially started as a literacy activity, but it is now compiled professionally. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep the facilitators and group members "in touch with what is going on" in the FLP. The group members are encouraged to contribute to the newsletters. The newsletter is laid out in the same way as a newspaper. Some group members complained that the printing was too small, but the Director decided to retain this, as it teaches the group members to read columns.

The FLP has attempted to have news about the organisation published in newspapers, but the journalists said that they could not keep on writing about FLP, "even if they do interesting things." According to the interviewee, the FLP would like to have magazine articles about the FLP, and the Fair Lady would be a "good place" for such an article.

When the FLP's staff was expanded, they realised that the organisation did not have a logo. The FLP had a logo designed for "sort of branding us." The FLP's website was designed by an outside organisation. According to the interviewee, many people approach the FLP because of their website.

8.3.3.1 Stakeholder relationships

The interviewee said that the FLP could build strong relationships with its *donors* because there are not so many. The only exception is the National Lottery, where the Director does not even have a contact person. The FLP has individual national donors. They handle their own funding applications and do not work through funding organisations. This makes it easier to build a strong relationship with a specific person at an organisation. The Director meets many of the FLP's donors at meetings and other functions, and communicates with them by e-mail, telephone, and the monthly *Update*. The FLP also has several international donors, with whom the Director has excellent relationships. The Director calls them and e-mails the monthly *Update* to them. An anonymous donor from the USA telephones the Director regularly, and the FLP has an excellent relationship with her. All the donors provide the Director with guidance, and she experiences them as being "very nice."

It is evident from the above that the FLP pays a lot of attention to the *donors*, their most strategically important stakeholder group. The Director could use these opportunities also to *listen* more to donors to determine their needs and expectations of the FLP, and then plan communication and relationship building activities accordingly.

As mentioned before, the FLP have montly meetings with *group members* as the organisation's beneficiaries. The FLP also makes use of the facilitators and the Annual Strategic Evaluation to provide them with information regarding the group members, how they experience the programme, as well as further needs they might have. The interviewee viewed the FLP's relationship with group members as successful.

However, group members are not fully utilised as a group that might aid the FLP strategically in spreading the message about the importance and benefits of literacy and early childhood development. It might aid the FLP in recruiting new group members, especially teenagers, should the FLP empower group members to convey a strategically planned message, with relationship building goals in mind, when doing their home visits.

Concerning the *facilitators*, the interviewee viewed the lack of opportunities for informal communication, for instance during a coffee break, as a huge setback for building relationships with them. The only chance for informal relationship building occurs during the quarterly staff development meetings. According to the interviewee, the FLP's relationship with the facilitators is satisfactory though.

The interviewee stated more face-to-face communication with *facilitators* as one of the five steps to successful communication management in an ideal world, and this implies more intimate relationship building. Although the FLP is successful in training and developing their facilitators, it might serve the organisation well to plan communication strategically with facilitators in such a way as to

enhance facilitators' authority and their feeling of "belonging" to the FLP. The 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluation supported this view, by recommending that relationships between the facilitators and the relationship between the facilitators and the FLP staff should be developed (Frow, 2007:49). The Annual Strategic Evaluations determines the training needs of the facilitators, but it does not focus on their communication and relationship-building needs. It might be feasible to add a section concerning these needs into the Annual Strategic Evaluation questionnaire. The gathered information could be used to create more opportunities for dialogue and listening between management and the facilitators, as well as among the facilitators themselves.

Although many facilitators stated in the 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluation that their communication skills had improved, they still listed improving their communication skills with regard to different beneficiary groups, such as teenagers, men, and potential group members, as a future need. This implies that facilitators are starting to value communication as a tool in building relationships. It would aid the FLP strategically to identify their strategic stakeholders (especially *emerging* stakeholders), specify relationship and subsequent communication goals for each stakeholder group, and educate the facilitators in communicating towards the attainment of these goals. Communicating according to a plan and attaining communication goals might add to the facilitators' authority and self-confidence.

Although the interviewee did not view *government* as a strategic stakeholder, it was evident from the interview that government is indeed an important stakeholder of the FLP. The interviewee remarked that she "cannot see what role they have in our organisation." This statement indicated that the FLP's relationship with government is "not rewarding and time consuming". The interviewee furthermore said that the FLP's relationship with the Department of Education is characterised by "a lot of missed and unreturned phone calls". The interviewee described the government and municipalities as working "very slowly". The interviewee noted that the FLP does not want to become a government centre, "because then you lose your independence." It is for this reason that the FLP receives no funding from government. The FLP's courses are also not accredited with the Department of Education. The FLP does not intend to get their courses accredited soon, as "it involves too much work and the FLP is too small an organisation".

The Director has developed a short course, 'Introduction to Family Literacy'. In this regard, she provides training to those who request it, for instance the WCED and the Ministry of Education of Namibia. The Department of Education is also interested in the FLP's approach to ABET, and the FLP is prepared to share their experience with government departments. Despite the FLP declaring, "We're there, and if you want to learn from what we do, we'd love to share it with you", government has, according to the interviewee, taken little or no action to learn from the FLP. The FLP does not realise that they must continuously create opportunities to deal with government, and not wait for government to approach them.

Other examples of failed attempts of co-operation with government departments include when UNESCO invited the FLP to a meeting with all the Education Ministers of Sub-Saharan Africa to introduce their approach to adult literacy. Nobody approached them afterwards for more information or courses, "not even our education department". The FLP also did not take any follow-up actions after the meeting. Government had a mass literacy campaign in KwaZulu-Natal, but they haven't approached the FLP at all, although the FLP offered their assistance with the training of facilitators. Again, the FLP did not follow-up their offer of assistance. According to the interviewee, the only exception is the Provincial Library Services that have been supportive in providing support, books, and shelving for the community libraries. There are also individuals in the Health Department that

"has been very good to us" by supplying the FLP with leaflets and advice.

The FLP's relationship with the Department of Education and other government departments highlights its *internal orientation* (characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview of organisational management) because management does not view the FLP as outsiders might perceive the organisation, and as such, management might be blind for the FLP's shortcomings. The interviewee gave the impression that the FLP does not care to learn from other literacy organisations because the FLP are "communicating what we do, so that people can learn from us".

Proceeding from the previous presupposition characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview is *elitism* where the FLP's management believes that they know best and that they have more knowledge than other stakeholders concerning family literacy. This is best illustrated by the interviewee's statement that despite telling South African, as well as other Sub-Saharan education departments, that "we're there, and if you want to learn from what we do, we'd love to share it with you", these stakeholders have not contacted them for assistance and/or training. The reason might be that the different education departments do not need exactly what the FLP offers, but the FLP is unaware of their needs because they have not cared to *listen* to the different education departments, to determine their exact needs.

Analysing the stakeholder landscape furthermore, it can be argued that on the one hand, the FLP seems to be a *closed system* because of the lack of two-way symmetrical communication, and thus input from stakeholders such as government and education departments. On the other hand, management makes use of the Annual Strategic Evaluation for information regarding the FLP programme and the further needs of group members and facilitators. In this regard, the FLP operates as an *open system*.

When the interviewee was asked to describe the five steps to successful stakeholder management in an ideal world, the answer was:
- to complete reports on time, and to keep in touch with donors, especially by e-mail because it is not intrusive;
- to honour all agreements between the FLP and the donors, to do what was promised, and to make it possible for donors to visit the FLP;
- to keep staff up-to-date on what is happening in the organisation, especially with regard to the Director's resignation, which implies probable changes in management style;
- to have face-to-face meetings with the facilitators, especially because the FLP does not have a central office from where everybody works; and
- to have more regular and formal communication (meetings, e-mails, telephone calls) with the Project Development Manager.

It is evident from the above that the interviewee believes communication management to be a technical task, with no strategic function to assist the organisation in attaining its goals. The FLP does not even acknowledge communication and relationship building's contribution to the effective attainment of organisational goals.

8.4   Family Literacy Project: strategic communication management analysis

8.4.1   Application of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model

In the next figure the communication management practices of the FLP are roughly plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 10.

Figure 8.3: Compliance of the FLP's communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)
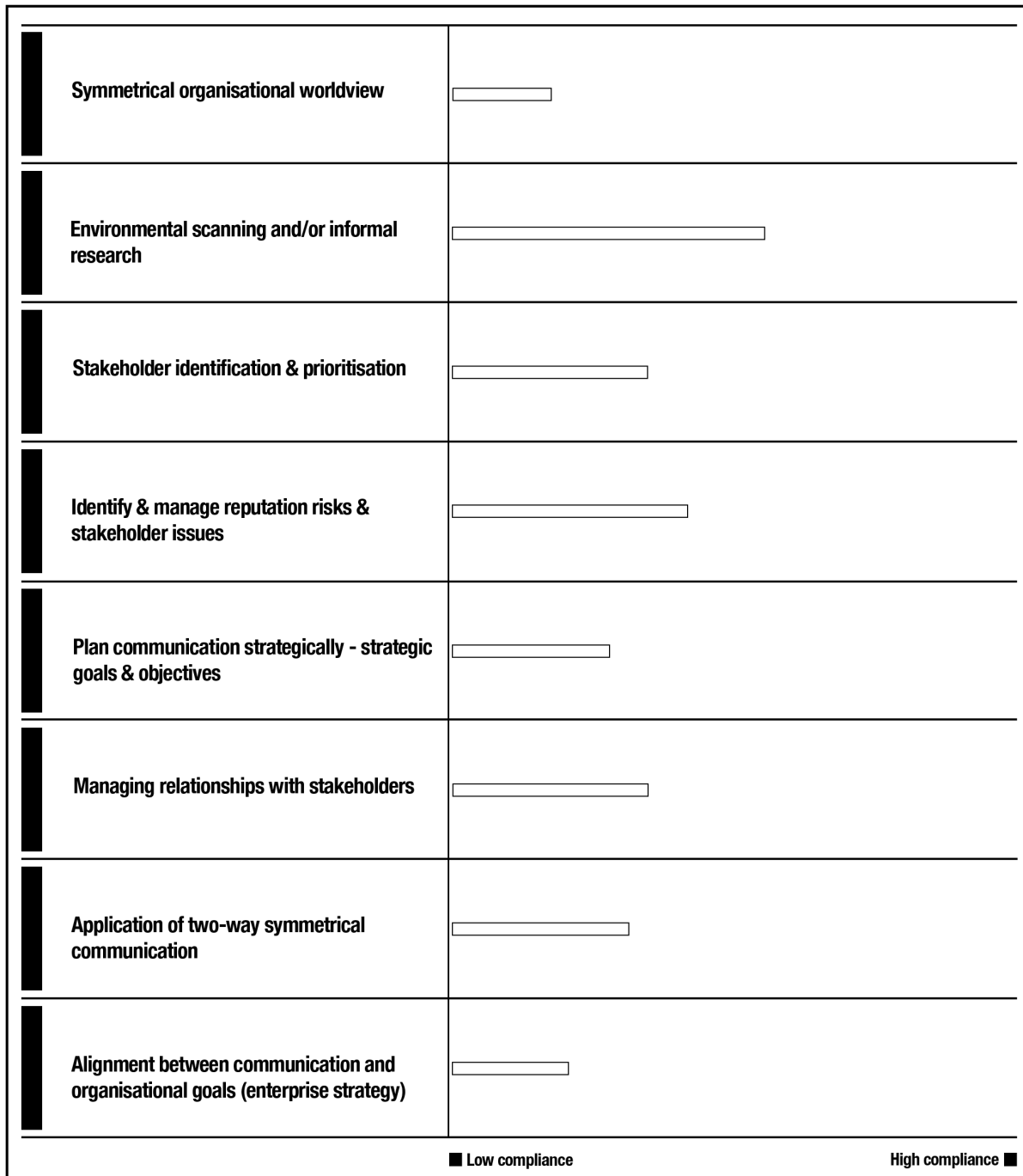
The FLP's communication practices do not correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management, as they do not have any communication management strategy in place to manage their reputation risks and their stakeholders' issues.

As mentioned in Section 8.3.2, the FLP mostly conducts *informal* research to determine the organisation's most important risks. The FLP furthermore uses the Annual Strategic Evaluation to determine the facilitators' and the group members' educational and/or training needs and concerns when planning for the next year. The Annual Strategic Evaluation can also be viewed as a form of *informal* environmental scanning. However, none of the mentioned research methods focuses on the identification of organisational risks and stakeholders' issues from a strategic communication approach.

The FLP pays most attention to donors as stakeholders, and has a strong relationship with them, which is characterised by dialogue and trust. The FLP's relationship with group members and facilitators are also good, but it seems as though the FLP does not *listen* enough to especially the facilitators' needs and expectations (see Section 8.3.3.1).

The FLP has no communication strategy and plan in place. The FLP shows a disregard for strategic communication and sees no need for it, not even for building strong relationships with stakeholders. The FLP's communication is mostly *technical* in nature, as communication materials are merely developed and distributed. The FLP's communication can thus be viewed as asymmetrical and one-way in nature, characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview. This implies that the FLP's communication practices are not aligned to their vision, mission, and organisational goals, and it does not enhance the attainment of organisational goals.

8.4.2 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

In the next figure the communication management practices of the FLP are roughly plotted against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 11.

Figure 8.4: Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRöH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	☐	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	☐	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	☐	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	☐	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	☐	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	☐	Relationship management strategically planned

It is clear from Table 8.4 that the FLP's communication management concurs mostly with Ströh's views. The interviewee believes that the FLP does not need a communication strategy. The interviewee also declared that a communication strategy might be good, but that she prefers to address

needs as they arise (see Section 8.3.3). This is in agreement with Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism on Steyn and Puth's (2000) model (2000) for strategic communication management (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.3). The reason for this disregard might be the Director's lack of communication training and the subsequent inability to realise the potential value of strategic communication management for the FLP. It is the researcher's opinion though that a practical strategic communication model would assist the FLP with strategically managing their communication to build strong stakeholder relationships. The model would especially be useful because the FLP's management has no communication training.

The FLP places a high premium on honesty, integrity, and ethical behaviour. This is particularly evident from the compilation of the monthly newsletter, the *Update* (see Section 8.3.3), where the interviewee stated that she is always honest with the FLP's donors. The FLP's ethical behaviour is also the reason for donors being accepting about the Director's planned retirement (see Section 8.3.3). In this regard, Ströh's (2007:199–220) view on communication management is in practice in the FLP.

It can be argued that Ströh's (2007:199–220) view on planned communication and that communication management should not have a dominant coalition role would most likely be in practice in the FLP, because the interviewee has no regard for a communication management strategy. Ströh (2007:210–212) furthermore postulates that a communication practitioner should have an activist role where alternative viewpoints are debated and conflict is instigated to contribute to meaning making. At the time of the project, the interviewee, who handled all the FLP's communication, did not operate as an activist who instigated conflict to create meaningful dialogue. Instead, she concentrated on building strong relationships with donors in particular. She used several platforms, such as entering competitions, presenting papers at academic conferences, and writing articles for journals to promote the adult literacy cause (see Sections 8.1.1, 8.3.2.1, 8.3.3 and 8.3.3.1).

Mainly the FLP's Director is responsible for strategy formulation. Other stakeholders, such as the facilitators and group members, have an indirect influence on strategy formulation because their developmental needs are taken into account when plans for the next year are formulated. Ströh (2007:209) claims that stakeholders cannot be managed top-down by formulating communication strategies, but only by all stakeholders participating fully in strategy formulation. The FLP's stakeholders do not participate fully in all strategy formulation. Ströh's (2007:199–220) recommendation on stakeholder participation in strategy formulation is thus not in practice in the FLP.

The interviewee's viewpoint that communication and stakeholder relationships should not be planned (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.3) is in agreement with Ströh's views (2007:199–220). The interviewee did not think it necessary to plan communication and stakeholder relationship management in a small organisation such as the FLP. The interviewee said, "communication just happens" at the FLP. In this regard, Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication management are in practice in the FLP.

CHAPTER 9

THE ARMY SUPPORT BASE POTCHEFSTROOM ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRE

Interview with Major Casper van Tonder and Hannah Dreyer, on 10 October 2007

9.1   Background

9.1.1   Organisational information

The Army Support Base Potchefstroom Adult Basic Education and Training Centre (hereafter the ABET Centre) was established in 1995 at the Potchefstroom Artillery School under the leadership of Desiree Botha. The ABET Centre moved to the Army Support Base Potchefstroom Division (hereafter the ASB Potchefstroom) in 2000 to be more centrally located for all ABET learners from the Potchefstroom Army's four operational divisions.

The ABET Centre is different from many other ABET providers in that it does not operate at night. The ABET Centre operates during the day, from 8:00 to 16:00. Army personnel have official permission to attend ABET and FET classes for eight hours per week. For instance, if a person has to do four subjects in a given year, his/her timetable is designed to allow two hours per subject per week. The interviewees said that the ABET Centre is operated like an ordinary school, except that it has adult learners.

The most notable difference between the ABET Centre and many other ABET providers is that it does not have to do any fundraising, as the Department of Defence supports the ABET Centre financially. All salaries of ABET Centre personnel, its municipal accounts and equipment (for example, paper and stationery) are paid by the Department of Defence. Learners do not have to pay any school fees, except for a R100.00 registration fee at the beginning of the year.

The ABET Centre sells handmade goods, made in the Skills Development Class, at events, such as the Aardklop Arts Festival to raise funds. These funds are ploughed back into the Skills Development Class to buy, for example, a microwave oven or new curtains. The raised funds are also used to take the participating learners on an outing, for instance to the Pretoria Zoo. The ASB provides the transport for the outings.

During 2007, thirty-nine learners registered for Levels 1 to 4 education at the ABET Centre. The number of learners registering for Grade 10 in 2007 was too low to carry on with classes, according to the Department of Education, and as a result, these classes ceased in March 2007 (also see Sections 9.3.2, 9.3.2.1, and 9.3.3). There were 171 learners registered for Grade 12 in 2007 (Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, 2007a:1-2).

According to the ABET Centre's 2008 Strategic Plan (Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, 2008:4, 5) two more classrooms, as well as a library, will be built in 2008.

9.1.2 The Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre's vision

The ABET Centre's vision is to provide professional, effective, and efficient tutoring to Department of Defence employees (including Reserve Force Members) and their dependants (Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, 2008:1).

9.1.3 The Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre's goals

The ABET Centre's goal is to ensure that Department of Defence employees (including Reserve Force Members) and their immediate family members receive a standardised education and their academic competency is improved (Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, 2008:1).

9.1.4 The Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre's activities and projects

The ABET Centre's Skills Development Class exhibit and sell their handmade products, such as hats and purses made from cold drink cans, at the annual Aardklop Arts Festival, the annual Potchefstroom Spring Festival, and the annual Klerksdorp-Orkney-Stilfontein-Hartbeesfontein (KOSH) Show. As already mentioned in Section 9.1.1, the funds raised at these occasions are ploughed back into the Skills Development Class's activities and outings for the learners. Every year a matric farewell function is hosted for the learners that successfully completed Grade 12 the previous year.

9.2 The Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre's organisational structure, management & societal role

The interviewees pointed out that the ABET Centre is an organisation functioning within an organisation (the ASB Potchefstroom), which in its turn functions within an "enormous" organisation (the Department of Defence). Therefore, the ABET Centre has three levels of management, namely the ASB Potchefstroom's *Commanding Officer* (Colonel van Dyk) who is responsible for administration and logistical management, such as financial management; the *Directorate Human Resources Development* from PSAP (Public Service Act Personnel) in Pretoria, who is responsible for the military functionalities of the ABET Centre; and the *Education Department*, which provides the functional guidelines for the ABET Centre. The ABET Centre must meet the requirements of all three levels of management. Although the ABET Centre makes use of the ASB Potchefstroom's facilities, the school falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defence's Directorate Human Resources Development's PSAP ETDP (Education, Training and Development Practices) in Pretoria.

In accordance with the presuppositions of a symmetrical worldview to organisational management, there is *interdependence* between the ABET Centre, the ASB Potchefstroom, the Directorate Human Resources Development, and the Education Department. The ABET Centre has to conform to the rules and guidelines of all the different managerial role-players. The interviewees' believe nonetheless that the closed-system nature of the Department of Defence impedes the ABET Centre's interaction with other ABET providers and/or stakeholders outside the Department of Defence, which could have provided a good support system for the Centre.

The ABET Centre's personnel consists of the ABET Centre Manager, two full-time and two part-time teachers. Major van Tonder was employed as the ABET Centre Manager from April 2007. Before Major van Tonder joined the ABET Centre, it consisted of two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. It proved very difficult to teach and run the ABET Centre simultaneously. Major van Tonder now handles all managerial and administrative tasks. All the ABET Centre's personnel are Depart-

ment of Defence personnel, and are thus paid by the Department of Defence. The ABET Centre's organogram is illustrated in the figure on the next page.

Figure 9.1: The ABET Centre's organogram
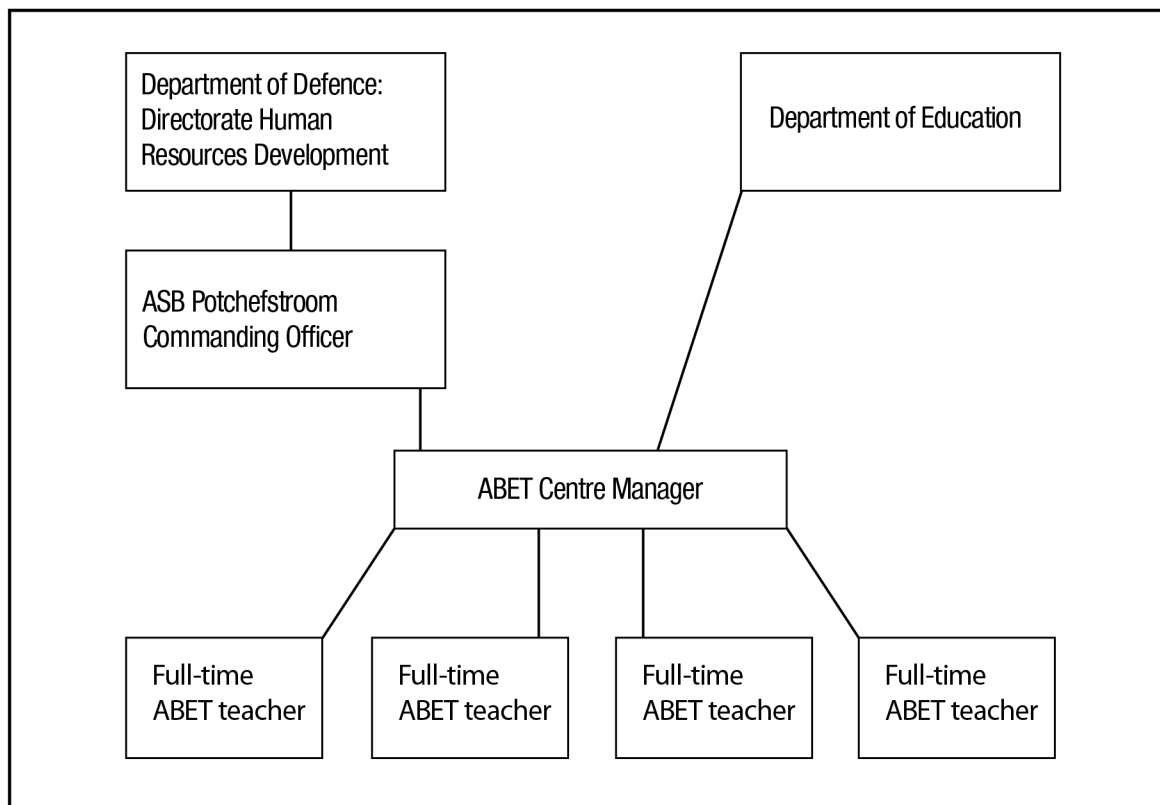
According to the interviewees, there are plans to restructure the ABET Centre to include the Centre Manager, an assistant manager, a liaison officer, and six teachers. The liaison officer would be responsible for most of the ABET Centre's communication function. The interviewees also pointed out that ABET will phase out within the next five to six years because all new recruits must have a minimum qualification of Grade 10. The Centre will then continue with FET education, covering Grade 10 to Grade 12.

The interviewees described the ABET Centre's organisational culture as creative, open, and participatory. The ABET Centre Manager maintains an open-door policy. He encourages all teachers to be creative and to give their own input into the ABET Centre's management. All personnel including the ABET Centre Manager learn from each other. If the ABET Centre Manager receives orders or work from the local Commanding Officer, he executes it, but decisions concerning the ABET Centre are made amongst themselves. They have to submit all plans or decisions to the local Commanding Officer for approval, however, but the interviewees emphasised that he is very sympathetic to the ABET cause.

Although the ABET Centre's personnel do not have equal status, the ABET Centre Manager treats the teachers as *equals*, and he encourages them to provide input into the organisation. The ABET Centre Manager also encourages *innovative* ideas. Both *equality* and *innovation* are characteristic of a symmetrical worldview to organisational management. Although the ABET Centre is bound by the ASB Potchefstroom's guidelines, as well as those provided by the Directorate Human Resources Development and the Education Department, personnel are free to be creative and innovative within the boundaries set.

The interviewees asserted that all the ABET Centre's personnel have an open relationship with learners, who are free to go to any of the personnel for advice. The personnel often assist the learners with personal issues, which are not formally part of their work.

The ABET Centre Manager is responsible for strategy formulation. The interviewees pointed out that there is no official lower-level participation in strategy formulation because of the rigid policy provided by, amongst others, the Department of Defence Instructions and the ASB Potchefstroom's Best Practices Guidelines. The ABET Centre Manager "unofficially" consults with the teachers on strategic matters though. Learners can only participate in matters concerning work methods in the classes. Learners, particularly in the lower levels, inform the teachers when they are not satisfied with certain topics or work methods and, if warranted, these can then be adapted to their needs.

Centralised management and authority characterise the Department of Defence, which it is also the case at the ASB Potchefstroom. Centralised management and authority is characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview. However, within the ABET Centre itself, management is *decentralised* because the ABET Centre Manager consults with all teachers regarding the ABET Centre's business. The ABET Centre personnel also have the *autonomy* to make decisions concerning their work and behaviour, provided that these decisions fall within the boundaries provided. Both *decentralisation* and *autonomy* are characteristic of a symmetrical worldview.

The ABET Centre does not employ a communication practitioner, but the ASB Potchefstroom Division has a Communication Officer who is responsible for all communication matters in the division. The ABET Centre does not make "much" use of the Division's Communication Officer though, because they do all communication themselves, for example all communication concerning the ABET tea (see Section 9.3.3). The teachers are responsible to communicate important information to the learners.

Following from the above, it is evident that none of the ABET Centre's personnel have a communication qualification. The ABET Centre Manager is an ABET facilitator and assessor–moderator accredited with the Education and Training Practitioners (ETP) SETA. He also qualified as a "trainer of trainers" at the College for Education and Training in Educational Technology in Pretoria.

From the interview it became clear that the ABET Centre views the function of communication as a one-way distribution of information inherent to the asymmetrical public information model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27) (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 & 3.3). This view is characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview in which communication is seen as a *technical*, *marketing function* without a strategic management role. The ABET Centre Manager's lack of formal communication qualifications might add to the ABET Centre's lack of strategic communication management and his disregard for communication's important strategic management role.

The interviewees describe the ABET Centre's social role in the following way: "It's a huge, enormous role". Firstly, the ABET Centre has an educational role in educating learners not only in school subjects, but also in life skills. Although many learners are older than the teachers, they are "the teachers' children". The teachers build close relationships with learners, in which communication and mutual respect play an important role. In this way, racist barriers are broken down. Attending the learners' family funerals is an example of the close relationship between the teachers and learners. In this regard, one interviewee pointed out that the learners "have respect for teachers, and therefore we respect our learners".

Secondly, the ABET Centre has begun to have a larger role in society. The ABET Centre was invited by the Potchefstroom Municipality to the local Environmental Day celebrations and to a school in Jacobsdal to teach hand skills to children at a special school, for example to make hats and purses from cold drink cans.

It is clear from the interview that the ABET Centre's personnel are all aware of the huge *responsibility* (characteristic of a symmetrical worldview to organisational management) of their work. They know that they are not only teachers, but also role models, and as such, they are careful of the consequences of their behaviour on their learners.

The ABET Centre serves the needs of adult illiterate personnel of the ASB Potchefstroom, serving as a "spokesperson" for them. In this way, the ABET Centre is a supporter of *interest-group liberalism.* Interest-group liberalism adds to ABET Centre's *idealistic social role*, characteristic of a symmetrical worldview to organisational management, because they aid social transformation by building up, and giving back to society.

9.3 Communication management

9.3.1 Stakeholders

The ABET Centre Manager distinguished between primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders. The ABET Centre's primary stakeholders are the ASB Potchefstroom's Commanding Officer and the learners. The secondary stakeholders are the Department of Education and the Directorate Human Resources Development. The ABET Centre's tertiary stakeholders are the four Division Commanding Officers.

9.3.2 Environmental analysis

Although the ABET Centre does not conduct any formal research relating to *communication issues*, the ABET Centre Manager conducts a SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis when he does the ABET Centre's annual planning. A SWOT analysis is used in strategic planning in which *internal* strengths and weaknesses, as well as *external* opportunities and threats, are identified. A SWOT analysis therefore assists an organisation to focus their activities where it is strongest and where its greatest opportunities lie (Pearce, 2007:25). Weaknesses and threats must be identified and alternatives must be sought. The information gathered from the SWOT analysis is supplemented by information gathered from the ABET Centre's personnel's everyday work and interaction with the learners.

The interviewees identified three main risks facing the ABET Centre, namely the reluctance of the Division Commanding Officers to send personnel to attend ABET or FET classes; learners attending military courses, or being deployed, which leads to them not being able to attend all ABET classes; and poor pass rates.

9.3.2.1 Consequences of risks for the organisation

Although the Department of Defence is "pro-studies", many *Division Commanding Officers* are not in favour of personnel attending ABET or FET classes, probably because of interference with learners' work responsibilities during the day. This is one of the reasons the ABET Centre did not have many learners in 2007. When personnel, particularly military personnel, attend classes the Division

have to do without the learners for the duration of the class in addition to travelling time to and from the ABET Centre. All Divisions are not located in one place, and some are quite a distance from the ABET Centre. Learners are taken with military transport to the ABET Centre in time for their class, and collected again, sometimes hours later, to return to work. Sometimes learners would be absent from work for up to four hours, four days a week. This situation has a huge impact on productivity and therefore Division Commanding Officers cannot allow too many personnel from one division to attend classes simultaneously because "who will do the work?". Non-military personnel (such as administrative personnel, gardeners, and cleaners) are allowed to attend classes more easily, but it also depends on whether their daily work is completed.

Military personnel from the four operational divisions within the Potchefstroom area receive job-related training by means of various military *courses* throughout the year, in order to be able to be *deployed* throughout the world. Whenever learners are attending a military course, or are deployed, they cannot attend ABET or FET classes or write examinations, and they have to repeat their ABET or FET grade. Military courses and deployments thus have a negative effect on pass rates at the ABET Centre, as well as learners' ability and motivation to attend ABET or FET classes. Concerning this risk, it is easier for non-military personnel to attend classes and pass grades.

In connection with both the above-mentioned risks, the interviewees also mentioned that personnel's children attending FET classes sometimes have a "sorely-needed" job, and their employers are not always willing to give them time off to attend classes. This implies that these learners have the opportunity to obtain further education and training free of charge, but they cannot make use of the opportunity.

Except for the above-mentioned factors, contributing to *poor pass rates*, the interviewees pointed out that it is very difficult for learners who are forty or fifty years old to start their education at Grade 1 level. Some learners take very long to learn because they are old, work full time, have never been exposed to a school situation, and do not have the fine motor skills necessary for writing, such as being able to cut paper with scissors.

The teaching of school subjects further contributes to poor pass rates because the course contents do not interest the learners. The ABET Centre have to teach school subjects because it is registered at the Department of Education, who sets this requirement. In the Skills Development Class the ABET Centre does however teach lower-grade learners to read a pay slip or their municipal services account, to complete a form for withdrawing money, and other practical tasks the learners may ask for.

The learners also find Mathematical Literacy very difficult because they have a limited mathematical frame of reference. Language too provides problems because learners must write their examination papers in English even though they are not proficient in English. Many learners are more proficient in Afrikaans, but there is political negativity surrounding Afrikaans. The ABET Centre now employs a teacher who teaches Mathematics in both English and SeTswana.

Another factor that contributed to a high dropout rate in 2007 is the militarising of the Constand Viljoen Officers' Mess, which compelled the learners to work shifts and which made it impossible to attend classes (Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre, 2007a:2). Without enough learners, in addition to a poor pass rate, the ABET Centre is not viable, and therefore, the above-mentioned risks need to be addressed effectively.

9.3.3   Communication strategy

The ABET Centre does not have a formal strategy and communication plans for stakeholder management. The interviewees believe that a communication management strategy is not "absolutely" necessary at the moment because of good communication in classes. The Division's Communication Officer handles all larger communication issues, and therefore it is not necessary for the ABET Centre to have a communication and stakeholder management strategy (although the interviewees said that the ABET Centre does not use the Communication Officer "much" - see Section 9.2).

The interviewees said that although it is necessary to plan communication, the ABET Centre does not have enough personnel to plan communication strategically. The ABET Centre Manager emphasised that in planning communication, contingencies need to be provided for, and therefore plans must be adaptable. The interviewees believed that it is possible to plan communication with certain stakeholders, but it is impossible to plan the contents of the communication beforehand. Within the Army framework there are set opportunities for communication throughout the year, and the ABET Centre has to adhere to the set timetable (see below for discussion of meetings and reports). When the ABET Centre Manager has to communicate with a certain group, he plans the presentation thoroughly and adapts the message and the language according to the level of the personnel he is addressing. It is clear that the ABET Centre does not understand and/or acknowledge communication's strategic role, and therefore they perceive it as unnecessary to implement. Communication is viewed as a tactical resource that is planned from interaction to interaction.

The ABET Centre hosts an annual ABET tea, to introduce the ABET Centre and its functionalities to other Army personnel and any interested parties. Tickets are for sale to anyone interested. The Skills Development Class learners with the teachers are responsible for the function. The learners make small gifts for the guests, lay the tables, and act as waiters. All food for the function is prepared at the ABET Centre. The ABET Centre does not make money from the function, but it serves as a marketing tool and teaches the learners new skills.

In another effort to attract more attention to the ABET Centre, they have previously invited Potchefstroom's mayor, several high-placed local politicians, and the former South African president, Nelson Mandela, to visit the ABET Centre, as well as the ABET tea. Unfortunately, Nelson Mandela declined the invitation due to poor health. The rationale behind the invitations was that when these guests visited the ABET Centre, it is published in the local newspapers. According to the interviewees, having the former South African president visit the ABET Centre would have provided excellent exposure for the ABET Centre. Some of the other guests attended the ABET tea.

The ABET Centre ought to determine which stakeholders they want to reach with actions such as the ABET tea, participation in the Aardklop Arts Festival, Potchefstroom Spring Festival and the KOSH Show (see Section 9.1.4), as well as inviting high-placed persons for visits. ABET training is only available to Army personnel and their dependents, and advertising to people outside the Army seems futile. The ABET tea furthermore only reaches persons willing to buy tickets for the function. The ABET tea might be expanded to include free-of-charge exhibitions of learners' work and talks by learners on the benefits of education. This might serve as an opportunity to create dialogue with potential learners and particularly the Division Commanding Officers.

As mentioned above, exposure at the Aardklop Arts Festival, Potchefstroom Spring Festival, and the KOSH Show cannot serve as a marketing tool because the ABET Centre's education is available only to Army personnel and their families. It rather serves to show learners that their handmade

products can be sold (see Section 9.1.1), which strengthens the relationship with and motivation of the learners.

The ABET Centre Manager planned to launch a "roadshow" or an awareness campaign in 2008. During the roadshow, he intended to present a proposal to all Division Commanding Officers, highlighting the needs of illiterate Army personnel and explaining the role of the ABET centre. Following the initial proposal to the Division Commanding Officers, he wanted to visit all the divisions to raise awareness of the ABET Centre amongst Army personnel at grass-roots level. He intended to emphasise the education the ABET Centre offers free of charge, except for the initial annual registration fee of R100.00. The aim of the roadshow is to motivate all Division Commanding Officers to encourage illiterate army personnel to attend ABET classes and to raise illiterate Army personnel's awareness of the benefits of literacy, and the ways in which the ABET Centre can assist them in improving their education. However, the roadshow would not address the Division Commanding Officers' concern about learners' productivity while they are attending ABET classes (see Section 9.3.2.1), and as such it seems as if the ABET Centre Manager does not really understand their issue. It is therefore questionable whether the roadshow would successfully address the ABET Centre's risk, because it does not solve their stakeholders' issues.

The ABET Centre's main mode of communication is meetings and reports. The ABET Centre Manager reports weekly on the ABET Centre's activities to the 'Orders Group' meeting, which all military and non-military division heads attend. Every Thursday, all division heads share the outcomes from the 'Orders Group' meeting with their personnel. The ABET Centre Manager also reports on the activities of the ABET Centre at the monthly meetings with all the Division Commanding Officers. The ABET Centre Manager has monthly meetings with the Education Department. He does not have to provide written reports to the Education Department because they attend the meetings. Should the Education Department however request a written report, the ABET Centre Manager will supply it. The ABET Centre Manager delivers a quarterly report to Directorate Human Resources in Pretoria on matters, such as examination results and newsworthy activities, such as participating in the Aardklop Arts Festival.

The ABET Centre makes use of flyers, which are sent to all divisions, in order to market its activities. The ABET Centre also relies on word of mouth to spread communication about its activities and benefits.

Although the local Division Communication Officer handles all media relations, the ABET Centre has good relations with one of the community newspaper's journalists. Sometimes they contact the journalist directly with a story, for example, when the ABET Centre took a group of learners for a week-long holiday to Durban or when the local municipality invited the Skills Development Class learners to attend the Environmental Day celebrations, to illustrate the recycling of cold drink cans into hats.

The ABET Centre also has their news published internally on the Intranet. Another media form they make use of is the Army's internal magazine, the *SA Soldier*. Interesting stories and/or photographs are published in the *SA Soldier*, which enables the ABET Centre to reach the wider Army community.

In making use of flyers, reports in local newspapers and in the Army's internal magazine, the *SA Soldier*, as well as placing news on the ASB Potchefstroom's Intranet, it seems as if the ABET Centre do not realise that all these media are for literate persons only, and therefore, they do not reach illiterate

potential learners. Verbal communication is very important to reach such learners. According to the interviewees, this problem would be reduced in future, as all new recruits must have a minimum qualification of Grade 10 (see Section 9.2).

9.3.3.1 Stakeholder relationships

Despite not managing communication strategically with stakeholders, the ABET Centre claims to have good relationships with most of its strategic stakeholders. According to the interviewees, the ABET Centre's communication and relationship with the ASB Potchefstroom's *Commanding Officer* is good, and as a result, the day-to-day operation of the ABET Centre is managed well. The Commanding Officer is within walking distance from the ABET Centre, and the ABET Centre Manager can visit him anytime concerning any matter regarding the ABET Centre's management.

The existence of two-way communication between the ABET Centre Manager, the teachers and the learners ensures that the relationship with the *learners* is excellent (also see Section 9.2). However, the interviewees believe though that communication and relationship management with *potential learners* is not at all satisfactory. This is due to several problems as discussed under Section 9.3.2.1. The ABET Centre Manager hopes to enhance the ABET Centre's exposure with the roadshow, which will be launched in 2008 (see Section 9.3.3).

The interviewees mentioned that the *Department of Education* does not always understand the unique needs of adult illiterates and the ABET sector, and that other ABET providers experience difficulty in obtaining government funds. The interviewees said though that the ABET Centre has a close relationship with the Department of Education because there is a local branch in Potchefstroom, which the ABET Centre Manager visits frequently. The ABET Centre Manager is free to ask for assistance and guidelines from the Department of Education. In other words, the ABET Centre Manager makes an effort to build and maintain a strong relationship with the Department of Education. Owing to this, they experience their communication and relationship with the Department of Education as satisfying.

The interviewees described the ABET Centre's relationship with the *Directorate Human Resources Development* in Pretoria as compliance driven "paper orientated communication", which mainly consists of instructions from the Directorate's side and written reports from the ABET Centre. As a result, the stakeholder relationship is not experienced as particularly satisfying but not as a problem either.

The ABET Centre's relationship with some of *the Division Commanding Officers* is acceptable, but others are not keen on their personnel attending ABET or FET classes (see Section 9.3.2.1). The ABET Centre Manager hopes that the roadshow planned for 2008 will motivate the Division Commanding Officers to encourage illiterate Army personnel to attend ABET classes, but as mentioned in Section 9.3.3, the roadshow will not address the Division Commanding Officers' issues.

In analysing the stakeholder landscape, it is evident that the ABET Centre's tertiary stakeholders, namely the four Division Commanding Officers, have a more strategic role than their secondary stakeholders, the Department of Education and the Directorate Human Resources Development (see Section 9.3.1). The four Division Commanding Officers' reluctance to send personnel for training at the ABET Centre causes concern because there were no Grade 10 learners in 2007 (see Sections 9.1.1 and 9.3.2.1). This implies that there will be no Grade 11s in 2008 and no Grade 12s in 2009, unless other learners enrol who already have a Grade 10 or Grade 11 qualification. Without learners, the

ABET Centre has no reason for its existence. It is thus imperative that the ABET Centre Manager understand and address the ABET Centre's stakeholders' real issues, and strategically plans his communication to build better relationships during his intended roadshow in 2008. It is essential to listen to the Division Commanding Officers' concerns, and by creating dialogue, attempt to find solutions that will be acceptable for both sides. The dialogue must be an ongoing process to assess the situation continuously and to build strong relationships with the Division Commanding Officers.

When the ABET Centre Manager has succeeded in building strong relationships with, and has addressed the Division Commanding Officers issues, it will be easier to recruit potential learners. The continuous recruitment of learners is necessary for the ABET Centre's existence. By creating opportunities for dialogue, the ABET Centre can determine current and potential learners' needs and adapt or create courses, within the frameworks provided, to meet their needs.

By building strong relationships with all their stakeholders, the ABET Centre would not need to draw attention by inviting high-placed politicians to visit them (see Section 9.3.3). These visits are once-off occasions, while the establishment of strong relationships will have long-lasting benefits for both the ABET Centre and their stakeholders.

When the interviewees were asked to describe the five steps to successful stakeholder management in an ideal world, their answer was:
- to be honest with all stakeholders;
- to deliver on all promises, which is particularly important to learners;
- to be dedicated to work; and
- to be loyal to all stakeholders, particularly to the learners.

It is obvious that the ABET Centre does not fully understand the challenges and benefits of strategic communication management, but they do value relationship building, especially with learners.

9.4 Army Support Base Potchefstroom ABET Centre: strategic communication management analysis

9.4.1 Application of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model

In the next figure, the communication management practices of the ABET Centre are roughly plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 10.

Figure 9.2: Compliance of the ABET Centre's communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)

The ABET Centre's communication practices mostly do not correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management. The ABET Centre's communication has to comply

with that of the Department of Defence, as well as the ASB Potchefstroom's internal values, strategies, policies, and so on. However, the ABET Centre does not have a communication management strategy in place to manage their reputation risks and stakeholders' issues.

The ABET Centre does not conduct formal environmental scanning to analyse their external environment to identify their strategic organisational and reputation risks, strategic stakeholders or stakeholders' issues. The ABET Centre Manager conducts an annual SWOT analysis (see Section 9.3.2), which can be viewed as a form of *informal* environmental scanning. However, the SWOT analysis does not focus on strategic communication with strategic stakeholders, or the use of communication to address organisational or reputation risks and stakeholders' issues.

The ABET Centre does not formally identify and prioritise their stakeholders. Therefore no specific relationship building efforts are aimed at specific stakeholders to build and maintain strong relationships.

The interviewees argued that the ABET Centre does not need a communication strategy because communication with their learners is very good. However, they do not seem to realise that the learners are not their only stakeholders. The interviewees also mentioned that the ASB Potchefstroom has a Communication Officer, and therefore, the ABET Centre does not need to compile a communication management strategy (see Section 9.3.3). Yet, the interviewees said that the ABET Centre does not make "much" use of the Communication Officer because they mostly handle their own communication (see Section 9.2). However, the ABET Centre Manager included the appointment of a liaison officer, who will be responsible for all the ABET Centre's communication, in his proposed restructuring of the ABET Centre (see Section 9.2). Therefore it seems as if the ABET Centre Manager does indeed realise that the ABET Centre requires a qualified practitioner to manage communication with stakeholders.

The ABET Centre's communication is mostly *technical* and *tactical* in nature because communication materials are merely developed and distributed. The ABET Centre's communication can thus be viewed as asymmetrical and one-way in nature.

Although the ABET Centre has a symmetrical worldview and organisational culture, it is bound by the ASB Potchefstroom's guidelines, as well as those provided by the Directorate Human Resources Development and the Education Department. Nevertheless, the ABET Centre can still, within the boundaries set, manage communication and relationship building in a strategic and innovative way by following a communication management strategy which takes their constraints into consideration.

It is evident from the above discussion that there is little alignment between organisational and communication goals. Communication and relationship building therefore plays a small role in organisational goal attainment.

9.4.2 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

In the next figure the communication management practices of the ABET Centre are roughly plotted against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 11.

Figure 9.4: Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRöH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	■	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	■	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	■	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	■	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	■	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	■	Relationship management strategically planned

According to the above figure, the ABET Centre's approach to communication management is more in line with Steyn and Puth's approach. However, the ABET Centre does agree partially with Ströh's approach in that they also believe that a communication strategy is unnecessary and relationship building need not to be planned.

The ABET Centre Manager stated that a communication strategy is not "absolutely" necessary for the ABET Centre. This is partially in agreement with Ströh's (2007:199–220) (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.6.2 & 4.6.3) criticism on Steyn and Puth's (2000) model that communication must not be planned and structured. The ABET Centre Manager believes though that communication must be planned and that such plans must be adjustable to manage emerging issues. Although the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model are indicated in a linear fashion, these do not need to happen in the stated sequence in practice (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.1.1.4). This means that a communication strategy designed according to the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is perfectly adaptable to manage emerging issues.

As mentioned in Section 9.3.3, the ABET Centre Manager considers it necessary to include the appointment of a liaison officer, who will be responsible for all the ABET Centre's communication, in his proposed restructuring of the ABET Centre (see Section 9.2). This implies that he realises that communication should be managed and planned by a trained practitioner, and that the ABET Centre needs a dedicated person for this task. These restructuring plans contradict his view on the necessity of a communication strategy, as expressed during the interview. However, it is too early to know whether the liaison officer will have a managerial role in the ABET Centre, but this person will nonetheless work closely with the ABET Manager. It can thus be argued that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on planned communication and communication management not having a dominant coalition

role are thus not in practice in the ABET Centre, nor is it viewed as viable for future practices.

Ströh (2007:209) furthermore asserts that stakeholders cannot be managed top-down by formulating communication strategies but only by all stakeholders participating fully in all strategy formulation. As mentioned in Section 9.2, the Department of Defence and the ASB Potchefstroom have rigid policy and strategy formulation guidelines, which do not allow for stakeholder participation. Although the ABET Centre Manager informally allows the teachers input into strategy formulation, he alone is responsible for formally compiling policies and strategies for the ABET Centre. Regarding the Department of Defence's strict policies, it can also be argued that it would be against its nature to tolerate a communication practitioner who acts as an activist. Ströh's (2007:210) views on communication management is thus not in practice in this case.

In analysing the ABET Centre's communication practices, it is evident that the ABET Centre does not realise the importance and benefits of strategic communication management for building strong relationships with stakeholders to manage risks and stakeholders' issues. It is clear that they do not have the knowledge to practise strategic communication management. In this regard, it is difficult to determine whether the ABET Centre would implement Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on the implementation of communication to build stakeholder relationships.

It is evident that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication management are not in practice in the ABET Centre nor are they viewed as feasible. On the other hand, one can also see that the ABET Centre's communication practices are not in line with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management.

CHAPTER 10

THE OPTIMUS FOUNDATION[1]

Interview with Claire Jenvey, on 15 October 2007

10.1   Background

10.1.1 Organisational information

The Optimus Foundation (hereafter Optimus) was established in 1976 as a Centre of Concern. In 1984, Optimus was formalised as a Section 21 NPO, and in 1991, it was registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2; Optimus Foundation, 2007b; Optimus Foundation, 2008:3). The Fourways Adult Education Centre was Optimus's first night school to open in 1983 (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8). To date Optimus has provided training to more than 22 000 adult learners since its establishment (Optimus Foundation, 2007b:2)

Optimus's ABET and skills training programmes are registered with the Gauteng Department of Education, and it is accredited as an ABET provider by Umalusi, which is the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education. According to Optimus's 2007 Annual Report (2008:11), all ABET courses are adult specific, outcomes based, and strictly aligned to the relevant NQF outcomes. Optimus's quality assurance process is threefold, with monitoring and moderation by the principal, the Gauteng Department of Education, and Umalusi.

Optimus's main focus is to make skills development and literacy programmes more accessible to South Africans living on the breadline (Optimus Foundation, 2008:3). Therefore, Optimus focuses on adult education and provides relevant, affordable education to those who have had little or no formal schooling or who have been unable to complete their formal schooling. Furthermore, Optimus provides relevant, affordable skills training to those who do not have skills to gain employment. The organisation also furnishes life and career skills training, in order to enhance employment opportunities, develop income-generating abilities and potential, and enhance understanding and knowledge of community issues, such as HIV/AIDS (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2). Optimus succeeds in this by:
*   establishing and maintaining financially and administratively efficient centres that are accessible in terms of scheduling of training and location;
*   supplying competent, motivated, suitably-qualified educators and relevant materials and programmes; and
*   partnering with and supporting other role players in ABET, such as the Gauteng Department of Education, NGOs, and community based organisations (CBOs) (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2).

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1   *The Optimus Foundation changed its name and identity in 2008 to Equip Skills for Living "to reflect the more dynamic, focussed and caring organisation it has become". Angela Robinson is the new CEO, with Claire Jenvey now acting as a Board Member.*
Website: http://www.equipskills.org

In order to obtain the above goals, Optimus has built and maintained valuable partnerships that allow them to combine facilities, equipment, resources, skills, and intellectual property, in order to provide improved services to the community through a broader range of courses for learners (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:5; Optimus Foundation, 2007a:5). The interviewee explained that partners provide the facilities, such as the building where they also pay the water and electricity. Optimus provides the trainers and money for equipment and "other consumable stuff". Partners do not pay Optimus to run a project. According to the interviewee, partnerships work better because "we don't have to do it all ourselves". Optimus's partners are, amongst others, the Bryanston Methodist Church, UCS (an international software development company), and the Gauteng Department of Education (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:5). The Gauteng Department of Education is a very important partner because it pays the educators' salaries (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:5; Optimus Foundation, 2008:31). Optimus believes that it is important for learners to "buy into" their education and therefore all learners must pay R160.00 per subject per year (Optimus Foundation, 2008:11).

In 2005, Optimus received the Adult Learning Network Award for the Best Adult Education Centre in Gauteng and was placed third nationally (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2; Optimus Foundation, 2007d).

10.1.2 The Optimus Foundation's vision

Optimus strives to be an active agent in the fight against illiteracy and unemployment in South Africa (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:1; Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2).

10.1.3 The Optimus Foundation's mission

Optimus strives to provide education and practical and life skills to underprivileged individuals, in order that they might become value adding citizens and active participants in South Africa's economy (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:1; Optimus Foundation, 2007a:2).

10.1.4 The Optimus Foundation's activities and projects

10.1.4.1   Adult education centres

Up to 2006, Optimus and its partners managed five adult education centres in Johannesburg, namely the Eyethu Centre, the Kingsway Centre, the Fourways Adult Education Centre, the Lesedi Centre, and the Florida Education Centre. During 2006, a decision was made to close the Eyethu Centre in Zevenfontein and the Kingsway Centre in Randpark. The relocation of the majority of people living in the Zevenfontein region to Cosmo City had a negative effect on the Eyethu Centre, while the dwindling numbers of learners attending the Kingsway Centre rendered it no longer financially viable (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8). Learners from the Eyethu Centre could go to either the Fourways Adult Education Centre or the Diepsloot Education Centre, which is managed by the Gauteng Department of Education (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8). The Kingsway Centre's learners could move to either the Fourways Adult Education Centre or the Lesedi Centre (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8).

In 2007, Optimus consolidated its night schools' programmes by closing all its small education centres, including the Lesedi Centre, and re-channeling resources that were used in these centres to programmes where the demand and need was very high (Optimus Foundation, 2008:26). Optimus thus ensured that the best possible courses are delivered, along with a high quality of tuition. Optimus

is now able to offer a wider variety of courses, and in this way, they ensure that individuals become more employable (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:6).

At the time of this research study, Optimus managed the night school in Florida, located at the Florida Park High School west of Johannesburg. The centre accommodates learners from Florida, Florida Park, Roodepoort, Dobsonville in Soweto, and Westbury (Optimus Foundation, 2008:8). The centre runs academic programmes ranging from Literacy to Grade 12 (Optimus Foundation, 2008:8). Over 500 learners were registered at the Centre in 2007, of which 350 were aspirant matriculants (Optimus Foundation, 2008:8, 10).

Grade 12 learners are offered eleven subjects, four evenings a week. Matric teachers offered additional classes (unpaid) on Saturday mornings and during the vacation periods between terms (Optimus Foundation, 2008:10). In 2007, the pass rate per subject was 70 per cent, with Afrikaans First Language leading, as 94 per cent of learners passed this subject (Optimus Foundation, 2008:10).

Optimus started the Fourways Adult Education Centre in 1983. The centre is now autonomous, and from 2007, it has been run by members of the community in conjunction with the Gauteng Department of Education (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8). Optimus's partnership with the Fourways Adult Education Centre continues because Optimus supplies it with resources, educational guidance, coaching, and training of staff members (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:8).

10.1.4.2 Skills training

10.1.4.2.1 Themba Project

Marita Nightingale, then a member of the Bryanston Methodist Church, founded the Themba Project in Diepsloot in 2003, which began with three women. During 2007 Themba had trained 130 women (Optimus Foundation, 2008:14). Through the Themba project unemployed women are taught to do beadwork, sewing, cross stitch, embroidery, fabric painting, knitting, cooking, and woodwork. The Themba Project provides the women not only with skills, but also with working material, market access, and working space (Optimus Foundation, 2008:14). The women's products are ordered by companies as corporate gifts, which allows the women to earn an income for their families (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:11). In some months, the women earn up to R2000 each for manufacturing and selling their products (Optimus Foundation, 2008:14).

Optimus's partner in the Themba Project, the Bryanston Methodist Church, expanded the centre in 2007. A new building was added, and they offered Optimus an office and training room on the premises. This enabled Optimus to expand training for the growing demand, especially for beadwork and sewing (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:11; Optimus Foundation, 2008:15).

During 2007, Old Mutual sponsored a week-long training course in Limpopo for two project leaders. Furthermore, the Themba Project secured display rights alongside other selected crafters at a retail store to be opened in May 2008 by Old Mutual in Johannesburg (Optimus Foundation, 2008:15). Vodacom also donated industrial sewing machines valued at R40 000 to the Themba Project (Optimus Foundation, 2008:15).

Previously, Optimus supported the Themba Project in terms of assistance with trainer salaries, materials, consumables, marketing, and fundraising (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:11). From November 2007, however, the Themba Project was incorporated under the Optimus banner as one of the flag-

ship projects run by the Foundation (Optimus Foundation, 2008:15). This implies that the Themba Project must expand, and Optimus is consulting with businesses in this regard (Optimus Foundation, 2008:15; see also Section 10.3.3.1).

10.1.4.2.2.   Zenzele Project

This project targets those people that are at the bottom of the unemployment chain, and trains them for entry-level jobs in industries, such as retail and wholesale (Optimus Foundation, 2008:4). Unemployed people are put on a two-week training programme focusing on customer care, understanding the retail environment, and point of sale software training. This training enables them to secure jobs as cashiers (Optimus Foundation, 2008:19). In 2007, UCS, an international software development company, partnered with Optimus and entirely funded the development and running of the Zenzele Project (Optimus Foundation, 2008:19). Homo Novus partnered with Optimus to deliver the first six months of the cashier training programme (Optimus Foundation, 2008:26).

According to the 2007 Annual Report (2008:20), the Zenzele Project's programme could be a corporate social investment opportunity for those in the corporate sector "to contribute and invest in skills development and job recruitment for those who otherwise would NOT have had an opportunity to become economically active and skilled citizens" (Optimus Foundation, 2008:20; see also Section 10.3.3.1).

10.1.4.2.3   Project Head Start

Optimus coordinates the distribution of food parcels supplied by the Bryanston Methodist Church on a monthly basis to approximately 130 AIDS sufferers (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:17). The parcels are packed at the church, after which Optimus and numerous volunteers distribute the parcels in Witkoppen, Kya Sands, and Diepsloot (Optimus Foundation, 2007c:17; Optimus Foundation, 2007b:5).

Additional to the above, Optimus piloted an entrepreneurship programme with AIDS sufferers in Diepsloot in 2007. Beneficiaries are supplied with R30 worth of goods to sell at a mark-up price and all generated profits can be kept (Optimus Foundation, 2008:24). The programme has proven to be successful in the first stage, and it will be expanded to Witkoppen and Kya Sands (Optimus Foundation, 2008:24).

10.2   The Optimus Foundation's organisational structure, management & societal role

Optimus has *founding members* who developed and constituted the organisation in 1976. In addition, Optimus has *ordinary members* whose main role is to ensure that all major decisions made by the Governing Board are checked, in order to ensure sustainability, growth, and good governance (Optimus Foundation, 2008:29).

Optimus's *Governing Board* consists of six to ten board members, each elected for a period of two years. The *Executive Committee* is accountable to the Governing Board. The Executive Committee's central office is in Bryanston in Johannesburg. It deals with administration pertaining to the education and skills centres: centre management, marketing, finance, human resources, fundraising, administration, materials management, assessment, and moderation (Optimus Foundation, 2007a:5).

Optimus has a formal hierarchical structure with a *CEO* leading the *Executive Committee* and *teachers* and *trainers* reporting to the Executive Committee members leading a specific project. Each Executive Committee member is responsible for a specific project and holds full accountability in terms of management of the project, decision-making, and idea generation. Thus, in terms of decision-making, idea generation, and accountability, Optimus has a very flat structure. Each Executive Committee member is allowed to contribute ideas to the other projects, in order to ensure that the projects are constantly improved, but the responsibility still lies with the relevant project leader. Optimus's organogram is presented in the figure on the following page.

Figure 10.1: Optimus's organogram
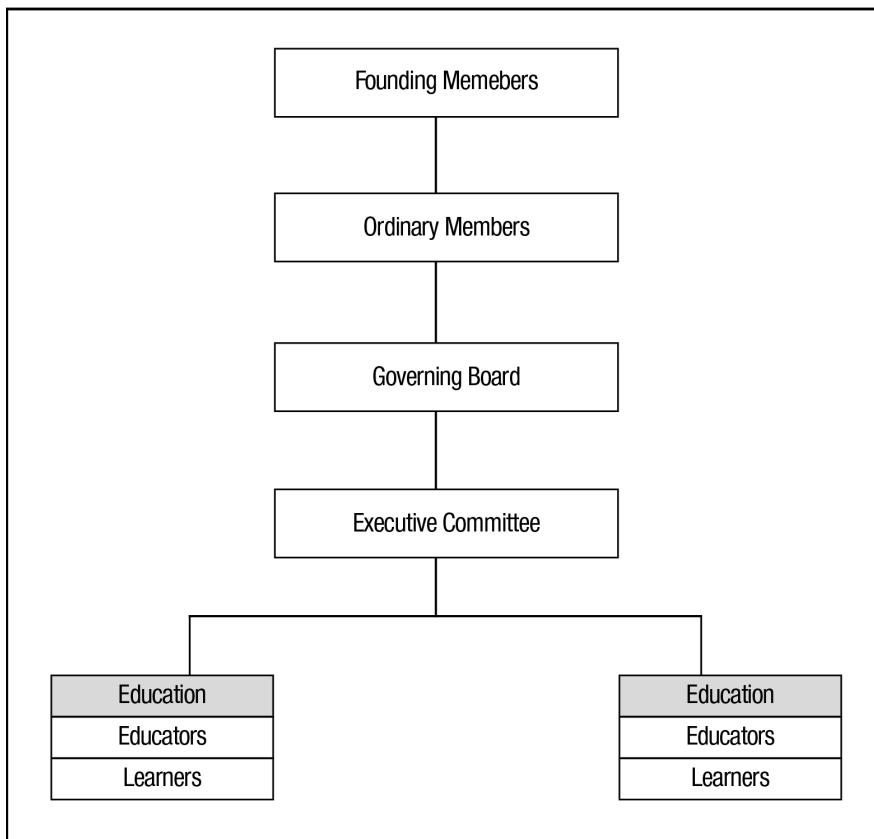
(Source: Optimus Foundation, 2007a:4; Optimus Foundation, 2008:28).

Although Optimus's Executive Committee members do not officially have equal status, all are responsible for certain projects, and they are fully accountable for managing the project. The organisation seems to display signs of a symmetrical worldview in its decentralisation of management, for instance, the Fourways Adult Education Centre that has been autonomous since 2007 (see Section 10.1.4.1).

All educators and trainers are encouraged to provide input into the organisation's operations. Feedback from educatores, however, has proven difficult because contact time with them is minimal, as they employed on a part time basis by Optimus to teach at the night schools. The Executive Committee members rely on the "short chats and discussions with individuals" to obtain feedback.

The interviewee emphasised that it is very important for teachers, learners, and partners to be part of strategy development. They understand community needs and issues and because of this, their feedback is key to ensuring the success of the organisation and its work. However, the interviewee believes that donors do not need to be part of the strategy development process unless they partici-

pate in entirely funding a specific project, for example, when Optimus runs a corporate social investment programme on behalf of the donor.

The interviewee pointed out that it is "definitely easier" to participate with partners and teachers in strategy formulation than it is with learners because contact time with many of the night school learners is very short due to the short duration of some courses. However, Optimus has always compiled a needs analysis prior to making large strategic changes and in doing so has always sampled learners and other stakeholders to assess the requirements for change. The interviewee emphasised that "without it [needs analysis] you will not meet a community need and therefore your organisation is not socially applicable".

Optimus does not employ a full-time communication practitioner. According to the interviewee, each Executive Committee member is responsible for various areas of communication, for example, the finance manager communicates to donors, the training manager communicates to learners, and the CEO communicates to board members and other stakeholders. Optimus therefore has a policy or protocol for communication with stakeholders. None of the Executive Committee members has a formal communication qualification however.

According to the interviewee, Optimus's role in society is to educate adults, in order for adults to be able to assist their children more with schoolwork. The interviewee said, "Family literacy is key for us. Without educating adults, children won't be able to learn from their parents and they won't get guidance or mentorship from their parents". Optimus do not run family literacy programmes but focuses on educating adults. The interviewee asserted that schools cannot provide everything for children, and parents have a very important role in their children's upbringing and education.

Optimus therefore serves the needs of illiterate adults, acting as a "spokesperson" for them. In this way, Optimus is a supporter of *interest-group liberalism*, which adds to their *idealistic social role* because they aid social transformation by building up and giving back to society. Interest-group liberalism and an idealistic social role are characteristic of a symmetrical worldview.

10.3 Communication management

10.3.1 Stakeholders

The interviewee defined stakeholders as "anyone who has an interest in the organisation". According to the interviewee, Optimus's most important stakeholders are donors; partners, including the Gauteng Education Department (see Section 10.1.4.1); educators; and learners and trainees[2].

10.3.2 Environmental analysis

According to the interviewee, Optimus does not have the capacity, financially or from a resource point of view, to conduct formal research in order to determine their most important risks and stakeholders' issues. Optimus is linked to other NPOs and organisations, such as the South African NGO Coalition[3] and Greater Good[4], in order to informally "find out what is happening in the field". How-

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2   *In this case "learners" refer to those adults attending ABET classes at night schools, while "trainees" refer to unemployed adults that participate in projects.*

3   *http://www.sangoco.org.za/site/.*

4   *The Greater Good South Africa is a NPO that brings good causes and committed givers together in meaningful and innovative ways to end poverty in South Africa. Greater Good South Africa acts to bring together organi-*

ever, the interviewee said that whenever Optimus plans strategic changes, they first conduct a needs analysis to ensure that the changes are viable (see Section 10.2). No formal environmental scanning or research is however conducted from a strategic communication perspective.

The interviewee highlighted the inability to provide the "right mix" of education and skills training programmes for learners as Optimus's greatest risk, but added that scarcity of funding can also be a problem. According to the interviewee, these organisational risks would most probably also form part of the organisation's stakeholders' issues.

10.3.2.1   Consequences of risks for the organisation

Optimus is in the process of developing more *effective programmes* for learners, by providing not only education in night schools, but also skills training. The interviewee said that there are learners who come to Optimus for literacy training, but due to certain constraints (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.2), they are not able to make it through to Grade 12. Optimus wants to provide them with skills, together with formal education, to enable them to get jobs more easily. It is currently a challenge for Optimus to find the "right mix" of education and skills training and the capacity of people or resources to provide the training. Optimus is currently investigating the implementation of craft and work skills training programmes that can be run during the year at the Florida Education Centre (Optimus Foundation, 2008:12).

The interviewee noted that the scarcity of *funding* can be a problem, but "we've been blessed with lots of good corporates who are sponsoring us". Obtaining funding is therefore currently not such a big organisational risk. In contrast to other NPOs, Optimus has more individual donors than corporate donors. The interviewee said in this regard that individual donors "are more reliable, they give consistently, and they don't ask questions". Corporate donors create "a lot of overheads in the form of report writing", and while it is good to be accountable, report writing takes a lot of time. It is for the above reasons that Optimus would like to increase its focus on individual donors.

The interviewer prompted the interviewee on whether Optimus experiences difficulties concerning donors changing their funding criteria and Optimus then losing funding. The interviewee answered that many organisations' funding criteria is changing due to legislation concerning BEE Charters[5]. Sector specific charters require of companies to focus corporate social investment in their own sector. Some organisations invest in the communities in which they operate. The interviewee pointed out that it is important for NPOs to understand why company wants to be involved in corporate social investment, and to direct requests for funding to companies or donors who have an imperative to invest in adult education.

Regarding the above, Optimus functions as an *open system* and it has a *moving equilibrium* because information is used to adapt to the changing environment, such as the changing donor landscape and the changing needs of learners. This is in accordance with a symmetrical worldview.

The interviewee also mentioned that the National Lottery has been inconsistent from the beginning, and because of this, funding from the Lottery cannot be relied upon.

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sations that need assistance (funds, goods, time, or skills) and individuals, companies, or organisations that can provide assistance (see http://www.myggsa.co.za/).

5   For more information, see the Department: Trade and Industry's website: http://www.thedti.gov.za/bee/beecharters.htm

10.3.3 Communication management

Optimus does not have a formal strategy and plans to communicate with and manage relationships with stakeholders. The interviewee believes that every organisation needs a communication strategy, but she is "not sold on" a formal communication strategy. The interviewee "has seen" some corporate communication strategies and "they're just over the top" and "too focused on profits". Instead she feels there must be principles and guidelines on how, when, and why to communicate. The interviewee is thus referring to the need for a communication policy rather than a formal communication strategy. The interviewee further specified the form a communication strategy in a NPO should take. She said that Optimus could make use of a simple and straightforward communication strategy. The strategy should clearly identify the stakeholders, the frequency of communication with each stakeholder, the communication medium (for example, meetings, formal presentations, or a written report), and the quality of the communication. The interviewee asserted that she does not think a "60-page document detailing everything in the organisation" is necessary, but rather advocates a manual to "pick up, and use quickly", detailing what level of communication is needed and then enabling one to implement it. A communication strategy must be very simple for NPOs to implement fast, because they do not have the money, time, or human resources to conduct research and to implement a complicated strategy.

Although the interviewee's, and therefore Optimus's needs regarding a communication strategy are clearly defined above, the interviewee only focused on technical communication practices as contained in a communication plan. The value of strategic communication management for building strong, lasting relationships does not appear to be realised. It became clear though that Optimus practises communication management intuitively, as they emphasise the creation of dialogue for building relationships (see Section 10.3.3.1). The interviewee pointed out that all stakeholders need to know what Optimus is doing, and therefore, they have to report to them. She noted further that it is important, to understand and determine what mode of communication stakeholders prefer and "then you provide it".

Optimus has a more formal relationship with donors, and therefore communication is mostly by e-mail, telephone, or formal reports. The interviewee emphasised the importance of providing updates to donors regarding a project's progress or any problems experienced. The Executive Committee members will also periodically make telephonic contact with donors to update them on what is happening on a project: "we are putting together a report", or "did you receive the report?".

According to the interviewee, many donors do not require formal Microsoft PowerPoint presentations because they do not have the time for it. Some donors focus on fewer organisations to fund, and they will require a formal presentation on Optimus and their needs. This might also include one-on-one presentations. The interviewee views Optimus's communication with their donors as "very effective". Optimus also ensures that partners and donors "give feedback on feedback". In this way, a relationship is cultivated and Optimus ensures that partners and donors receive the information they require. Some donors also have very strict corporate governance requirements to which Optimus must adhere.

In terms of the Gauteng Department of Education, communication takes place by "lots" of meetings. Telephone calls and e-mails are not efficient for government relations, because government officials prefer meeting face-to-face. Despite this, the interviewee has experienced meetings as not always effective.

Night schools are structured, and educators are available four nights a week. It is therefore easier to plan communication with educators because the night school's routine is known. Optimus has a plan, or a schedule, for communicating with its educators, and do so in meetings at the respective night schools, as faxes, e-mails, and telephone calls have been proven to not be effective modes of communication with educators.

The interviewee pointed out that it is not easy to communicate with unemployed people who are trained in Optimus's training programmes. Contact with trainees only lasts for about eleven days per training course, after which the Foundation does not have further contact with trainees again. Optimus therefore relies on feedback from partners and sponsors concerning unemployed people's needs, problems, and successes. Optimus also relies on feedback from the educators concerning the night school learners' needs, successes, and problems.

The interviewee noted that Optimus does not have the funding to "put together nice, flashy brochures". She added that for the same reason, they are currently "battling" with their website. Optimus's Executive Committee members compile Optimus's brochures and the Annual Report for the Foundation themselves, despite having no marketing or communication training. Optimus also printed pamphlets on coloured paper as an introduction to their activities in 2006, and the pamphlets were distributed at robots and in shops. According to the interviewee, the pamphlets assisted Optimus in attracting more learners. It does not seem as if Optimus realised that pamphlets are accessible to literate persons only, and as such might not be the most appropriate way to attract illiterate learners to be trained by the Foundation.

10.3.3.1   Stakeholder relationships

The interviewee asserted that there is no difference in the way a relationship with stakeholders in the corporate world is built to the way this is done in a NPO. In the case of a NPO, different information is provided, and one has a different role, however all relationships with stakeholders are based on trust and honesty, no matter who the stakeholder is. It is also important to adapt the message to the needs of specific stakeholders. The interviewee emphasised that NPO staff members should be professional, and the NPO should be run professionally, as a NPO with high standards would get more opportunities to obtain funding.

The interviewee believes that it is necessary to plan communication: "Yes, 100 per cent necessary to plan". Optimus sees communication as part of project management and does not have a separate, overall communication strategy for the organisation. According to the interviewee, it is necessary to plan communication particularly with regard to *donors*. The interviewee stated that, "when donors give you money, you sign an agreement with them on what feedback you're going to give to them, and they often have very specific dates. Without a plan, you will not be able to provide the feedback on time". She added that should Optimus not communicate as expected, it would affect future funding applications negatively. Optimus's Financial Manager thus has a plan to communicate with all donors, with all the dates and necessary communication specified.

The interviewee asserted that complete honesty with donors is very important. Donors must always know exactly where and how their money is spent, and Optimus even provides invoices as proof. The interviewee said that without complete honesty a strong relationship with donors could not be built. She added that even if the donors do not find out that the organisation was not completely honest in the past, and they provide funding again, the organisation would have to build on a broken relationship. The interviewee said that should an organisation not be able to deliver on what is expected,

or when there is a problem with money, it is preferable to provide feedback as soon as the problem becomes known. It can then be decided whether the plan can be adjusted or whether the money should be returned. In this way, the project is more likely to be successful and the relationship with the donor will be stronger. It is also less stressful to be completely honest. Usually, whenever Optimus has reported problems early, the donors have said that, "[Optimus] knows what the project needs, then do what needs to be done". The interviewee explained that the ABET sector is very volatile, and changes take place "everyday". The interviewee said, "If you planned a project last year, it doesn't mean it will run exactly as you planned it". Overall, it seemed that Optimus is satisfied with its relationship with donors.

Communication with *partners*, including the *Gauteng Department of Education*, is very important, according to the interviewee. Optimus meets quarterly with partners, who will inform Optimus whether they (Optimus) are delivering what is expected of them. Feedback to partners is structured and regular. The interviewee views Optimus's relationship with their partners as very good, because they work hard on maintaining the relationship by, for example, writing reports and making telephone calls.

The interviewee said that it is very important to have a good relationship and communication with *educators* and *trainers* because "they are on the ground"; educators and trainers are more aware of "what is working and what is not working" than the managers. It is therefore necessary to take note of what educators and trainers say. Umalusi evaluated Optimus as a training provider, and they asked for feedback from the educators and trainers about Optimus. Approximately 90 per cent of the educators and trainers were "happy" with the running of Optimus. The interviewee therefore views the relationship with educators and trainers as good.

Educators are in a favourable position to recruit more learners by continuously communicating the advantages of literacy to current learners and encouraging them to spread the word about training at Optimus's night schools and skills centres. The same argument can be applied to learners because they are Optimus's "best advertisements". It is thus worthwhile for Optimus to plan messages strategically that can be distributed by educators to current learners. Learners in turn can spread these messages to illiterate potential learners.

Learners and *trainees* are another important stakeholder group to Optimus, and it is important to understand the their needs and requirements, in order to offer them the most applicable training possible. The interviewee said that Optimus cannot "just train for the sake of training". It is therefore important to obtain feedback from learners and trainees on the quality of Optimus's programmes and making the difference these programmes are making for them. Optimus obtains formal, written feedback from their learners and trainees. The interviewee said that "about 95 per cent" of the learners and trainees are "happy" with the Optimus training, and therefore Optimus's relationship with their learners and trainees can be viewed as successful.

The interviewee regretted that Optimus has no campaigns or communication efforts aimed at the "general public". She views this as a significant shortcoming because they might receive more funding and/or assistance and form more partnerships were the general public more informed about Optimus's programmes and needs.

Concerning the stakeholder landscape, it is evident that Optimus has built strong relationships with their stakeholders, especially their donors and partners. Optimus has an awareness of the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships, but they do not realise that strategic commu-

nication management is at the core of relationship management. A simple strategic communication model, which does not merely focus on technical communication practices (see Section 10.3.3) but outlines the use of communication for building strong relationships, would be valuable to Optimus.

There is also a strong *interdependence* between Optimus, their donors, and in particular, their partners in successfully running programmes and the education and skills centres. Interdependence is a presupposition of a symmetrical worldview to which Optimus adheres.

It can be argued that Optimus could also view the corporations or businesses that purchase the Themba Project women's products for corporate gifts (see Section 10.1.4.2.1) as strategic stakeholders. Should Optimus strengthen their relationships with these corporations or businesses, the women's businesses might grow more, and more women would be needed to make the products. The same applies for those in the corporate sector that employ the cashier trainees of the Zenzele Project (see Section 10.1.4.2.2).

When the interviewee was asked to describe the five steps to successful stakeholder management in an ideal world, the answer was:
- to determine how stakeholders wish to be communicated with because some want a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, while others only want an e-mail;
- to determine how often stakeholders wish to be communicated with, and deliver on the required dates otherwise stakeholders may lose trust and faith; and
- to be honest, especially with donors, by showing donors exactly where and how their money is spent.

It is evident from the above that the interviewee does not realise the link between organisational goals and communication and relationship building with its stakeholders. The interviewee views communication management as a technical and tactical task, with no strategic function to assist the organisation in attaining its goals.

Despite the above, the interviewee lastly commented that she wishes that donors would realise the need and strengths of communication, because if they did they would fund time and salary costs towards communication. The reason, according to the interviewee, that many NPOs battle with communication is that they do not have the funding for communication from a time point of view; "you have to be at the project, working on the project, you cannot be at the head office doing communications". Donors do not see the value of communication because "you're a non-profit, you should be spending the money on the people, learners and on skills".

10.4 The Optimus Foundation: strategic communication management analysis

10.4.1 Application of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model

In the next figure the communication management practices of Optimus are roughly plotted against the main requirements set by the Steyn & Puth model, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 10.

Figure 10.2: Compliance of Optimus' communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)
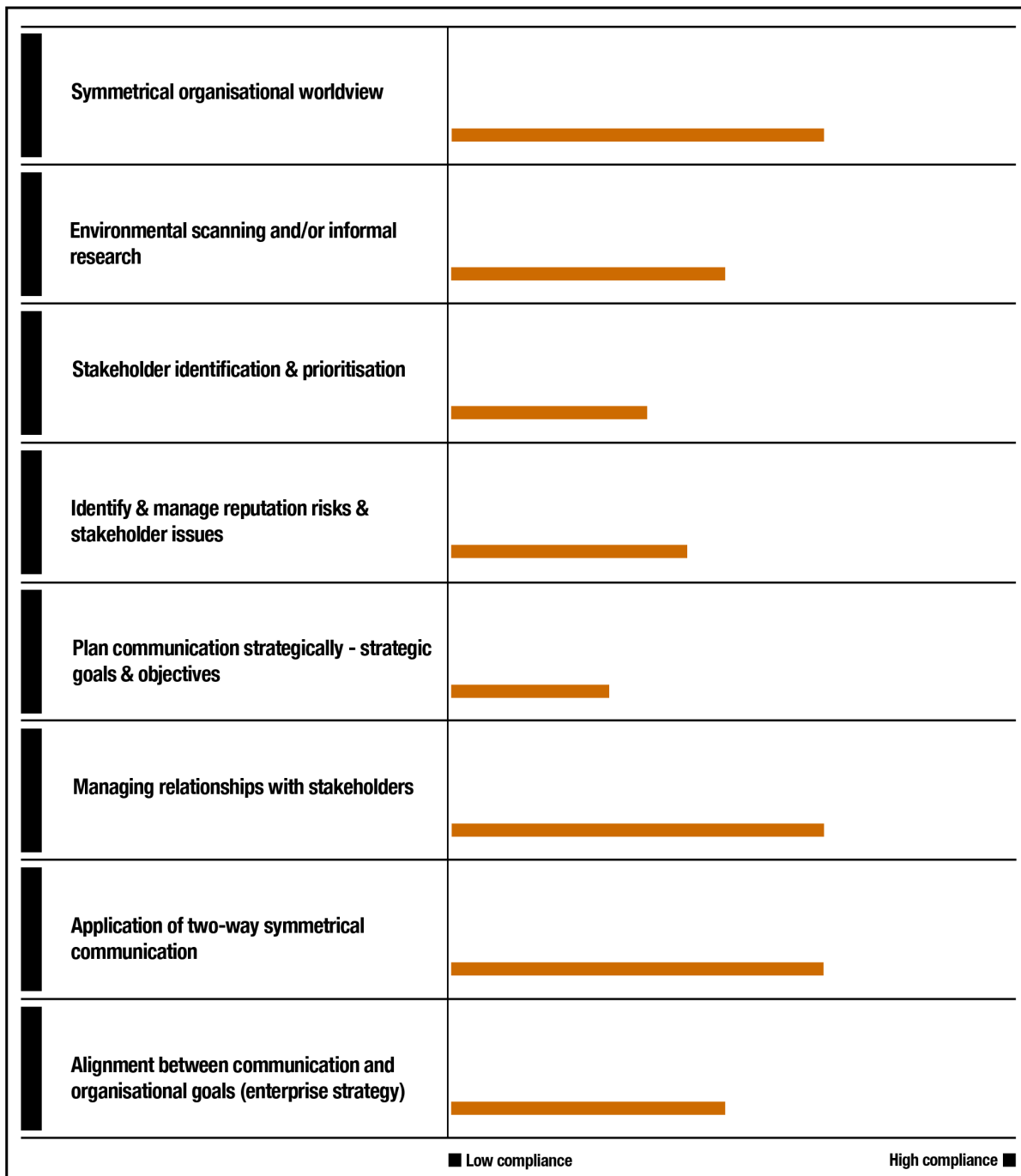
Optimus's communication practices do not formally correspond with Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management, but Optimus practises relationship management very well in an informal, intuitive way. All Optimus's communication practices are aligned to their vision,

mission and organisational strategy: to provide education and life skills to illiterate and unemployed adults. All relationship-building efforts are aimed at enabling Optimus to continue with their work.

Optimus does not conduct formal environmental scanning to analyse their external environment, in order to identify their strategic stakeholders, organisational risks, and stakeholders' issues, especially not from a strategic communication point of view. The interviewee mentioned however that Optimus has always compiled a needs analysis prior to making large strategic changes, and in doing so, has always sampled learners and other stakeholders, in order to assess the requirements for change (see Section 10.2). The needs analysis serves as a form of *informal* environmental scanning.

Although the Executive Committee members are familiar with Optimus's stakeholders, their issues, and the risks facing the organisation, they do not use this knowledge to compile a formal communication management strategy or communication plan. However, the Executive Committee members focus very strongly on relationship management, by creating opportunities for ongoing dialogue with donors and partners in particular (see Section 10.3.3.1).

The interviewee argued that she is "not sold on" the need for a formal communication strategy, because it usually is very complicated (see Section 10.3.3). She added that communication forms part of project management, and Optimus follows a plan in communicating with educators and trainers. However, these "communication plans" consist rather of schedules explaining when to communicate what to whom and are thus technical and tactical in nature rather than strategic. These plans do not answer to specific, overall strategic goals regarding relationship building with specific stakeholder groups.

Some of Optimus's communication materials, such as brochures and flyers, are *technical* in nature, as communication materials are merely developed and distributed. This communication can thus be viewed as asymmetrical and one-way in nature. However, Optimus's practical, intuitive communication practices with stakeholders, particularly with donors and partners, are symmetrical and two-way in nature. Optimus emphasises the creation of dialogue to build and maintain relationships, which is characteristic of a symmetrical worldview and organisational culture. Optimus's lack of knowledge about strategic communication and its benefits for the organisation prevent them from formally practising strategic communication.

Optimus does use two-way communication to build strong relationships, but in an *informal*, *tactical* way. Communication and relationship building therefore does not play a formal, strategic role in organisational goal attainment, which implies that when applied formally, it would definately impact positively on attaining organisational goals.

10.4.2 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

In the next figure the communication management practices of Optimus are roughly plotted against Ströh's (2007:199-220) main theoretical assumptions, as summarised in Specific Theoretical Statement 11.

Figure 10.3: **Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management**

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRöH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	■	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	■	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	■	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	■	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	■	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	■	Relationship management strategically planned

According to the above figure, Optimus's approach to communication management is in line with Steyn and Puth's approach. It is mainly a lack of knowledge and manpower that keeps Optimus from strategically managing communication and relationship building with stakeholders.

The interviewee believes that every organisation requires a communication strategy, but that it must be very simple and easy to implement. This implies, contrary to Ströh's views (2007:212), that a logical model, such as Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, could be ideal for Optimus.

The interviewee emphasised that ethical behaviour is very important for building and maintaining relationships (see Section 10.3.3.1). This view partially agrees with Ströh's (2007:207) point of view that ethical behaviour is *all* that is necessary to build stakeholder relationships, but the interviewee insisted that a communication plan is still of the utmost importance. The interviewee believes that it is "100 per cent" necessary to plan communication because the survival of the organisation depends on it. She added that she wished that donors would realise the importance of communication, and that they would subsequently fund the communication function.

In terms of Ströh's (2007:200) viewpoint that communication practitioners should not be part of the dominant coalition, it can be concluded from the interview that the interviewee would not agree with Ströh. Currently, all Executive Committee members, in other words, Optimus's dominant coalition, are responsible for communication management. It can also be deduced that Optimus's communication practitioner would not have an activist role (Ströh, 2007:210), as Optimus values strong relationships with stakeholder highly.

Ströh (2007:209) asserts that stakeholders cannot be managed top-down by formulating commu-

nication strategies but only by all stakeholders participating fully in all strategy formulation. The interviewee partially agrees with Ströh's (2007) statement, by saying that teacher participation in particular is necessary but adds that it is difficult to reach learners and trainees for the same level of participation. The interviewee also feels strongly that it is not necessary for donors to be part of strategy formulation, unless Optimus runs a corporate social investment programme on behalf of the donor (see Section 10.2).

It is clear that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication are not in practice at Optimus nor are they viewed as viable communication practices.

Part III

Conclusions

The five NPOs that participated in the study were investigated individually in Part II. It became evident that the NPOs experience several constraints that hinder them in practising communication strategically, of which the most detrimental are a lack of knowledge on the benefits of strategic communication management and building strong, mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, as well as a lack of funding.

The above findings will be put into perspective in the next chapter by addressing the objectives stated in Chapter 1. It was not the aim of the study to compare the NPOs to each other, but to identify certain trends in their communication management practices, which will be discussed in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the results of the study in order to put the findings described in Part II into perspective. The previous five chapters discussed the interviews with the NPOs separately, providing a detailed analysis of communication and stakeholder management practice in each organisation. In this chapter, these findings are linked to the study's research questions, objectives and the specific theoretical statements outlined previously; conclusions and recommendations are made; and the study's contribution and limitations are discussed.

It is important to note that the study did not aim to compare the selected NPOs to each other. NPOs were selected to have a sample as diverse as possible to identify general trends with regard to their strategic communication needs and practices. To minimise repetition of the findings discussed in the previous chapters, the findings are summarised here to identify trends with regard to strategic communication within the studied NPOs. Based on these trends, recommendations are made on how NPOs can best apply strategic communication within their particular context, and how NPOs' current communication practices can be used to adapt the Steyn and Puth (2000) model.

11.2   Addressing the research objectives of the study

In Chapter 1, each research objective was linked to a specific research question, guiding the study throughout. Answering the different research questions in the following section, will therefore also address the study's research objectives and indicate how each objective has been achieved.

11.2.1 Two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management

Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for the development of a communication strategy is based on the two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management theories, addressed by the first research question:

*   **Research Question 1:**
    What are the implications of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management for strategic communication management?

The above research question was answered in Chapter 3 in the form of a detailed literature review on communication management research.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models, namely the *press agentry/publicity model, public information model, two-way asymmetrical* and *two-way symmetrical model,* as stages in the development of communication management. All four models are still currently applied in organisations, depending on their specific situations (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995:20; Laskin, 2009:38-39).

Grunig and Grunig (1992:289) investigated the reasons that organisations apply certain communication models, and in the process, identified two variables that are present in all four of the models, namely *direction* and *purpose*:

- *direction* describes the extent to which communication can be regarded as one- or two-way communication. *One-way communication* releases information in a monologue, while *two-way communication* exchanges information in a dialogue;
- *purpose* describes the extent to which communication can be regarded as either symmetrical or asymmetrical. *Asymmetrical communication* is unbalanced: the organisation remains unchanged while it attempts to change its stakeholders. *Symmetrical communication* is balanced, and it changes the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Thus, the direction of an organisation's communication greatly depends on the purpose of its communication. Based on this, the following specific theoretical statement was derived:

Specific Theoretical Statement 1

The communication model practised by NPOs could be determined by:

- the purpose of communication (for example, to inform, distribute information, persuade, or build relationships); and
- the direction of communication (one-way or two-way communication).

Research has proved that the two-way symmetrical model is the ideal or norm for which professional communication practitioners should strive, as it is the most effective way to contribute to organisational excellence (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:312–317, 362). When practising the two-way symmetrical model, the communication practitioner tries to balance the interests of the organisation with those of its stakeholders, by promoting mutual understanding through listening, dialogue, and willingness to accommodate each other. Although the two-way symmetrical model would not necessarily be applicable at all times, it promotes dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders. By practising the two-way symmetrical model, the communication practitioner builds strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders, and the communication function thereby contributes to the organisation achieving its goals.

Grunig and White (1992:57) also state that a symmetrical worldview is viewed as inherently *ethical*, as reciprocity forms its foundation. It could then be argued that symmetrical communication is inherently ethical because it is founded in a symmetrical worldview. Grunig, L.A. *et al.* (2002:350) find that a symmetrical worldview, symmetrical dialogue, and the norm of reciprocity imply that the symmetrical model can be viewed as the most ethical communication model.

The symmetrical model has, however, been criticised because communication practitioners are expected to balance the needs and interests of both the organisation and its stakeholders. This implies that communication practitioners are not allowed to prioritise the interests of the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:45-46; Plowman, 1998:239; Terblanche, 2003:108), which may lead to communication practitioners experiencing a conflict of interests. A further point of criticism is that persuasion, inherent to asymmetrical communication, is not necessarily unethical or ineffective when applied within a symmetrical worldview (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:310), since persuasion sometimes is inevitable.

In researching a positive theory describing the ways in which communication practitioners conduct their work, it was found that most communication departments use two-way asymmetrical communication within a symmetrical worldview (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:51; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:358).

This led to the creation of a new model, known as the mixed-motive model, which is viewed as both a normative and positive model because it is an accurate reflection of the actual practices of communication practitioners and also sets a norm for practising communication management (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:358; Holtzhausen & Verwey, 1996:39; Plowman, 1998:237–261; Plowman, 2005:131–138).

The mixed motive model is based on the principle of reciprocity, which implies that both the organisation and its stakeholders concede some of their demands or preferences (Grunig & White, 1992:46), in order to reach a win-win situation. Reciprocal communication allows the mixed-motive model to fit into the symmetrical worldview and therefore qualifies as excellent communication (Grunig & White, 1992:48). Based on this, the following specific theoretical statement was derived:

Specific Theoretical Statement 2
- NPOs that practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in dialogue with their different stakeholders, which include *listening* to stakeholder needs. The goal of practising two-way communication with stakeholders is to reach mutual understanding, which will lead to strong, lasting relationships.
- NPOs that practise the asymmetrical communication models will not view dialogue as an integral part of their communication efforts. They would tend rather to address one-way monologue towards their stakeholders.

The communication practitioner or department does not function in isolation but forms part of the greater functioning of an organisation. The organisational worldview therefore determines how the organisation views itself in relation to the outside world (including its stakeholders), and as such influences the choice of communication model practised, the communication practitioner's role, whether communication has a strategic function or not, and ultimately, whether the organisation is successful or not (Grunig, 1989:17–44; Grunig & White, 1992:31–64) (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4). Based on this, the following specific theoretical statement was derived:

Specific Theoretical Statement 3
A NPO's choice of a communication model will be directly influenced by its organisational worldview:
- An asymmetrical worldview (characterised by an internal orientation, a closed system, efficiency, elitism, conservatism, tradition, and a central authority) will lead to the practising of an asymmetrical communication model (press agentry/publicity model, public information model, or two-way asymmetrical model). A NPO with an asymmetrical worldview will view communication management as a mere technical function, and it will be more likely to practise an asymmetrical communication model.
- A symmetrical worldview (characterised by interdependence, an open system, a moving equilibrium, equity, autonomy, innovation, decentralised management, responsibility, conflict resolution, and interest-group liberalism) will enable the practising of the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model. A NPO with a symmetrical worldview will view communication management as a managerial function, and it will be more likely to practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

Directly linked to an organisation's worldview is its view on its social role from which the social role of communication management originates. The following specific theoretical statement was subsequently derived:

> **Specific Theoretical Statement 4**
> A NPO's view on its social role, from which the social role of communication management can be derived, are linked to its organisational worldview and will influence its choice of communication model:
> - Those NPOs that view communication management as having a pragmatic, radical, or a neutral social role will be more inclined to practise an asymmetrical model.
> - Those NPOs that view communication management as having an idealistic or critical social role will practise the two-way symmetrical model and/or the mixed-motive model.

It was found that excellent communication practitioners with communication management training will be more inclined or better equipped to practice the two-way communication models. Secondly, the head of the communication management department needs to be part of the dominant coalition, or senior management. Thirdly, the organisational worldview and culture determines which communication model will be practised and whether the head of the communication department would be part of the dominant coalition (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:297–303; Grunig L.A. *et al.*, 2002:9, 331-339, 361). The following specific theoretical statement was derived from the above:

> **Specific Theoretical Statement 5**
> The model practiced by a NPO, as well as the role played by its most senior communication practitioner can be determined by examining:
> - the expertise of the communication practitioner;
> - whether the communication practitioner is part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
> - whether the practitioner has a strategic role; and
> - the organisational worldview and culture of the NPO.

The aim of applying two-way communication is to create mutual understanding, which will result in strong relationships with the organisation's stakeholders. Communication management's strategic value therefore lies in the use of two-way symmetrical communication to develop and maintain strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with the organisation's stakeholders, in order to assist the organisation to obtain its goals (Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:548; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii).

Hung (2005:415–417; 2007:457–458) recommends that organisations strive to build exchange (implies economic exchanges), covenantal (implies the exchange of opinions between two parties that are both committed to a common goal), and mutual communal (implies the concerns that one person has regarding the welfare of the other party) relationships with stakeholders. These types of relationships are particularly important in the NPO sector.

The most important outcomes of relationship building are trust, control mutuality, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. NPOs regard especially trust as an important relationship outcome, particularly with regard to funding management. The following specific theoretical statement was subsequently derived:

Specific Theoretical Statement 6

• NPOs' use of two-way symmetrical communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with their strategic stakeholders.

• These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.

• By building and maintaining strong relationships with strategic stakeholders, the communication function assists the organisation in achieving its goals, and therefore in being excellent.

The above six theoretical statements summarise the implications of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management theory for strategic communication management. This contribution can be briefly stated as: the use of two-way communication within a symmetrical organisational worldview, focusing on an idealistic and critical social role, practised by a well-trained communication practitioner who fulfils a strategic role in the dominant coalition, contributes to effective stakeholder relationship management, and ultimately to organisational effectiveness and excellence.

The preceding six theoretical statements form the basis of the analysis of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model and the NPOs' communication practices. In the next section, the nature of strategic communication according to Steyn and Puth (2000) is discussed.

11.2.2 Nature of strategic communication according to Steyn and Puth (2000)

In the previous section, the key principles of two-way symmetrical communication and relationship management were discussed as the foundation of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model for strategic communication management. The second research question focused on identifying the distinctive characteristics of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model.

• **Research Question 2:**
  What is the nature of strategic communication management according to Steyn and Puth (2000)?

The above research question was answered in detail in Chapter 4 in the form of a detailed literature review and analysis of *strategic* communication management and the Steyn and Puth (2000) model.

In their research towards the model, Steyn and Puth (2000:20–21) empirically verified three communication practitioner roles, as opposed to the widely-accepted two main roles of manager and technician (Broom, 1982:20; Broom & Dozier, 1986:40; Dozier, 1992:331; Moss *et al.*, 2000:293–294; Moss & Green, 2001:120–121). Their first two roles represent a differentiation in the traditional communication manager's role, namely between that of the strategist and the manager (Steyn & Puth, 2000:20–21). The strategist's role involves scanning the social, political, and economical environment for changes and new developments, and determining its influence on the organisation's strategies and policies. In this strategic function, the communication practitioner is able to interpret the collected environmental information and to apply it as strategic management information to be incorporated in the organisation's enterprise strategy. The manager is responsible for the preparation and implementation of communication strategy and policy in clear messages to the organisation's stakeholders. The technician, as a third role, is responsible for the physical implementation of communication plans.

By studying the tasks of the communication practitioners or persons responsible for communication in the selected NPOs, it was possible to determine whether the communication practitioner is performing a strategic, managerial, or technical role. The following three specific theoretical statements were derived from the above, to illustrate the different roles and tasks of communication practitioners, according to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model:

Specific Theoretical Statement 7

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication strategist* is responsible for the analysis of the NPO's internal and external environment, to manage all organisational stakeholders and their issues effectively (steps 1 and 2 of the model). This strategic function can be fulfilled by:
- aligning both internal and external communication with the NPO's mission, vision, and goal statements;
- using research/environmental scanning to:
  ‣ identify and prioritise all organisational stakeholders, publics, and activists;
  ‣ identify and prioritise social, political, and societal risks; and
  ‣ determine the consequences and/or reputation risks of stakeholders, publics, activists, and issues for the organisation; and
- using the above strategic information in the implementation of the *enterprise strategy*.

Specific Theoretical Statement 8

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication manager* is responsible for developing the NPO's communication strategy, with the assistance of the communication strategist (steps 3 to 6 of the model). This managerial function can be fulfilled by:
- identifying the implications of each risk for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups and society at large;
- formulating the key communication themes for each risk and stakeholder issue;
- setting and integrating the communication goals for the organisation, as well as functional and business-units;
- selecting communication media;;
- developing the communication policy; and
- developing a strategic communication plan for all divisions.

Specific Theoretical Statement 9

According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, the *communication technician* is responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy (step 7 of the model). This technical function can be fulfilled by:
- developing and implementing communication programmes/campaigns/plans.

Steyn and Puth's (2000) differentiation amongst roles is linked to the practitioners' positions in the organisation. The strategist forms part of the dominant coalition, while the manager forms part of middle management. The communication technician has no managerial function. Steyn and Puth's (2000) model thus makes it clear that the communication strategist, or most senior communication practitioner, must form part of the dominant coalition. It is furthermore clear from the task descriptions (see Figure 4.1 and Specific Theoretical Statement 7) that the strategist must possess communication management training and expertise in order to perform the strategic, higher-level managerial tasks expected from him or her. This is in agreement with Grunig *et al.'s* (1992) recommendations (see Specific Theoretical Statement 5).

Steyn and Puth's (2000) model is aimed at building strong, lasting relationships with stakeholders, by applying the two-way communication models (Grunig *et al.*, 1992). Application of these models will ensure the communication function's contribution to organisational goal achievement. Two-way communication is implied in the application of environmental scanning and regular contact with stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:63–67). Without two-way communication, which implies creating dialogue and listening, there would be no insight into stakeholders' needs, because no mutual understanding can be created without two-way communication. According to Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, stakeholders' needs and the consequences of their behaviour, expectations, and concerns are carefully analysed, and the information is fed into the enterprise strategy of the organisation. This means that stakeholders' needs receive attention at the highest organisational level. It is thus clear that the strategic intent of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model aligns with specific theoretical statements 1, 2 and 6.

Based on the above, it can be argued that when the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is applied in an organisation, the organisation is managed according to a symmetrical worldview, where communication has a strategic managerial function and the two-way symmetrical and/or mixed motive models are implemented. This would enable an organisation, especially a NPO, to fulfil its idealistic or critical social role. Both a symmetrical worldview and the use of the two-way models are implied in the Steyn and Puth model. This means that the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is also in alignment with specific theoretical statements 3, 4 and 5.

It is clear from the above that the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is informed by the key principles of symmetrical communication as identified by Grunig *et al.* (1992), as well as the key principles of relationship management, as identified by a number of researchers (Ledingham & Bruning,1998:55-65; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Hung, 2001; Grunig, L.A. *et al.*, 2002:550; Freeman *et al.*, 2004:364-369; Hung, 2005:393-425; Hung, 2007:443-476; Gregory, 2008). By following the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, the communication practitioner fulfils a strategic role, by applying the two-way models, conducting environmental scanning and research on organisational risks, stakeholders and stakeholder issues, and feeding this information into the enterprise strategy. This means that stakeholder needs and expectations receive attention at the highest level in the organisation, thereby minimising organisational risks. When stakeholder needs and expectations are known, the organisation can enter into dialogue with stakeholders, in order to create mutual understanding and to build strong, mutually beneficial relationships. This implies that the application of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model will lead to excellence in communication management, and ultimately contributes to an effective organisation. This led to the following specific theoretical statement:

Specific Theoretical Statement 10

Should NPOs practise strategic communication management according to the steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, their communication practices would:

- be supported by a symmetrical organisational worldview and culture;
- be based on formal environmental scanning and/or informal research about the consequences of stakeholders' behaviour, expectations, and concerns, as well as social, political, and societal risks for the organisation;
- include stakeholder identification and prioritisation;
- include the identification and management of organisational reputation risks and stakeholder issues;
- be based on strategic communication goals and objectives;
- be aimed at building, maintaining, and/or improving strong relationships with stakeholders;
- be practised according to the two-way symmetrical and/or the mixed motive model; and
- be characterised by alignment between communication and organisational goals (enterprise strategy).

11.2.3 Communication management in NPOs in the adult literacy sector

After determining the key principles of symmetrical communication and relationship management, as well as the nature of strategic communication management according to the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, an empirical study of how NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa practise communication management was undertaken. This addressed the third research question:

- **Research Question 3:**
  How do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practise communication management within their unique context?

The above research question was answered in Chapters 6 to 10. Communication management in each NPO was analysed in a separate chapter. Background on each NPO was followed by an analysis of communication and stakeholder management practices. As indicated in Chapter 5, data was collected by means of in-depth interviews (see Section 5.4), with the questions in the interview schedule rooted in and informed by Specific Theoretical Statements 1 to 11.

All the interviewed NPOs had a relatively flat organisational structure, usually with a Board of Trustees and/or a Management Committee overseeing organisational management. The only exception is the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre, which has three levels of formal management, namely the ASB Potchefstroom's *Commanding Officer, the Directorate Human Resources Development from Public Service Act Personnel in Pretoria*, and the *Department of Education*. However, within the ABET Centre itself, the organisational structure is flat with an ABET Centre Manager, two full-time and two part-time teachers, and the Commanding Officer overseeing the ABET Centre.

All the NPOs interviewed, except the Family Literacy Project (FLP), were mostly managed according to the presuppositions characterising a symmetrical worldview (Grunig, 1989:38–39; Grunig & White, 1992:43–44; Naudé, 2001:71–72). All the NPOs were supporters of participative management and encouraged staff members to provide input into management. Organisational culture in all NPOs, except the FLP, was characterised by emphasis on equity, autonomy, responsibility, participation, and innovation. The FLP is also moving towards a more symmetrical worldview, as was recommended in its own 2007 Annual Strategic Evaluation (see Chapter 8, Sections 8.2, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3.1).

However, the presupposition stating that excellent communication management should have a *managerial role*, and not merely a technical role as presupposed by the asymmetrical worldview, was absent in all NPOs. This can mainly be attributed to the lack of qualified communication practitioners and/or knowledge about strategic communication practices. None of the NPOs employed a communication practitioner, except Project Literacy whose Fundraising and Communications Manager had a half-day position. None of the persons responsible for organisational communication, not even Project Literacy's Fundraising and Communications Manager, had any formal communication training, although some remarked that they had "picked it [communication] up through years of experience".

It was also clear that Project Literacy's Fundraising and Communications Manager, who forms part of the dominant coalition, views her role as being strategic, but she stated that she works closely with the CEO on what Project Literacy's "corporate image, brochures, and annual report should look like" (see Chapter 7, Section 7.2), all tasks of a communication technician. Project Literacy's Fundraising and Communications Manager should concentrate more on research and environmental scanning, presenting this information to the strategy formulation process, and relationship management, in order to play a more *strategic* role in the organisation.

The NPOs' one-way distribution of information, inherent in the application of the asymmetrical public information model, as described by Grunig and Hunt (1984:21–27), results from a lack of trained communication practitioners and/or knowledge about strategic communication practices. All the NPOs viewed communication as a means "to tell and remind" stakeholders of what they do. Project Literacy and the Optimus Foundation, who also provides ABET training to the business sector at cost, also applied the two-way asymmetrical communication model (Grunig & Hunt 1984:21–27), by using scientific research on the benefits and quality of their ABET provision, to *influence* potential clients (that is, the marketplace and employers) to make use of their ABET programmes, despite the high costs thereof. Communication is thus seen as a *technical*, *marketing function* without a strategic management role.

Although some of the NPOs realised that they *might* need a communication strategy, none were of the opinion that it is absolutely necessary:
- "it [a communication strategy] is not absolutely necessary at the moment because of good communication in classes";
- "a formal communication strategy would probably add to what we can do";
- "does need a communication strategy, but we need a dedicated person for that";
- "does not really need a communication strategy, although it is important to let people know what you're doing";
- "we're still small, [therefore it is] not really necessary for a communication strategy until the organisation gets bigger"; and
- "every organisation needs a communication strategy, but I'm not sold on a formal communication strategy. I have seen some corporate communication strategies and they're just over the top and too focused on profits".

All the interviewees were of the opinion that a dedicated person would have to be appointed to conduct strategic communication formally and especially relationship building that is viewed as a time-consuming task. All interviewees were certain that the organisation could not afford such an appointment especially because they do not see the value in strategic communication and relationship management. It was thus not surprising that none of the interviewed NPOs had a communication management strategy to manage their stakeholder relations and stakeholders' issues.

11.2.4 Implementation of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for strategic communication management by NPOs in the adult literacy sector

After examining the NPOs' communication practices broadly, it was also necessary to determine to what extend NPOs practice communication management according to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management. It was accepted that because the model is normative, a knowledgeable practitioner in any organisation or context could apply it. The study sought to determine whether components of the model, in particular the strategic function, are already in practice in the NPOs, and whether the interviewees believe that these functions or components are important and/or feasible for their organisation. This led to the next research question:

- **Research Question 4:**
  To what extend do NPOs in the adult literacy sector practice communication according to the Steyn and Puth model (2000) for strategic communication management?

The above research question was answered from two perspectives, namely:
- Do NPOs (unwittingly) practise (some of) the *strategic* functions or components of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, and therefore can it be assumed that the model, or parts of the model, is feasible for NPOs in the adult literacy sector?
- Do NPOs practise communication according to the suggestions made by Ströh (2007:199–220) in her criticism of the traditional approach to strategic communication management, as proposed in the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, which would imply that the model should be refined to include (some of) Ströh's suggestions or replaced by a new model based on Ströh's approach to communication management?

Research Question 4 was answered in Chapters 6 to 10, by comparing each NPO's communication practices with the different elements in the Steyn and Puth model. In order to answer Research Question 4, interview questions were rooted in Specific Theoretical Statements 7 to 11.

Specific Theoretical Statement 10 summarises the elements of strategic communication management in the Steyn and Puth (2000) model, and as such forms the basis on which NPOs' communication practices were analysed. In Chapters 6 – 10, individual NPOs' compliance with the most important elements of the Steyn and Puth model (2000) were plotted roughly on a low-high compliance scale. The following figure provides the individual analyses combined and displayed in one illustration for a summarised overview of the NPOs' communication practices. It was not done with the purpose of comparing the NPOs to each other, but rather to provide a visual overview, and to identify certain trends in the NPOs' communication practices. Each element of the analysis will be discussed individually to explain the illustration.

Figure 11.1 Compliance of the NPOs' communication practices with Steyn and Puth's model (2000)
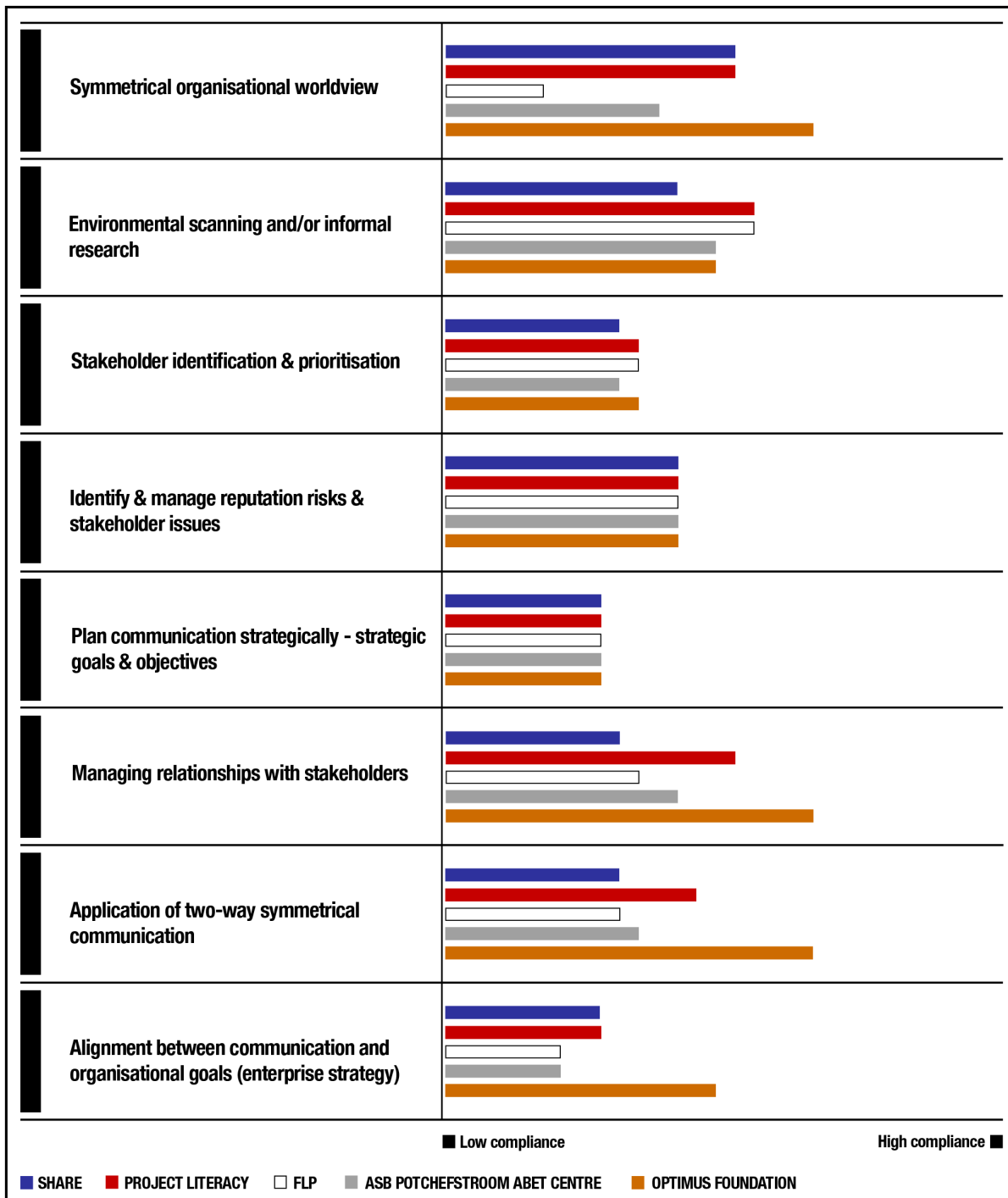
- Symmetrical organisational worldview

All the NPOs, except the FLP, were mostly managed according to the presuppositions characterising a symmetrical worldview (Grunig, 1989:38–39; Grunig & White, 1992:43–44; Naudé, 2001:71–72). This implies that most of the NPOs are open to strategic communication management and would most probably apply it if they knew the benefits of strategic communication management for the organisation, and secondly, if they had the expertise and capacity to do so. In other words, if the NPOs could obtain the knowledge to practise strategic communication management and learn its importance for organisational effectiveness, it would be a natural transition for them.

• Environmental scanning and/or informal research

None of the interviewed NPOs conducted *formal* environmental scanning to identify their strategically important stakeholders and their issues. None of the NPOs *formally* prioritised or mapped their stakeholders and issues. Some of the NPOs conducted some form of formal research when starting large projects or planning to make drastic changes in the organisation or curriculum. However, this research was not specifically focused on the views of stakeholders about the organisation, stakeholder issues, or communication needs of stakeholders. This being said, all the NPOs' senior management staff did engage regularly with stakeholders, which brought stakeholder opinions obtained through *informal* environmental scanning into decision-making processes. Another form of informal environmental scanning was scanning the Internet extensively, as well as networking with peers in the adult literacy sector. None of the different methods of environmental scanning focused though on identifying stakeholders' issues, and the strategic application of *communication* to build relationships and address issues.

• Stakeholder identification and prioritisation

Resulting from the lack of a communication management strategy, the NPOs did not apply stakeholder profiling to identify specific persons that might assist them with attaining their strategic goals but rather aimed communication at unspecified persons in the government, a donor organisation, or a newspaper. None of the interviewed NPOs identified any *strategic* relationship management goals for any of their stakeholders and thus did not engage in strategically planned relationship management efforts. All NPOs realised the importance of relationship management though, but they mainly focused on relationships with donors and government, concentrating less on learners and potential learners, teachers, and the communities in which programmes are run.

Specific messages explaining organisational policy and actions might add to mutual understanding and trust, but the NPO must also *listen* to stakeholders to *understand* their issues, and subsequently might need to adapt organisational strategy and policies. For instance, many NPOs stated that learners do not always want to follow the Department of Education's formalised curriculum (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.2), because it does not address their immediate needs. On the other hand, NPOs are forced to follow the formal curriculum to ensure accreditation and funding from the Department of Education. This situation might seem like an insurmountable problem, but by engaging in dialogue NPOs, learners and the Department of Education can reach mutual understanding and a possible solution to the issue.

During the interviews, all the NPOs identified their learners and donors as their most important stakeholders (but most relationship-building efforts were aimed only at donors). The Department of Education was identified by most NPOs as another influential stakeholder. The ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre that is funded by government was the only NPO that did not identify funding as its most strategic organisational risks. Most interviewees said that finding or creating relevant, meaningful programmes for adult learners and the lack of well-trained teachers were also challenges facing their organisations. Although the NPOs therefore informally identified and prioritised their stakeholders and organisational risks, none of them used strategic communication to manage relationships in order to assist them with minimising their organisational and/or reputation risks.

- Identify and manage reputation risks and stakeholder issues

   It was surprising that none of the interviewed NPOs conducted any formal research to determine the consequences or reputation risks of their stakeholders' behaviour, expectations, or concerns, or stakeholders' issues for the organisation. The most important stakeholder behaviour consequence and risk that concerned the NPOs was the withdrawal of funding and/or finding new donors, and therefore relationships with donors received much attention from all NPOs.

- Plan communication strategically - strategic goals & objectives

   Furthermore, it was found that the interviewed NPOs did not really set any communication goals, and therefore there was no allignment between organisational and communication goals. The Optimus Foundation were plotted higher in this regard though, because it really created dialogue between the organisation and its stakeholders, and therefore it could be argued that communication management assists the organisation in attaining its goals. The general lack of alignment between organisational and communication goals might be due to a lack of knowledge about the relationship-building component of strategic communication management, as well as a lack of knowledge on the value of relationship management for the organisation.

- Managing relationships with stakeholders

   Despite the NPOs' constraints and lack of communication training, they used creative and unique ways to build relationships with their stakeholders, for instance:
   ‣ Different senior staff members at Project Literacy were responsible for building relationships with different stakeholders. However, communication and relationship management happened on an ad hoc basis and no strategy or plans were followed.
   ‣ Staff members at the Optimus Foundation, who managed certain projects, were also responsible for communication and relationship building. They placed high emphasis on feedback, and they also insisted on "feedback on feedback", thus creating dialogue and strong relationships.
   ‣ All the NPOs' teachers were responsible for strong, trusting relationships with learners, but unfortunately no strategy or plans were followed to strategically manage these relationships.
   ‣ All the NPOs placed a high premium on trust, dependability, and commitment, which is characteristic of communal relationships (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1).

- Application of two-way symmetrical communication

   All the NPOs mostly applied the one-way asymmetrical models (see Section 11.2.3), but they also engaged, in various degrees, in two-way communication with stakeholders. For instance, Project Literacy's Client Relations Officer phones all clients once a month to receive feedback on services rendered and to build and maintain strong relationships with these clients (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3.1). Furthermore, Optimus emphasised dialogue and feedback, even insisting on "feedback on feedback" (see Chapter 10, Section 10.3.3), as an essential tool to build strong relationships with stakeholders.

- Alignment between communication and organisational goals (enterprise strategy)

  Some NPOs, such as Project Literacy, claimed that their communication is aligned to their mission, vision, and goals. This might prove difficult if communication and stakeholder relationships are not managed strategically. When the NPO's communication was analysed, it became clear that their communication was rather *about* the organisation's mission, vision, and goals, more than actually having additional content that is aligned to it.

  Information about stakeholder opinions and needs were not fed into the NPOs' *enterprise* strategy but rather into the *corporate* strategy, which is financially or target-orientated (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2). The reason might be that a formal enterprise strategy does not exist, but is mentally shared amongst members of the organisation rather than being spelled out in a formal document. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2, the enterprise strategy usually addressed questions, such as "how is the organisation perceived by their stakeholders?", "what are stakeholder values and expectations?" It includes non-financial goals, such as enhancing the organisation's image and *identifying ways to fulfil its social responsibilities* (Pearce & Robinson, 1999:5; Steyn, 2002:9). It can thus be argued that NPOs unwittingly add information about stakeholder expectations and ways to fulfil their social responsibilities to their 'enterprise' strategy, by focusing on financial matters in the corporate strategy. Without sufficient funding available, NPOs cannot fulfil their social responsibilities nor can they survive.

In considering the above, it can thus be argued that the interviewed NPOs mostly did not formally apply strategic communication management according to the Steyn and Puth (2000) model. However, in considering the NPOs' organisational worldview, it could also be argued that strategic communication management would be possible in these NPOs, if the persons responsible for communication management were coached, and understood how to apply communication management strategically.

Although the tasks of the communication manager and the technician were not investigated for this study, there were informative findings in this regard and therefore specific theoretical statements 8 and 9 are repeated here to guide the discussion:

Specific theoretical statement 8
According to Steyn and Puth's model, the *communication manager* is responsible for developing the NPO's communication strategy, with the assistance of the communication strategist (steps 3-6 of the model). This managerial function can be fulfilled by:
- identifying the implications of each risk for each of the strategic stakeholders, publics, activist groups and society at large;
- formulating the key communication themes for each risk and stakeholder issue;
- setting and integrating the communication goals for the organisation, as well as functional and business-units;
- selecting communication channels;
- developing the communication policy; and
- developing a strategic communication plan for all divisions.

All the interviewees emphasised that their organisation has communication plans, but these "communication plans" consisted rather of *schedules* explaining when to communicate what to whom, and as such, are more technical than strategic in nature. These communication plans also confirm the one-way nature of the NPOs' communication. Although all the interviewed NPOs engaged with

their stakeholders, their communication practices did not answer to specific, overall strategic goals regarding relationship building with specific stakeholder groups.

Without clearly setting specific communication goals for specific stakeholders and their issues, it is difficult for NPOs to plan relationship-building activities in order to obtain specific organisational goals. It is thus important to link the communication strategy and its goals to specific strategic organisational goals, otherwise the wrong people may be communicated to. This happened in the case of the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre, in which former president Nelson Mandela and the Potchefstroom mayor were invited to attend the annual ABET tea, to provide exposure for the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre. When the interviewees were questioned about this action's strategic goals, it became evident that they only wanted exposure, in order to draw the Potchefstroom community and potential learners' attention to the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre. Although it is always good to maintain visibility in a community, the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre should have considered that only army employees can make use of the ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre and inviting such a high-profile person, such as Nelson Mandela, might not assist the NPO to attain their goals.

Another problem experienced by all the interviewed NPOs was the selection of appropriate mass media. All NPOs were frustrated by the media for not covering organisational events sufficiently. However, none of the interviewed NPOs strategically selected communication media to reach specific stakeholders. All the NPOs wanted as broad coverage they can get, targeting the *general public*. It is because of their focus on publicity, and not relationship building, that the NPOs wanted television (which they all viewed as "too expensive"), national newspapers and even a national women's magazine (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.3) to run their stories. Local or community newspapers and radio stations were not viewed as equal or even more important for reaching stakeholders. Their publicity-seeking actions therefore were futile, as the general public is not a strategic stakeholder (see Chapter 9, Section 9.3.3). The same could be said for using flyers to promote ABET courses to illiterate adults. Communication and relationship-building activities should be aimed at strategic stakeholders, in order to address stakeholders' issues, using communication media that would reach these stakeholders effectively.

In order to overcome its challenges regarding the media, NPOs have to have a media strategy. Such a strategy includes deciding *what* they want to communicate, *who* their audience for a specific message is, *what media* would reach this audience best, and which *journalist* to approach with the message (determine which journalist works on the social development, education, or human interest beat).

Specific theoretical statement 9
According to Steyn and Puth's model, the communication technician is responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy (step 7 of the model). This technical function can be fulfilled by:
- developing and implementing communication programs/campaigns/plans.

All the NPOs' communication practices were on an operational level and consisted of annual reports, meetings, formal reports, annual functions to introduce the organisation to stakeholders, and road-shows. The interviewee from the FLP also attended conferences, presented papers, and published scientific articles on family literacy as a way of "communicating what we do, so that people can learn from us". All these communication practices indicate a one-way communication approach, with no or limited focus on relationship building.

11.2.4.1 Ströh's (2007) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management

It has been determined that the *strategic* components of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model are not practised by the interviewed NPOs, due to many constraints (see Chapters 6 to 10 and Section 11.2.4). Ströh (2007:199–220) criticises Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management (which also implies their model) from a postmodern perspective and makes suggestions to enhance communication between an organisation and its stakeholders (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6). One of the aims of this study was to determine whether NPOs practise communication according to the suggestions made by Ströh (2007:199–220). If this was found to be the case, it would imply that Steyn and Puth's (2000) model is not feasible for use by NPOs, because Ströh's suggestions are in most cases directly opposite to Steyn and Puth's more traditional approach to strategic communication management. This led to the following specific theoretical statement:

> **Specific Theoretical Statement 11**
> Considering Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, it can be argued that a new model for strategic communication management by NPOs should be developed, which includes Ströh's suggestions for communication management, in cases where the NPO's communication practices suggest that the communication function/practitioner:
> - does not need to have predetermined communication strategies and plans;
> - relies *only* on ethical behaviour to build and maintain internal and external stakeholder relationships;
> - should not form part of the dominant coalition of the NPO;
> - has an activist role in which alternative viewpoints are debated and conflict instigated, in order to contribute to the creation of meaning;
> - strives for fully participative decision-making in strategy formulation in all communication issues, by the organisation and all its stakeholders; and
> - does not strategically manage relationships with internal and external stakeholders but cultivates relationships in such a way as to allow all stakeholders to form part of strategy formulation.
>
> *All* the above points of criticism have to be in practice to conclude that the NPO has a postmodern approach to communication management.

In Chapter 6 – 10, individual NPOs' *views* on strategic communication management were roughly plotted in terms of compatibility with Steyn and Puth (2000) or Ströh's (2007:199-220) approaches. In the next figure, the individual analyses from Chapters 6 to 10 are combined and displayed in a single illustration for a summarised overview of the NPOs' views. Again, the aim is not to compare the views of the NPOs to each other, but to identify trends in this regard. Each of the elements of the analysis will be discussed to explain the illustration.

Figure 11.2: Feasibility of Ströh's (2007:199-220) recommendations for strategic communication management

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH VIEWS OF:

STRÖH		STEYN & PUTH
No communication strategy	□ ▣ ▪ ▪	Communication strategy essential
Ethical behaviour all that is necessary for relationship building	□ ▪ ▪ ▪	More than ethical behaviour necessary for relationship building
Not part of the dominant coalition	□ ▣ ▪ ▪▪	Essential to be part of the dominant coalition
Play an activist role	□▪ ▪	Build harmonious relationships
Full stakeholder participation in strategy formulation	▪ ▪ ▣ ▫	Limited stakeholder participation in strategy formulation
Relationship management not planned	□ ▣ ▪ ▪	Relationship management strategically planned

■ SHARE   ■ PROJECT LITERACY   □ FLP   ▣ ASB POTCHEFSTROOM ABET CENTRE   ■ OPTIMUS FOUNDATION

In terms of Ströh's (2007:199–220) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management, it was found that although none of the interviewed NPOs planned their communication and stakeholder relationships strategically, all believed that it might be useful to do so. Project Literacy's interviewees regarded their organisation's lack of a communication and relationship management strategy as a significant shortcoming (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3). The ASB Potchefstroom ABET Centre's Manager contradicted himself when he said that a communication strategy is not "absolutely" necessary for the ABET Centre, but that communication must be planned and such plans must be adjustable (see Chapter 9, Section 9.3.3). The interviewee from the Optimus Foundation believes that every organisation needs a communication strategy, but it must be very simple and easy to implement (see Chapter 10, Section 10.3.3). SHARE also did not have a communication and stakeholder relationship management strategy, but this was because of time and resource constraints (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3) not because the Centre Co-ordinator believes in "experiencing the anxiety of unpredictability" (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.1). The only exception was the FLP's interviewee, the Director, who agreed with Ströh (2007:199–220) that a communication strategy is not necessary (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.3). The reason for this disregard might be the Director's general unwillingness to work according to any plan or strategy, as well as her lack of communication training, which leads to her subsequent inability to realise communication and relationship management's strategic value for the FLP.

All the interviewed NPOs viewed themselves as being ethical, honest, and having their stakeholders' best interests in mind. All NPOs, except the FLP, nonetheless believe that a communication strategy is needed to build and maintain stakeholder relationships. The interviewee from Optimus agreed with Ströh (2007:207) that ethical behaviour is very important to build and maintain relationships (see Chapter 10, Section 10.3.4) but added that a communication strategy is still of the utmost importance. Project Literacy's CEO summed it up well in saying that stakeholder communication should be planned otherwise "people fall off the radar system, and you don't communicate with all stakeholders" (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3.1). Conversely, the interviewee of the FLP agreed with Ströh (2007:199–220) that communication and stakeholder relationships should not be planned

(see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.3) in a small organisation such as the FLP (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.3). Except for the FLP, Ströh's suggestions in this regard are not considered feasible by the interviewed NPOs.

None of the NPOs interviewed employed a communication practitioner, except Project Literacy. Project Literacy's Fundraising and Communications Manager only has a half-day position, but she still forms part of the dominant coalition. Despite this, Project Literacy's Fundraising and Communications Manager did not fully perform a strategic role as the focus of her communication activities was not on stakeholder research and the application of two-way communication to build stakeholder relationships. All the NPOs believe that employing a communication practitioner or outsourcing the communication function would be beneficial for the organisation but that they had no funds to do so. SHARE's interviewee commented that she would have "to raise the funds to pay such a person" (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3). In all the other NPOs, the CEO or manager was responsible for communication. All the interviewees added though that they do not have sufficient time to manage communication and stakeholder relationships well. Despite the above-mentioned funding and time constraints, it can be argued that the communication function forms part of senior management's job descriptions. Communication and stakeholder relationship management are thus carried out by the dominant coalition. Ströh's suggestion that the communication practitioner should not form part of the dominant coalition is thus not in practice in these NPOs.

According to Ströh (2007:210), a communication practitioner is both a relationship manager and an *activist* who debates alternative viewpoints and instigates conflict, in order to contribute to meaning making (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2). Although NPOs, such as SHARE and Project Literacy, are outspoken against government's ABET policies and actions, they are careful not to disadvantage their organisations by instigating conflict and in the process lose funding. The NPOs' communication practices intuitively agree with Grunig, L.A.'s (1992:513) view that dialogue with stakeholders must create understanding and cooperation rather than conflict. It is thus evident that Ströh's (2007) opinion in this regard is not considered feasible by the NPOs participating in the study.

Ströh (2007:209) furthermore asserts that stakeholders should not be managed top-down by formulating communication strategies, rather all stakeholders must have the opportunity to participate fully in strategy formulation. This does not mean that all stakeholders must have a say in all mundane organisational management issues, but that stakeholders must be involved in enterprise and communication strategy formulation in particular. None of the interviewed NPOs' stakeholders formally took part in strategy formulation, but the NPOs used information informally gained from all their stakeholders. The interviewees said that reasons for not including all stakeholders in strategy formulation are, amongst others, time constraints, a lack of understanding of organisational risks and issues, a lack of interest and insight into risks and issues, and difficulty in reaching all stakeholders. The interviewee from Optimus also felt that it is not necessary for donors to be part of strategy formulation, unless Optimus runs a corporate social investment programme on behalf of the donor (see Chapter 10, Section 10.2). Project Literacy's interviewees believe that it is not in Project Literacy's best interests for strategic information to be available to all possible stakeholders. Ströh's (2007:199–220) approach is thus not supported by the participating NPOs in this case.

It is clear that Ströh's (2007:199–220) views on strategic communication management are not fully in practice at the interviewed NPOs nor are they viewed as viable alternatives to Steyn and Puth's approach. This implies, in theory, that Steyn and Puth's (2000) model are more feasible for implementation by NPOs. However, some of Ströh's (2007:199-220) suggestions might be helpful to enhance the Steyn and Puth (2000) model for implementation by NPOs. For instance, all NPOs stressed that

they are known for their ethical behaviour, which includes transparency and honesty. It might serve NPOs well if they emphasised their ethical behaviour more, especially concerning the application of donor funds. This might strengthen both the communal and exchange relationship (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1) between NPOs and donors, because donors would be assured that their funds are applied to alleviate illiteracy.

NPOs can also consider Ströh's (2007:209) suggestion to include stakeholder participation in strategy formulation, in some way or another. More stakeholder participation in especially the communication management strategy would enhance relationship-building efforts, and in turn contribute to attaining organisational goals.

11.2.4.2   *Conclusions*

Before recommendations are made, the key conclusions of the study as discussed so far can be summarised as follow:
• Participating NPOs do not manage their communication strategically
• They believe that a lack of manpower and funding are the most important limitations, preventing them from managing communication more strategically
• However, in fact, the participating NPOs are unaware of what strategic communication management entails, due to a lack of communication training
• Therefore, they do not realise the value of strategic communication management
• The NPOs do not realise that strong, mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders will eventually contribute to the achievement of organisational goals
• However, the NPOs do apply some of the requirements for strategic communication management intuitively, and in most cases displayed a symmetrical organisational worldview
• It can therefore be concluded that most of the NPOs function in a fertile environment for the formalisation and application of strategic communication management principles.

To address these conclusions, this study proposes some recommendations, which will be discussed in the following sections.

11.3   Recommendations

The research findings led to the formulation of recommendations for NPOs to apply strategic communication management and ways in which the Steyn and Puth (2000) model for strategic communication management can be adapted to make it more suitable for NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa. These recommendations represent an answer to the general research question as well as research question 5:

• **General Research Question:**
   How can NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa best practice strategic communication management within their specific context?

• **Research Question 5:**
   How can strategic communication management best be practiced by NPOs to enhance the achievement of their goals?

All the NPOs made it clear that appointing a qualified communication practitioner, who is solely responsible for communication management, or contracting a communication agency to manage com-

munication, is not possible due to funding constraints. However, this study concluded that the lack of knowledge about strategic communication management, particularly with regard to its purpose and benefits, is a more serious obstacle to the implementation of strategic communication management in the interviewed NPOs than a lack of funds. It is thus imperative to find more cost effective ways to practise strategic communication management in NPOs, with their current staff component. A solution might be to train the persons responsible for communication management in NPOs in the principles of strategic communication management. In the following section, the main recommendation of this study, namely to *collapse or condense* and *simplify* the Steyn and Puth model, will be discussed in detail. Other recommendations will be discussed in Section 11.4.2.

11.3.1 Simplified Steyn and Puth model

Taking the NPOs' constraints into consideration, this study recommends that the Steyn and Puth model (2000) be *collapsed or condensed* and simplified for *implementation* purposes. The proposed actions or steps in the model are based on what the NPOs already do and understand, as well as what they do not do, within the presuppositions and steps of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model. The academic division of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model into strategic, functional, and implementation levels might be too intimidating or overwhelming for NPOs that do not have access to a trained communication practitioner. NPOs might not realise that the Steyn and Puth (2000) model is a continuous, or rolling model, and that they then focus on only certain levels. The purpose of such a collapsed model is to *combine* the *academic, normative model with the practical reality as experienced by the NPOs*. Such a collapsed or condensed model would therefore aid NPOs that:

- do not have communication practitioners or competencies,
- do not have funds to employ a communication practitioner or to outsource the communication function, and
- face serious time constraints.

With regard to the simplified model, it is furthermore recommended that NPOs be persuaded of the value and benefits of strategic communication management for building relationships, in order to minimise and manage organisational risks. If NPOs do not "buy into" the benefits of strategic communication management, they would view any model as being unnecessary and impossible to implement, due to their constraints. It is therefore important to emphasise that it is possible to manage communication and relationships strategically if NPOs keep on doing, and build on what they are already doing, which will not cost them more in terms of funding or time.

The proposed collapsed or condensed version of Steyn and Puth's (2000) model is presented in Figure 11.1.

The purpose of the circular depiction of the model is to emphasise the continuous process of managing communication and building relationships with stakeholders. This illustrates that a communication management strategy is not something that should be developed and put away, but rather viewed as a "working document" which should be consulted and adapted continuously. Another intention of the circular format of the model is to indicate that no part of the strategy is more important than another part, and that all steps in the model need to be followed in order to manage communication and stakeholder relationships strategically.

Figure 11.3 Proposed simplified version of Steyn and Puth's model

Legend:
- Strategic level
- Functional level
- Implementation level

ENTERPRISE / ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: implications of the enterprise strategy for communication management

- Our values?
- How do we want to be perceived by stakeholders?

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

- Who impacts most on organisation?
- Specific contact persons?

DETERMINE STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

- From direct and indirect engagement with stakeholders

ASSESS ORGANISATIONAL GOALS/RISKS VERSUS STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

- Implications - communication & relationship management
- Prioritise risks, stakeholders and stakeholders' issues

OVERARCHING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: Set strategic relationship building goals and objectives

- What should be achieved?
- What to focus on?
- Measurable objectives
- Stakeholder / issues matrix

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: how to achieve relationship building goals and objectives

- What should be done by whom?

IMPLEMENT: including stakeholder listening

Confirm strategy

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF EMERGING ISSUES

- Regular, formal feedback process
- Feedback mechanisms
- Analysis of issues/risks

EMERGING STRATEGY: emerging risks/issues

- impact on enterprise strategy?
- Response to emerging issues/risks:
- How to manage risk/issue?
- How to manage relationships?

In the simplified model, the strategic steps in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, implemented to contribute to enterprise strategy, are situated on the left side. It is very important to show that the information gathered by formal and/or informal research is used for strategic communication management and relationship building. Creating the communication strategy and implementation plan constitutes the functional level in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, while the implementation of the plans is on a technical, or implementation, level. The need for evaluation of communication and relationship building activities by entering into dialogue with stakeholders is illustrated in the *Implement* step in this model, after which organisational and/or communication management strategies might be adapted again.

ENTERPRISE / ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: implications of the enterprise strategy for communication management

In the first step, NPOs need to determine their enterprise strategy (if it does not already exist) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2) by asking non-financial questions such as:

- "what are the organisational values that we would like to communicate to our stakeholders?" (NPOs could, for example, emphasise their ethical business practices, which theoretically links to Ströh's (2007:199-220) approach, which will assist NPOs in building strong relationships).
- "how would we like our stakeholders to perceived the organisation?"
- "how do we fulfil our social responsibilities?"

Once the enterprise strategy is clear, the implications thereof for communication management should be explored. This can be done by asking the "so what" question for communication management, upon considering the contents of the enterprise strategy. Answering this question will guide NPOs to eventually set *strategic communication goals* that are aligned with organisational goals.

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

NPOs already have an idea of who their stakeholders are, but they need to draw up a formal stakeholder map to prioritise their stakeholders, in view of the organisation's enterprise strategy. It is also important for NPOs to identify specific stakeholder representatives to engage with in dialogue, for instance at newspapers, donor organisations and government (see Section 11.2.4). This would enable NPOs to compile specific messages aimed at specific stakeholders, and therefore relationship-building efforts would be more effective.

DETERMINE STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

NPOs already have access to most of the information about their stakeholders' needs and expectations, but in an informal manner. By formalising the process, specific needs, expectations and issues can be linked to specific stakeholders. This would enable NPOs to develop communication and relationship building efforts that specifically address a particular stakeholder's issues. All staff actions can then uniformly address a particular stakeholder's issues, and all communication and relationship building efforts from the NPO would be aligned to the organisation's enterprise strategy.

Most NPOs expressed the view that relationship building are costly, and that they do not have enough staff to perform the task. However, senior management already perform most communication and relationship management efforts. By using existing staff members' relationships with stakeholders, senior management's task in this regard can be simplified. For instance, all NPOs noted that teachers had strong relationships, where especially trust had a pivotal role, with learners. If NPOs trained

or sensitised teachers to engage in dialogue to determine learners' needs and expectations, and to provide formal feedback to the organisation, no additional staff or funds have to be used to obtain this information. Teachers can also be trained to *strategically* communicate the NPO's values, social role, and care to build strong relationships with learners. In this way, teachers perform a more strategic role, and such training can be viewed as capacity building (see Section 11.4.2 for recommendation on training).

ASSESS ORGANISATIONAL GOALS/RISKS VERSUS STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS, EXPECTATIONS AND IS-SUES: implications for communication management

When NPOs have determined their strategic stakeholders' needs, expectations and issues, its implications for communication and relationship management can be considered. At this stage, the NPO needs to arrive at communication priorities, in other words, prioritise on *whom* and *what* to focus its communication and relationship building efforts, considering its limited time and financial resources.

Prioritising the stakeholders, issues and/or reputation risks to focus on, will ensure that NPOs use their scarce resources wisely, and with maximum impact. NPOs might, for instance, decide to focus only on certain stakeholders, reputation risks, or performance areas such as positioning, reputation management or employee engagement. A NPO might decide, for instance, to prioritise positioning to address its shortage of individual donors and corporate clients in a certain geographical area. The NPO might make use of, amongst others, specific media such as community radio stations, community newspapers and it website to attract new donors and clients.

OVERARCHING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: set strategic relationship building goals and objectives

At this stage, NPOs must determine strategic communication goals to be achieved, in order to address the strategic priorities identified in the previous step. In other words, the NPO needs to determine what its communication and stakeholder relationships would look like, if applied effectively. Specific, measureable objectives outline the steps to be taken to achieve the goals set.

The communication strategy therefore determines *what should be achieved by communication management and relationship building efforts, and sets clear objectives that indicate measures for success over a specified time period.*

Based on the steps followed so far, a stakeholder and issues matrix can be compiled, listing priority stakeholders, their issues, consequent reputation risks for the organisation, as well as communication goals, objectives and communication themes relevant to particular stakeholders. The communication strategy is directly linked to the enterprise strategy, and therefore NPOs can link its communication and relationship building efforts with stakeholders to its enterprise strategy. In this way, NPOs can ensure that the communication strategy contributes to obtaining organisational goals.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: how to achieve relationship building goals and objectives

Although it is the ideal, it is not necessary for the NPO's CEO or person responsible for communication, to be *directly* responsible for every aspect of communication management. Other staff members, such as board members, teachers, or even partners, could be involved *indirectly,* and on behalf of the NPO. For example, specific stakeholders could be assigned to specific board members, who are then responsible for building a relationship with that specific stakeholder. In the case of teachers and/or partners, strong relationships can be built with learners or beneficiaries, and the constraint of learner retention (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.2) can be addressed more effectively. It is important that a uniform message must be conveyed to all stakeholders to eliminate misunderstanding. *Indirect* communication management and relationship building are already informally in practice at Project Literacy and the Optimus Foundation (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3.1 and Chapter 10, Section 10.3.3.1). Formalising the process and providing training to the concerned staff members on especially relationship building, would assist in attaining organisational goals more effectively (see Section 11.4.2 for recommendation on training).

It is therefore vital to include in, or at least inform, board members, teachers, and partners of the NPO's overarching communication strategy and associated relationship goals per stakeholder, in order to empower them to communicate and build relationships according to a strategy. In this way, a more participative approach to management will be encouraged, which, theoretically, links to Ströh's (2007:199–220) criticism of Steyn and Puth's (2000) approach to strategic communication management as not being participative enough. Following an indirect approach to communication management would also reduce cost and manpower needs.

IMPLEMENT: including stakeholder listening

This step refers to all communication methods, actions and functions implemented by NPOs. While NPO representatives interact with stakeholders, they must listen and engage with stakeholders as a form of informal research. Every opportunity must therefore be used to pick up on new stakeholder issues, and probe on the status of existing stakeholder issues. It is imperative for NPOs to understand that a communication strategy is not static, but that it involves a continuous *process* of evaluation and adaptation. Whenever NPOs engage in dialogue with stakeholders, they need to *listen* to stakeholders to determine whether the NPO's communication efforts are successful in addressing stakeholders' issues and/or whether these issues have changed. If no emerging issues are detected, the current overall communication strategy is confirmed.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF EMERGING ISSUES

It is very important for NPOs to have a formalised feedback process to manage feedback between NPO representatives and the rest of the organisation, especially where other staff members than senior management indirectly manage relationships with stakeholders. Stakeholders' issues must be conveyed continuously to senior management, whereafter the information can be fed into emerging strategy formulation and/or the organisation's enterprise strategy. Feedback mechanisms might include quarterly meetings or more regular and formal reports.

EMERGING STRATEGY: emerging risks/issues

Whenever a new organisational risk or stakeholder issue arises, the communication strategy needs to be adapted. New information, gathered through both formal and informal environmental scan-

ning, has to be fed into both the enterprise and communication strategy. It might happen that the enterprise strategy has to be adapted, or, in the case of more short-term risks and issues, an emergent communication strategy needs to be developed.

11.3.1.1 Summary

It is clear from the above discussion that the simplified model is still rooted in the Excellence and relationship management theories, because it emphasises the importance of engaging with stakeholders to build strong relationships, which will assist the organisation in achieving its goals. The simplified model aims to build on, and improve, the NPOs current communication management practices. Nonetheless, NPOs first need to receive training on strategic communication management, which, amongst others, forms part of the study's next set of recommendations.

11.3.2 Other recommendations

- This study found that NPOs in the adult literacy sector cannot *afford* to appoint qualified communication practitioners nor can they afford to *outsource* the communication function. Nevertheless, the study also found that it is not necessarily a prerequisite for a formally qualified person to be responsible for strategic communication management. The person(s) currently performing communication management can be sensitised and/or trained to manage the communication function more strategically, by following the guidelines in the simplified model, and as such contribute to organisational effectiveness.

  Training unqualified persons to perform strategic communication management might be criticised as impossible, particularly if Grunig *et al.'s* (1992) views on the relation between trained communication practitioners and the application of two-way symmetrical communication are taken into account. The question here is: how can NPOs in the adult literacy sector best practise strategic communication management, considering their constraints, particularly a lack of funding? It could be argued that following a pragmatic approach by providing training would definitely not result in strategic communication management being practised as prescribed theoretically, but it would be in the best interests of NPOs to at least improve on their current communication practices. Furthermore, most of the participating NPOs had a symmetrical worldview, which would support the implementation of strategic communication management. All the participating NPOs have been operating for many years, and intuitively practiced communication and relationship management to varying degrees of success. These NPOs would therefore not start communication and relationship management at "point zero". It is for this reason that the simplified Steyn and Puth model build on what the NPOs are already doing, and training should follow the same route.

  It is not necessary to train all staff, or a high number of staff members in strategic communication management, as the responsibility already lies with the organisations' dominant coalitions. Therefore, only the persons currently responsible for communication and relationship management can be sensitised and trained, according to a simplified Steyn and Puth (2000) model. Although the initial costs of training staff in strategic communication management principles might be high, NPOs must compare these costs to the possible gains (more funding, improved relationships with all stakeholders, strategic management of organisational risks) that practising strategic communication management can offer the organisation. Training staff in strategic communication management can also be viewed as strategic capacity building.

Structured communication management training for NPOs can include aspects such as:

‣ the role of strategic communication management in organisational effectivity;
‣ the nature and importance of two-way communication;
‣ stakeholder mapping;
‣ strategic relationship building;
‣ setting of strategic relationship building goals and measurable objectives;
‣ engagement methods, tools and skills;
‣ prioritising of organisational risks, stakeholders and stakeholders' issues and
‣ how to conduct a communication media analysis to determine which kind of media are best suited to the needs of the organisation.

• Concerning training, it is recommended that universities, as part of their social responsibility programmes, provide communication management training at reduced cost to NPOs. The improvement of adults' literacy level, which directly impact on children's literacy (see Chapter 2. Section 2.2), are in the best interest of universities, and therefore it is fitting for universities to assist NPOs in this regard.

• Taking the above recommendation to train NPOs in strategic communication management further, this study recommends that an action research team "adopts" a few NPOs for a year or two. During this research period, the research team can train the NPOs, including doing research on stakeholders, and as such incorporate stakeholder information into the communication strategy. In this way, the research team stays involved in a hands-on, advisory capacity until strategic communication management is institutionalised in the organisation. Such an approach would be more efficient than merely providing a one-day training course to NPOs (so-called "hit and run" approach).

• It is furthermore recommended that the simplified Steyn and Puth model be applied for a year or two in NPOs, where after the NPOs' communication practices could be evaluated. Universities could obtain funding for such a study from an international organisation or local research organisations. In this instance it would not be necessary for NPOs to arrange for funding.

• A longitudinal approach might lead to additional refinement of the model, as proved to be necessary in practice. Furthermore, such a study would make a valid contribution to communication theory development in the NPO sector.

11.4   Scientific contribution of the study

• It was found that although NPOs can *theoretically* apply the normative Steyn and Puth (2000) model, it is not *practically* feasible, due to the NPOs' unique constraints. The theoretical and practical contribution of this study was the development of a simplified model, based on sound theoretical principles, for NPOs in the adult literacy sector to implement strategic communication management notwithstanding their constraints and limited resources. The steps/actions indicated in the simplified model are aligned to the NPOs reality and current practice, within the requirements for strategic communication management. All NPOs viewed strategic communication and relationship management as a time-consuming task that necessitates an additional, trained staff member. By simplifying the model, and focusing on what NPOs are already doing, misconceptions about the complexity and feasibility of communication management might be cleared.

• The study identified the specific constraints experienced by NPOs in the adult literacy sector, which impact negatively on their application of strategic communication management. The main constraints experienced by NPOs are a lack of funding and manpower, a lack of training in communication management and the subsequent lack of knowledge of the advantages of strate-

gic communication management for the achievement of organisational goals.

- In addition to the above, the study made a social contribution because improved strategic communication would assist NPOs in the adult literacy sector to be more successful in achieving their goals, and as such to make a larger contribution to social development in South Africa.
- Furthermore, this study identified a specific method of capacity building in NPOs, for which universities can obtain funding, and at the same time be socially responsible by engaging in empowering action research in NPOs.

11.5   Limitations of the study

As this study was exploratory with a qualitative nature, a shortcoming is the small sample of NPOs that took part in the study. The findings could therefore not be generalised to all the NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa, or to any other NPO sector in South Africa. An additional factor was that it was difficult to find NPOs in South Africa whose *main* focus is the upliftment of adult illiteracy, as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.

It would have been ideal to make a longitudinal, in-depth study of each NPO, in order to obtain a better understanding of the effect of the application of strategic communication management on attaining organisational goals and relationship building with stakeholders. A longitudinal study would enable investigation of the strategic communication function within each NPO in more detail than was the case with this study. However, this study's time frame did not allow for such an expansive research design.

It would furthermore have been valuable to investigate the views of the NPOs' strategic stakeholders, such as their learners, donors, government, and teachers, about each NPO's communication. Determining the *communication* and *relationship building needs* of the NPOs' strategic stakeholders would enable NPOs to adapt their communication practices to their stakeholders' needs. It would also make a valuable contribution to the adaptation of the Steyn and Puth (2000) model for NPOs in the adult literacy sector in South Africa.

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Appendix A: Letter of invitation to NPOs

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22 May 2007

Dear Mr Miller

RESEARCH PROJECT: NGOS - STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

I am a lecturer at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, and am busy with a Ph.D. research project on NGOs working towards the alleviation of adult illiteracy. I have identified your organisation as one of the NGOs that I would like to include in the research.

NGOs, like all other organisations, can benefit greatly from the application of strategic stakeholder and communication management, including relationship and issues management, and recognising the importance of the aforementioned in the organisation's strategy development processes. Research has shown though that most NGOs do not practice strategic stakeholder and communication management, nor do they employ specialist communication practitioners. This research project therefore aims to investigate how NGOs deal with stakeholder and communication management challenges, and to test the viability of a specific stakeholder and communication management approach that could enhance the achievement of organisations' strategic goals.

Unfortunately I can only include 5 NGOs in this project due to limited time and resources. If you agree to take part in the project your organisation's stakeholder and communication management efforts could be enhanced by the results and the recommendations of the study. Your involvement will entail the provisioning of background information about your organisation, as well as information on your organisation's current stakeholder and communication management practices. I intend to gather this information by means of an in-depth interview in the near future.

Would you be so kind as to inform me if you would agree to take part in this project? You can reply directly to my e-mail address (see above). If you have agreed to be involved I will contact you again in the near future to organise the proposed interview.

Yours sincerely

Marlene Wiggill (Mrs)
Lecturer

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