

**AN EVALUATION OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS  
INTEGRATION WITHIN THE MSUNDUZI LOCAL AUTHORITY**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

In the subject

**COMMUNICATION**

at the

University of South Africa

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MAY 2016

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**DECLARATION**

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I declare that **AN EVALUATION OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS INTEGRATION WITHIN THE MSUNDUZI LOCAL AUTHORITY** is my own work and that all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To embark on a journey of discovering knowledge and wisdom is a life changing experience; one has to rely on and appreciate the experiences of those who have travelled a similar path. With that said I wish to acknowledge the following people whom the study would not have been completed without their contribution:

- ❖ Firstly, I must thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; it has been a long, hard journey and I am eternally grateful for God gave me strength to carry on even when I felt like giving up.
- ❖ My mother who is my confidant; she has always encouraged me to pursue my education and never give up.
- ❖ My colleagues for their time, interest and inputs.
- ❖ A large amount of gratitude goes to my Supervisor Dr Blessing Mbatha for his constant guidance, assistance, encouragement and constructive advice.
- ❖ My editor Max Sibanda for his hard work, dedication and advice. He assisted in shaping this study to the best it can be.
- ❖ My brother Lindani Dladla for his support and financial contribution.

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## ABSTRACT

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The study was an evaluation of organisational communication and its integration within the Msunduzi Local Authority. The purpose was firstly to explore and describe the state of communication in the organisation, and secondly to measure the level of communication integration within the organisation.

The qualitative content analysis and individual semi-structured interviews were the suitable data collection techniques for the study. The data was analysed through a thematic analysis, a technique that involves identifying, analysing and reporting in detail patterns or themes within data.

The study found that organisational communication at Msunduzi Local Authority was one sided and top down; which indicated that there was little emphasis on feedback from employees. The study revealed that there were more external communication messages than internal, to an extent that the internal stakeholders depended on external media to learn about their organisation. Findings on the consistency of messages revealed that all communications are managed by senior employees within their respective departments and sections; the status of the consistency of messages can be improved if a comprehensive approach can be adopted in communicating internal messages in addition to employing diverse communication channels. On infrastructure for integration, the study found that there is infrastructure and several prospects for information sharing in the organisation created by information communication and technology though not fully explored. With regards to the free flow and sharing of information, the study established that the required systems for communication exist but not adequately utilised. Findings on the co-ordination of communication efforts and actions to promote integrated communication showed flaws. It also appeared that the departments in the organisation function in silos due to lack of cross-functional planning.

Key concept:

Organisational communication, organisational stakeholders, integrated communication, communication infrastructure, free flow of information, message consistency, information sharing, communication alignment and communication coordination.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Schultz and Schultz (2004:3) purport that organisations are faced with a challenge of transition, whether it is transition in production, manufacturing, logistics, distribution or marketing and communication. However, organisations need to embrace change instead of sticking to out-dated approaches, in the name of corporate culture. Accordingly, the best mechanism of making transition in marketing and communication is the integration of organisational efforts, including the development of processes, systems and coordination (ibid). This indicates that the integration of all aspects of communication internally and externally.

The issue of communication and its integration in all the aspects of the organisation is the major focal point of this study. This chapter is intended to elucidate the context of the study in order to highlight the purpose, need, objectives and background on which the study subtends; highlight the research problem, sub-problems, as well as to define relevant key terms.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

Msunduzi Municipality is a local government authority located in Pietermaritzburg. As the Provincial capital, Pietermaritzburg is the main economic hub of uMgungundlovu district, the second largest city within the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the fifth largest in South Africa (Msunduzi Municipality 2012:2). Msunduzi Municipality, as a local authority, operates in an environment that is greatly influenced by different interests and daily personal needs of the citizens.

Integrated organisational communication has become a major aspect of organisational strategy in recent years due to varied reasons. Maenetja (2009) maintains that many employees in organisations do not have basic understanding of how their organisation operates and what their specific role is in building and maintaining customer relationships; this is because employees have not been integrated. This indicates that organisational communication is not sufficiently

active. According to Angelopulo and Schoonraad (cited in Barker & Angelopulo 2006:3), integrated organisational communication is the central feature through which internal and stakeholder relationships are established and maintained.

According to the Handbook of Government Communications (2010:20), communication is regarded as a core function that enables an organisation to put together clear, specific, and collectively created plans. There is a great need for any organisation to adopt a cohesive, strategic and integrated approach to its communication processes. Cornish, Lindley-French and Yorke (2011) maintain that good communication is both a function and a proof of good governance. In a democracy, informative and transparent communication is essential to the maintenance of a productive and enduring relationship between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, and the electorate. Therefore, communication in government organisations has a constitutional significance; the democratic process can be damaged when communication is insincere, inadequate or incomplete.

It is uncontroversial, therefore, to expect Msunduzi Local Authority, as an organisation that employs over 4000 individuals, to be pertinent about its communication strategy. As a result, this study aimed to establish how communication is practised in this local authority and to measure the extent of communication integration.

### **1.3 Need for the study**

Communication is a strategic tool through which organisations, both in the private and public sector, can establish and maintain competitive advantage. Its role needs to be recognised and clearly defined in order to achieve unity and co-operation towards reaching organisational goals. As such, the research and analysis of communication in any organisation is critical to give an understanding of the organisation's current position and performance. Antonis (2005) maintains that communication experts and managers in an organisation should be able to measure the successes, failures, strengths and weaknesses of communication and its integration - including people and systems-oriented issues impacting on communication - in order to constantly improve and enhance organisational communication.

In concurrence, Mohamed (2004) states that a comprehensive strategy for communication will result in an effective, integrated and coordinated communication process; ensuring that all components of the organisation speak in one voice. This is crucial in addressing the key challenge of managing public perceptions and maintaining good relations with all stakeholders, thus bridging existing gaps and enhancing services.

Maenetja (2009) encapsulates that an integrated communication approach is focused on the integration of various communication activities in the organisation in order to face the increased challenges of maintaining a positive image of the organisation, remaining competitive in a changing global environment, and establishing meaningful relationships with its stakeholders. According to Ehlers (2002), integrated communication should form part of the organisation's strategic planning process, and those driving the integration should be multi-skilled, so that they can contribute effectively to the process. In light of this discussion, the need for an integrated communication approach is crucial in order for an organisation to facilitate effective communication with its internal and external stakeholders.

#### **1.4 Relationship of study to the discipline of communication**

The topic is relevant to the discipline of communication, communication is known as a bridge that binds together all the components of an organisation by coordinating collectively planned initiatives of achieving organisational objectives and establishing beneficial relationships with relevant stakeholders (Barker & Angelopulo 2006:74).

In addition, Wilkins (2010) indicates that organisational communication plays a major role of informing about the organisation and its work, persuading employees to cooperate, integrating various components within an organisation to establish unity and cohesion, and regulating organisational activities to ensure efficient operation. In this sense, the subject of this study fits well into the general ambit of communication.

Effective organisational communication involves integrated communication, defined by Maenetja (2009) as a strategic management process of controlling and influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with organisational stakeholders. There is great emphasis placed for the organisations to recognise the element of integrated communication as central in the management process. Maenetja (2009) further states that the principles of wholeness and interdependence are therefore important in integrated communication because the interdependence of the system's parts is what makes the process work. This means that organisations should be tightly coupled internally and everything should be related to everything else.

Therefore, the importance of this topic lies in the fact that the role of communication in an organisation cannot be underestimated. Communication has a big influence in the organisational context as a transactional process whereby messages are exchanged and interpreted to establish and maintain mutual understanding between internal parties, and with external stakeholders, through integration. In concurrence, Maenetja (2009) states that in all organisations, communication should be recognised as a mechanism of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonised as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with the groups upon which the company is dependent.

Furthermore, communication is a function that maps out all internal and external communication dimensions relevant to the projection of a coherent image of the organisation and its surroundings (Christensen & Cheney 2005:2). Considering all the facts about the role and influence of communication in the organisation, it is important to study the role that communication is currently playing and its position in terms of integration in the chosen organisation. The findings of the study have a potential of making a contribution to the discipline of communication, in terms of the extent to which a local authority recognises the role and importance of communication and its integration.

## **1.5 Rationale for the study**

Communication in the organisational context is increasingly becoming crucial and recognition is given to the fact that it has a major impact on the success of the organisation. The organisation at which the study is conducted operates in an environment influenced by different interests and whereby daily personal needs play a crucial role in how the members of the public view, approach, and respond to certain issues. This indicates that integrated organisational communication should be regarded as the core function which enables the coordination and integration of various functions and activities. Christensen and Cheney (2005:2) maintain that the development of unified communication that transcends disciplinary demarcations had become a priority of most communication disciplines.

In addition, Antonis (2005) purports that it is necessary for the organisational management to understand that a successful organisation requires a strategic and integrated approach to its communication processes, to allow the organisation to plan and anticipate what is required from communication as a whole, and how to gain the best value from it. Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:50) concur by stating that such a strategic approach allows a systematic and consistent application of organisational communication in an integrative framework that ultimately serves to link all aspects of business.

Therefore, it became logical to conduct a study to explore communication and within Msunduzi Local Authority, to measure the extent to which the communication processes were integrated.

## **1.6 Research problem**

According to Ramodibe (2014), a research problem could be described as the challenge which the researcher has experienced or have knowledge of, and is interested in finding out its root causes and possible solutions. The aim of the study was to explore organisational communication and its integration at Msunduzi Local Authority. Organisational communication is said to be the glue that binds together all components of the organisation; aligning them towards a single goal in order for the organisation to succeed. This implies an understanding of the processes involved,



continuous improvement within all spheres of activity, empowering employees in achieving higher productivity and improved quality, and focusing on the customers. Employees can be empowered by giving them knowledge and information about organisational performance, the power to make decisions and influence organisational direction, and basing their rewards on organisational performance (Antonis 2005).

#### 1.6.1 Contextualisation of the problem

Wilkins (2010:10) purports that the concept or formal idea of organisational communications dates back to the 1920s, during which businesses and individuals engaged in organised forms of communication to include public speaking at town hall meetings and legislative gatherings. This is still the case at the Msunduzi Local Authority; the leadership still conducts public speaking at the town halls and legislative gatherings, targeting external stakeholders, mainly the community and external businesses in a programme that is called public participation.

As an employee of the Msunduzi Local Authority and communication professional, the researcher was of the view that there are challenges facing the communication system or machinery at local level. This was against the backdrop that the Msunduzi Local Authority does not have a fully functional communication component that should be responsible for encouraging integration, coordination and high levels of professionalism and also expand access to information that would enable stakeholders to participate in transformation and in bettering their own lives. Moreover, it is without question that success lies in the root of good communication, particularly in matters of delivery and development. It fosters the necessary environment for the pursuit of partnerships leading to shared growth and better lives.

The researcher believes that without a fully-fledged communication system, the organisation would be unable to deliver optimally transparent, productive, communication and integration at all levels and that would lead to an increased number of community service delivery protests. Therefore, the root cause of the problem needs to be identified and resolved.

In addition, there has been widespread criticism against organisations that do not want to embrace change and the political influence evident in the local sphere of government; some believe that they focus too much on the internal environment at the expense of the external environment, while others feel that the politics of the organisation is overlooked, in conflict and power struggles because of the inability to reach consensus. (Sokhela 2006:117). The researcher believes that an organisation that does not recognise the value of communication and has not embraced the integration of its components into one vision can end up with a demotivated workforce and reputational damage. In the case of the Msunduzi Local Authority, employees would not be informed and service delivery would not be adequately achieved, resulting in the public not being informed and sporadic community protests against poor or slow service delivery. Therefore, it is against this background that the researcher wished to evaluate the organisational communication system and level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority.

#### 1.6.2 Research problem statement

To evaluate organisational communication and measure the level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority.

#### 1.6.3 Sub-problems

The study has the following subordinate problems:

- Internal stakeholder orientation at Msunduzi Local Authority
- Communication alignment to strategic focus at Msunduzi Local Authority
- Existence of the consistency of messages within Msunduzi Local Authority
- Mechanisms to co-ordinate communication efforts and action within Msunduzi Local Authority
- Sharing of information and free flow of information within Msunduzi Local Authority
- Infrastructure for integration within Msunduzi Local Authority

### 1.6.3 Research questions

In responding to the research problem, the study sought to answer the following sub-research questions:

- Does Msunduzi Local Authority communication have internal stakeholder orientation?
- Is communication aligned with the strategic focus of the organisation?
- How consistent are messages and media used within Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What are the mechanisms put in place to coordinate communication efforts and action within the Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What is the status of free flow of information within the Msunduzi Local Authority?
- Is there infrastructure for the integration of communication messages?

### 1.7 Aim of the study

The need for integration in organisational communication has been emphasised, with scholars arguing that it is important for the management to understand that for an organisation to be successful there has to be a strategic and integrated approach to its communication (Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2003; Antonis 2005; Barker & Angelopulo 2006; Swart 2010). The communication process and its success depend largely on how well an organisation is managed, and the manner in which the different components of the organisation are integrated.

Hence; the premise of the research is to establish the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority, with specific reference to communication integration. Angelopulo and Schoonraad (cited in Barker & Angelopulo 2006:3) purport that communication functions as an ingredient for corporate culture. This indicates that in any organisation, communication plays a major role of binding together all various components where mutual understanding and relations are established.

### 1.8 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are exploratory and descriptive. Babbie (2005:89) maintains that exploratory research is essential when the researcher investigates a new or different angle of a

phenomenon and usually generates new insight into a particular topic. The intention of this study is to explore the communication and get an insight into the extent of integration at the chosen organisation. The research study attempts to develop a broader understanding of how the organisation operates, how communication flows within the organisation, as well as how the related aspects of communication are integrated.

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were addressed:

- To evaluate the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority
- To measure the level of communication integration

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

The study is significant to the discipline of communication given its location within integrated organisational communication. According to Angelopulo (2006:43) in many organisations communication is seen as a specialised function, undertaken only by the marketing communication or public relations departments; however communication is not limited to specific departments but plays an active role in all areas of the modern organisation. Schultz and Schultz (2004:3) purport that in the past, few organisations entertained the idea of integrated business functional areas, and organisations were divided into departments operating as independent silos. The study will ultimately determine if the Msunduzi Local Authority has realised the need for a comprehensive and integrated organisational communication system and will further provide an insight in terms of whether the Msunduzi Local Authority is communicating adequately; and whether it is using appropriate communication channels as Overman's (2003) assertion that integrated communication messages need to be aligned with an organisation's corporate brand promise, which should be embedded consistently throughout the organisation and across every touch point including performance measures, internal environment and communication.

### **1.10 Research hypotheses**

Ramodibe (2014:30) explains a hypothesis as a prediction that the researcher makes about the expected relationships among variables. He argues that when testing a hypothesis, the researcher

should use statistics to make inferences about the population from a study sample. The hypothesis is the prediction of the results of the study. The following hypothesis was thus tested:

**The current communication system of the Msunduzi Local Authority is not adequate and integrated; therefore, the strategies that can be developed to improve organisational communication and enhance integration are proposed.**

### **1.11 Definition of key terms**

The discussion of the key concepts for this study deals broadly with organisational communication and cascades down to the aspects relevant to communication and its integration. The focus of the study is mainly on integrated intra-organisational communication. The key concepts will be discussed in the context as provided in this chapter as well as in-depth in the following chapters.

1.11.1 *Evaluation* The word evaluation refers to the process of making a judgment about the value, importance, or quality of something after considering it carefully (McMillan Dictionary 2013).

1.11.2 *Organisational communication* refers to the flow of material, information, perception and understanding between various parts and members of an organisation. All the methods, means and media of communication and all the channels, networks and systems of communication and all the person-to-person interchange are included as aspects of communication (Vos 1994b:33). In concurrence, Barker and Angelopulo (2006:74) define organisational communication as involving an understanding of the influence that communication has within an organisational context, because it is a transactional and symbolic process whereby messages are exchanged and interpreted to establish and maintain mutual understanding between parties. Wilkins (2010) believes that organisational communication plays a role of informing about the organisation and its work, persuading employees to cooperate, integrating various components within an

organisation to establish unity and cohesion, and regulating organisational activities to ensure efficient operation.

1.11.3 *Intra-organisational communication* is concerned with communication that takes place within the organisation. According to Barker and Du Plessis (2002:4), intra-organisational communication can be defined as the internal, work-related messages that are shared amongst members of an organisation whether intrapersonal, interpersonal or in a small group. There are four levels of organisational communication, and these can be formal or informal. Intrapersonal communication is the type of communication that takes place within a single person by means of processing information to clarify an idea or analyse a situation. Interpersonal communication takes place between two individuals involving both verbal and non-verbal communication. The small group communication enables a group of members to work together since mutual relationships have been built through intrapersonal communication and the multi-group communication is the fourth level of communication that involves all members of the organisation, sharing work-related messages through formal communication.

1.11.4 *Integrated communication* can be defined as the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term profitable relationships with stakeholders (Niemann 2005; Duncan 2002; Swart 2010). In concurrence Antonis (2005) maintains that integrated communication refers to planned and coordinated efforts of sharing ideas and reaching common understanding of communication which results in a joint program of action to achieve the set objectives within an organisation. This creates an understanding that communication forms an integral part of all organisational processes, and that integration promotes the importance of inclusive and holistic management of all communication within the organisational context in order to achieve organisational success.

1.11.5 *Communication infrastructure* refers to the organisation's structures and routines, which sustain its culture. Maenetja (2010) indicates that the systems of planning, quality control and information management are crucial in organisational performance of its primary activities. These systems focus specifically on communication infrastructure such as the channels of communication used, the levels that communication takes, the direction through which communication flows, and the networks of communication existing in the organisation.

1.11.6 *Organisational stakeholders* refer to the people who enter into partnership or relationship with the organisation, whether internally or externally. The internal stakeholders can be the employees from all levels of the organisation, including the political bodies. The external stakeholders refer to the parties that are outside the organisation, such as members of the public that an organisation serves, the suppliers, the media, as well as different levels of government.

## **1.12 Structural presentation of the dissertation**

### 1.12.1 Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study

The first chapter of the study provides the conceptual context on which the study is set, as well as the clarification of the problem being investigated. As such, this chapter contains the background to the research problem, the purpose and need for the study, the relationship of the topic to the discipline of communication, the definition of key terms, the presentation of the research problem, sub-problems, objectives of the study and the research questions.

### 1.12.2 Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter contains the literature review relevant to the study. It consists of a discussion of the existing research on the topic, an overview of organisational communication, intra-organisational communication, and provides background for the contextualisation of integrated communication as a theoretical concept of the study. In addition, this chapter gives an overview of Msunduzi Municipality, as the organisation where the research study is conducted.

### 1.12.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will discuss the research design, study population, sampling methods, the limitations of the study, as well as the means by which reliability and validity were ensured in the present study.

### 1.12.4 Chapter Four: Data Analysis

In this chapter, the data analysis methods are discussed in detail.

### 1.12.5 Chapter Five: Discussion and Interpretation of findings

In this section, an interpretation of the research findings is done, from which the conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

### 1.12.6 Chapter Six: Conclusions, Recommendations and Summary

This chapter concludes the study and propose a set of recommendations. The recommendations are based on the communication requirements identified in Chapter Five.

## **1.13 Summary**

This chapter has introduced the study by providing background and rationale; presented the research problem; discussed the aim (what) and objectives (how) of the study; provided the motivation why the study is significant to the discipline of communication; presented the research hypothesis; defined the terms used in the study and further outlined the structural presentation of the dissertation.

The issues discussed in the context of the study made it clear that organisations need to change the way in which the communication function was previously structured and focus on a more integrated approach. A study of this nature has not been conducted at Msunduzi Local Authority before. As such, the findings of the study will give an understanding of how the Local Authority is currently structured in terms of communication.



The next chapter (Chapter two) reviews literature on previous studies on strategic and integrated organisational communication and its context; thus laying a foundation for a good research outcome.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature on organisational communication and integrated communication. A literature review gives the researcher an idea of how other researchers and writers have thought and gone about researching integrated organisational communication and its context; thus laying a foundation for a good research outcome. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:64), understanding and doing a literature review can introduce the researcher to specific measurement tools that other researchers have developed and used effectively.

This literature review is based on the objectives of the study as indicated below:

- To evaluate the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority
- To measure the level of communication integration

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

Miller (2005) argues that a theory is essential in providing a framework for the entire study, since it can assist the researcher in determining what should be measured and further provides statistical relationships. This indicates that theories provide an insight to researchers, as to why people behave the way they do. In other words, theories are essential because they predict how individuals are likely to behave when they experience a certain information environment (Littlejohn & Foss 2008). After analysing the objectives of the study, it became evident that the most appropriate theory would be the one that deals with transactions since the study was in the main, intended to evaluate the level of the communication and integration within the Msunduzi Local Authority. To this end, the theoretical domain adopted for the study was the transactional model communication. Additionally, other theoretical strands referred to in this study include dialogue and employee engagement theories.

The transactional model of communication therefore lays the foundation towards answering the three (3) research questions, namely:

- a) What is the current state of organisational communication?
- b) What is the level of communication integration practiced?
- c) What could be done to improve the communication system of the Msunduzi Local Authority?

### 2.2.1 Dialogue theory

Van der Walt (2006) states that the dialogue theory of communication relates to the transactional view of communication, whereby unrestricted, simultaneous, mutual and continuous communication should occur in every communication transaction between employees. Therefore, dialogue reduces the level of misunderstanding through engaging in meaningful communication whereby communicators respond accordingly with essential characteristics stated before. Van der Walt (2006) reviewed Buber's theory of dialogical ethics, which describes dialogue as mutuality in communication whereby people can assist each other to become more human and authentic; by engaging in a communication process where neither of the communicators is attempting to project or coerce their opinion on the other. According to Wells (2002), the theory of dialogue emphasises the process of disclosure, which means that people involved in a communication encounter have to be fully aware of each other as unique individuals without reduction or abstraction.

In concurrence, Van der Walt (2006) states that dialogue theory in relation to transactional communication, is distinct from communication interactions such as debates, discussions and deliberations, because the dialogic communication makes listening and speaking possible, and therefore effective. Furthermore, dialogic communication is a two-way, unrestricted and continuous type of communication that makes use of the all-channel network of communication which enables communicators an equal opportunity to communicate and participate freely.

### 2.2.2 Employee engagement theory

Lawrence (2007) indicates that employee engagement is also related to transactional communication since it means that organisations are able to involve their employees in the

running of the organisation, including the decision-making. This motivates employees, making them productive and improving their satisfaction, which in turn leads to a series of effects from greater customer satisfaction, to sales growth and greater profits, and back to greater employee satisfaction. According to Hayase (2002), with the introduction of employee engagement came some of the new variables for measuring effective internal communication including; trust, credibility, organisational goals, identification, internal and external alignment, accuracy, openness, transparency, timeliness, receiver relevance, using numerous channels, and message management.

Therefore, Hayase (2002) asserts that effective organisational communication extends beyond employees satisfied with receiving information; employees also want to work for an organisation that believes that they can contribute substantially to the value and decision-making process. Smith (2005) believes that organisations need to improve employee engagement in order to ensure that employees have an understanding of the organisation's mission, objectives and that the contribution of employees is recognised. Improving employee engagement can be done through coaching, career development, recognition, rewards, accountability, satisfaction, meaningful work, perceived safety, adequate resources, individual attention, alignment with organisation's values, opinion surveys, effective communication, management's interest in employee wellbeing, challenging work, input in decision-making, clear vision of organisation's goals, as well as autonomy (Lawrence 2007).

The dialogue and employee engagement theories are relevant to the stakeholders of the organisation, be they internal or external. The organisation's stakeholders have a vested interest in the success of the organisation; therefore, what the organisation does affects them, while what they do affects the organisation. Niemann (2005:50) states, in this regard, that the broader and deeper the support of the organisation's stakeholder, the greater the stakeholder capital, and thus the greater the organisation's brand equity. It can, therefore, be argued that communication should be utilised to build relationships with stakeholders because from an organisation's point of view, corporate success depends on an on-going process of stakeholder management, in which interests and demands of the stakeholders are identified and dealt with appropriately.

### **2.3 The state of organisational communication**

Communication involves the sender, subject matter of communication, expressions used for communicating, medium of communication, receiver of the communication and interpretation, and feedback expected to be mutual if communication is to be effective and take place (Vos 1994b:30) This process begins with the sender, being an individual who makes an attempt to communicate, by creating a message through encoding. The sender chooses a suitable medium (channel) for transmitting the message to the receiver (recipient). The receiver receives and decodes the message by way of interpreting and understanding it. The communication process then ends with feedback, which enables the sender to learn if the receiver has received, understood and responded, appropriately, to the message.

Fielding (2006:10) highlights that communication is essential for the survival of the organisation because it plays a transactional role; involving two or more people who construct and exchange meaning. In this way, communication messages can move upward, downward and horizontal. Organisational communication serves at least four major functions: informative, integrative, regulative and persuasive function, discussed below.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:11) maintain that organisational communication shifted its primary focus from the applied aspects -such as writing, speaking and persuasion - to a broader role in areas such as organisational behaviour and organisational theory. The scope of communication has changed from that traditional view and has developed and spread throughout the organisation to the extent that it has become central to an organisation's functioning. Organisational communication is now seen as central to overall interactions, whereby meaning is coded, transmitted, encoded and interpreted throughout the organisation. This can be a one-way or two-way process, depending on the approach that an organisation has towards communication (Vos 1994b:33).

Furthermore, there are several approaches to communication. Each approach is related to a specific model or theory of communication that suits the type of organisation. Theories of communication help to explain how communication works. Communication serves a purpose of

transferring information from one person to another for example sending messages. According to Van der Walt (2006) models of communication can be used for multiple purposes; for example, representing various elements of communication, indicating relationships between elements, simplifying complex processes and making it possible to see a familiar process from a different perspective.

### 2.3.1 Models of communication

The following models of communication are explored:

#### (a) Linear model of communication

The linear model of communication, describes communication as a one-way process; it was the earliest communication model developed by engineer Claude Shannon and his assistant, Warren Weaver. The model suggested that communication is linear, mechanistic, clearly indicating the sender who encodes and sends the message to a receiver, who receives and decodes it. A weakness of this model is that it does not indicate any kind of exchange. Feedback is not addressed.

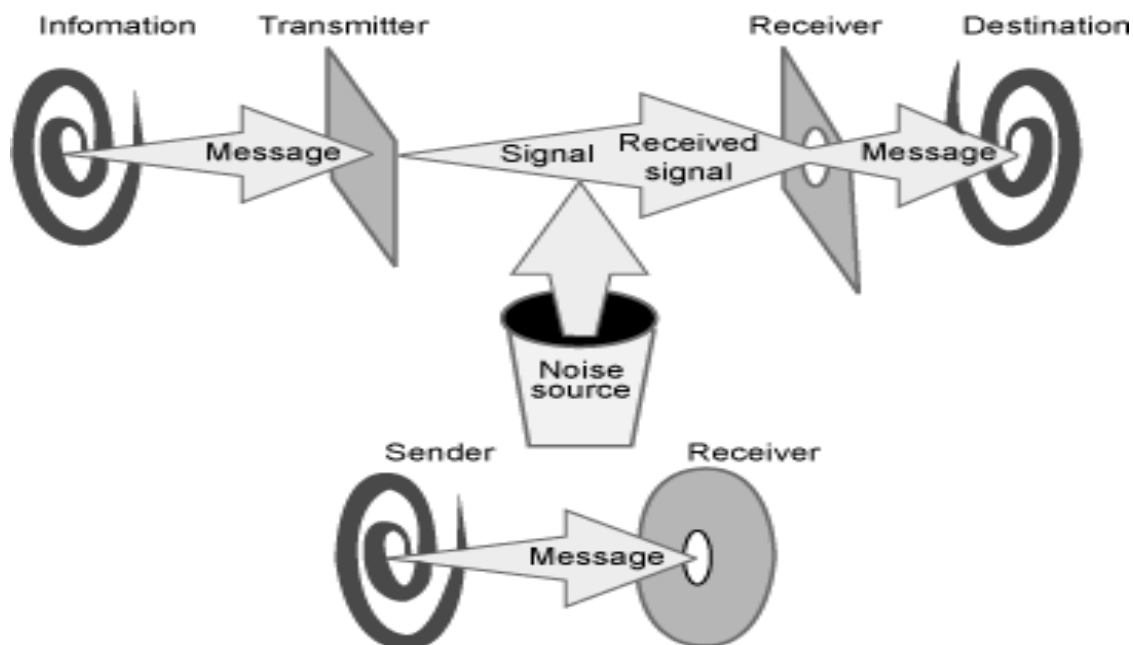


Figure 2.1: Shannon-Weaver mathematical model of communication (Wood 2009)

(b) Interaction model of communication

The interaction model reflects advancements in the knowledge and understanding of communication. Silungwe (2014) indicates that the interaction model of communication identifies a circular, interdependent feedback process transposed over the linear communication model. The interaction model can also be referred to as two-way communication.

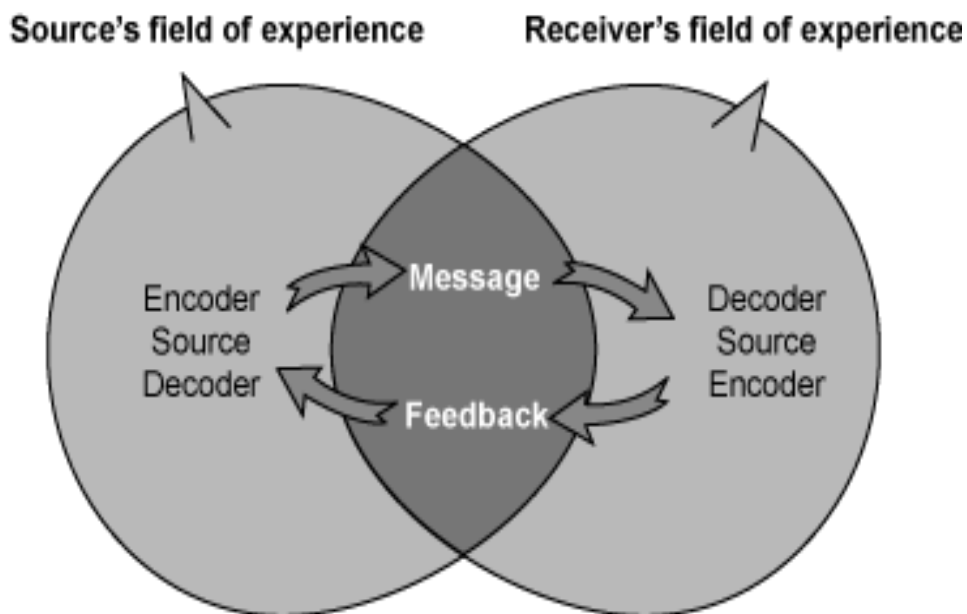


Figure 2.2: Interaction model of communication (Wood 2009)

(c) Transactional model of communication

The transactional model shows that the elements in communication are interdependent, each person in the communication act is both a speaker and a listener, and can be simultaneously sending and receiving messages. Wood (2009) purports that “*Transactional*” means that communication is an on-going and continuously changing process. In any transactional process, each element exists in relation to all the other elements. There is this interdependence where there

can be no source without a receiver and no message without a source. Each person in the communication process reacts depending on factors such as their background, prior experiences, attitudes, cultural beliefs and self-esteem.

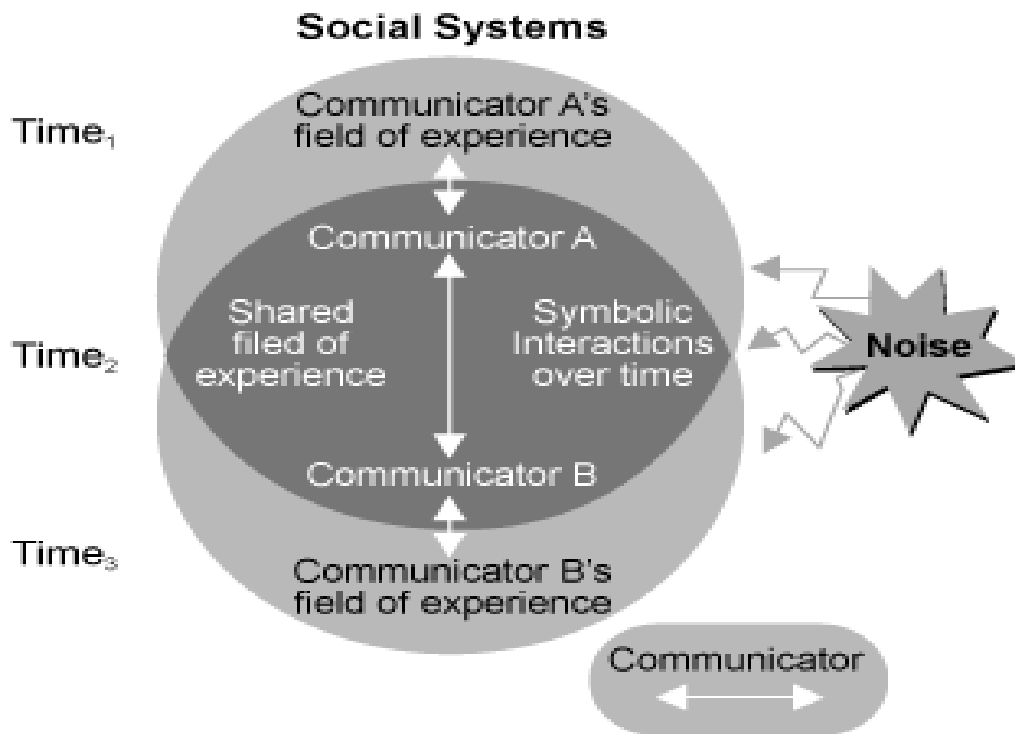


Figure 2.3: Transactional model of communication (Wood 2009)

Waltman (sa) indicates that organisational communication can take a one-way process, whereby communication practice and communication channels used do not make a provision for feedback or interaction. These range from top-down messages normally give instructions and feedback on staff performance or decisions taken, to provide a range of information related to statutory issues (such as policies, by-laws and operational procedures) or strategic issues (such as goals and objectives, vision and mission) of the organisation. According to Antonis (2005), a two-way communication process is through various forms and channels such as group meetings, one-on-one meetings, telephone and email. A two-way communication approach is seen as interaction between humans, whereby meaning is created and associations are formulated in order to share



that meaning, thus establishing mutual working relationships based on honest and cohesive principles of human relations (Barker & Angelopulo 2006:14). Wilkins (2010) asserts that the way communication messages are distributed and the way target audiences receive and respond to these messages is critical to the success of any organisation, because organisational communication is highly relevant to the overall performance and strategic outcomes of the organisation.

### 2.3.2 Functions of communication

#### a) Informative function

The informative function of communication concerns itself with the constant provision of information to the stakeholders of an organisation, to ensure that the organisation functions efficiently. Employees in an organisation require enormous amount of information to operate efficiently and effectively. Managers also need to be provided with accurate and well-organised information to reach decisions and to resolve any conflict. The receiving or giving of information underlines all communication functions, either directly or indirectly.

#### b) Integrative function

Antonis (2005) purport that integrative communication function is that which operates to give the organisation unity and cohesion; to define objectives and tasks for the purpose of facilitating the entry and smooth absorption of appropriate participants, to coordinate the activities and schedules of various departments within an organisation, and to eliminate redundancy and wasted effort.

#### c) Regulative function

According to Antonis (2005), the regulatory function of communication focuses on controlling organisational activities to ensure an efficient and effective operation of the organisation, and to provide guidelines related to policy, rules and instructions. It is dependent on management control and information transmission because regulative communication messages are work-oriented, and concentrate on tasks that are necessary to accomplish a particular job. Therefore, the employees should have an understanding of what is expected from them and what restrictions are placed on their behaviour.

#### d) Persuasive function

The persuasive function of communication is concerned with influencing the internal members of the organisation in order to gain their co-operation and compliance, in a voluntary manner, for them to support and commit to the goals and objectives of the organisation. Antonis (2005) indicates that organisational managers must regulate through persuasion, which is used at all levels in the organisation. A successful manager realises that voluntary compliance by employees provides greater commitment than control and command, or appeals to authority.

#### 2.3.3 Levels of organisational communication

Fielding (2006:25) states that communication is not simply a matter of face-to-face exchange of information; in an organisation, stakeholders participate in a number of different levels of communication, briefly outlined below:

##### a) Organisational communication

Organisational communication involves communication within an organisation, it is particularly concerned with the effects of managerial styles, leadership and motivation on communication and it covers many types of verbal and written communication (Fielding 2006:25).

##### b) Intrapersonal communication

Intrapersonal communication is the type of communication that takes place within a single person by means of processing information to clarify an idea or analyse a situation. Antonis (2005) defines intrapersonal communication as the most basic level, which enables a person to send and receive messages, thus communicating at interpersonal and group levels. This, therefore, contributes to an establishment and maintenance of sound working relationships within an organisation.

c) Mass communication

Fielding (2006:25) states that mass communication involves communication with large audiences, frequent reproduction of messages and rapid distribution of messages, however feedback is most delayed and audiences are the most difficult to define.

d) Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication is the exchange of information between two individuals, and it involves both verbal and non-verbal messages. According to Antonis (2005) an organisation utilises the intrapersonal level to facilitate its interpersonal communication, as both members in a communication process have to create or encode and interpret or decode messages for mutual understanding. In concurrence, Fielding (2006:25) indicates that a great deal of communication in an organisation is interpersonal, as it calls for good control of language, good listening, tolerance as well as sensitivity to nonverbal communication.

e) Small group

Fielding (2006:25) purports that small group communication covers all communication in committees and formal meetings. These groups may be involved in a range of activities, from simply chatting to articulation of organisational policies. Therefore, small group communication enables a group of members to work together, relying on mutual relationships that have been built through interpersonal communication. Through small group communication, all members are encouraged to communicate, thus establishing a positive atmosphere and mutual relations.

f) Public communication

Public communication refers to public speaking where the speaker is concerned with effective analysis of the audience's needs, appearance, good preparation, an effective style of delivery, effective non-verbal communication and the audiences' response to the speech (Fielding 2006:26).

#### 2.3.4 Flows of communication messages

The flow of communication indicates the direction that an organisation takes to reach the intended target recipients. These directions represent the organisation's overall approach to intra- and inter-organisational communication.

##### a) Downward communication

Fielding (2006:13) defines downward communication as the flow of organisational communication messages from the superiors to the subordinates, mostly in relation with;

- Information about the mission, policies, goals and procedures of the organisation,
- Feedback to subordinates on their performance and procedures to be followed ,
- Giving instruction for specific tasks,
- Information describing employees relationship with the organisation, and
- Feedback on the performance of employees and/ or departments as well as the progress on tasks.

Organisational superiors make extensive use of downward communication to disseminate information through formal channels of communication, such as oral or written instruction, manuals, memoranda, report, notice, in-house newsletter or magazines. Waltman (sa) expands Fielding's (2006:14) definition by asserting that, downward communication is regarded as more than just passing information from the top to the bottom, as it may involve effectively managing the tone of the message; thus showing skills in delegation to ensure the job is done efficiently by the right person. In upward communication, the tone is more crucial as are timing, strategy and audience adaptation. Therefore, neither in downward nor upward communication can a manager operate on automatic as the messages are sent out.

##### b) Upward communication

Meade (2010) and Wilkins (2010) describe the upward flow of communication as communication that facilitates the provision of feedback about issues which concern project status reports, staff suggestions and grievances from the subordinates to the manager. It forms a critical component

for building and maintaining positive intra-organisational communication, and a healthy organisational climate. Fielding (2006:14) also concurs that upward communication involve communication from the lowest positions in the organisation to the highest position, usually for such purposes as asking questions, reporting about individual problems and performance, report on what needs to be done and how to do it, memoranda about practical results of policies and practices, as well as messages in suggestion boxes about specific staff problems. Organisational managers need to encourage a two-way flow of information through channels such as proposals, memoranda, and oral or written reports.

#### c) Horizontal communication

Horizontal communication is also known as lateral or sideways flow of communication between organisational departments or managers of equal ranks, with an intention to report on the activities of departments, to keep other departments informed, and to share or exchange information on policies and progress, so that all members are able to make informed decisions. The communication messages in this level are mostly related to problem-solving, coordination, conflict resolution and rumours. The channel used in this level of communication is usually face-to-face, through discussions and oral or written reports. According to Wilkins (2010) horizontal flow provides a holistic view of operations and enables interactions among various levels and components of the organisation, thereby enhancing organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

#### 2.3.5 Networks of communication

The systems for planning, quality control and information management are crucial to the performance of the organisation in its primary activities. The infrastructure consists of organisation's structures and routines, which sustain its culture. According to Maenetja (2009:30), these are the systematic and structural aspects that focus on the actual communication-related infrastructure, such as the communication channels used, including issues such as media richness, the levels at which communication takes place, the directions in which communication flows, as well as the communication networks existing in the organisation.

Communication messages within organisations are transmitted and exchanged through formal and informal communication networks, which define the channels by which organisational information flows. These networks are discussed by Barker and Angelopulo (2006:74) as patterns through which communication messages flow from the communicator to the receiver. Antonis (2005) contends that the formal communication networks are depicted by the organisational structural chart, meaning the act of organising the organisation in terms of decision-making power, reporting lines and allocation of work creates networks through which information flows. As a result, informal communication networks emerge from the interpersonal relationships that develop among members of the same organisation. Communication networks form an integral part of the infrastructure of the organisation. Without networks, routine organisational activities such as general management, training and good interpersonal relations, would not succeed. The messages carried in networks range from data, information, knowledge, and any other form that can move from one network point to another.

Hence, Barker and Angelopulo (2006:81) highlight the characteristics of communication networks, which organisations should consider as having an impact on the success of organisational communication process in reaching goals and objectives, as follows:

- The size of the communication network refers to the links used to transmit messages from sender to receiver.
- The more links used the greater the chances of the message distortion, meanwhile the lesser the links the higher the chances for improved communication.
- Formality of networks - both formal and informal communication networks are present in an organisation. Formal networks are more task-oriented and done by the book, whereas informal networks are less task-oriented and work-related.
- Another important characteristic of communication networks is their openness. Some communication networks are too open and externally-oriented while others are closed and internally-oriented, as some of the information in the organisation is confidential and cannot be disclosed to the public.

Therefore, the chain, y, wheel, circle, and the all-channel are the five network formats for organisational communication.

a) Chain network

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:77) indicate that the chain network takes a formal communication system, and is a one-way downward communication process that moves through various organisational levels to reach the recipients of the communication message, either way. Antonis (2005) adds that, in chain network, communication messages are passed down through clear channels and direct commands; making the communication process task-oriented and fast.

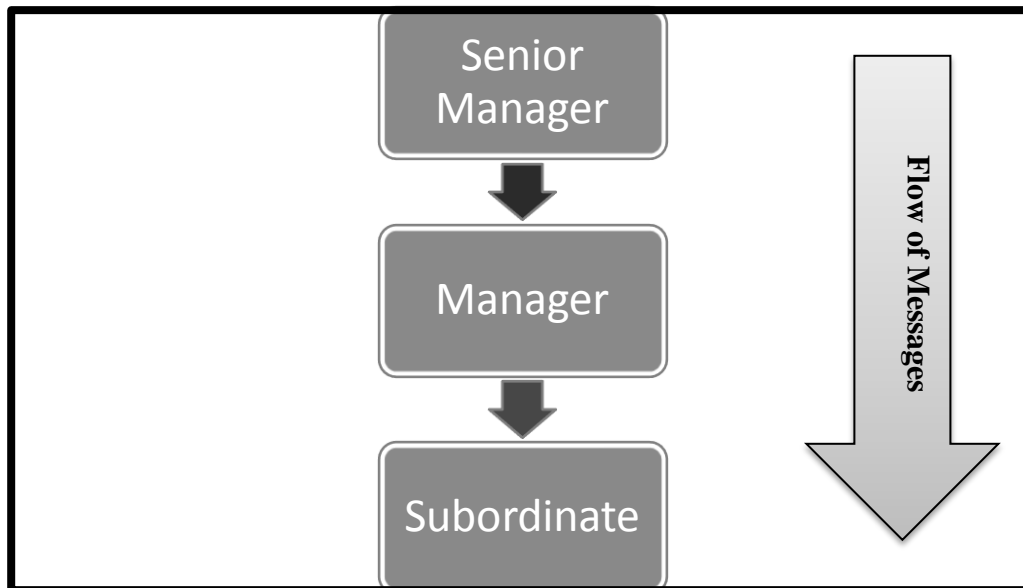


Figure 2.4: Chain communication network (Fielding 2006)

b) Y network

According to Van der Walt (2006), the Y network is a formal, two-way communication process, whereby, a manager gives an instruction to a subordinate, and the subordinate will pass on the message to his own subordinate and receive feedback. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:78) observe that this network resembles the chain network in some way. For example, communication between five people would enable three to communicate with one person only and the fifth

person, who does not have access to the leader, has to use another member as a go between. The information carried through this network is also task-oriented, with clear commands and accurate information concerning specific tasks.

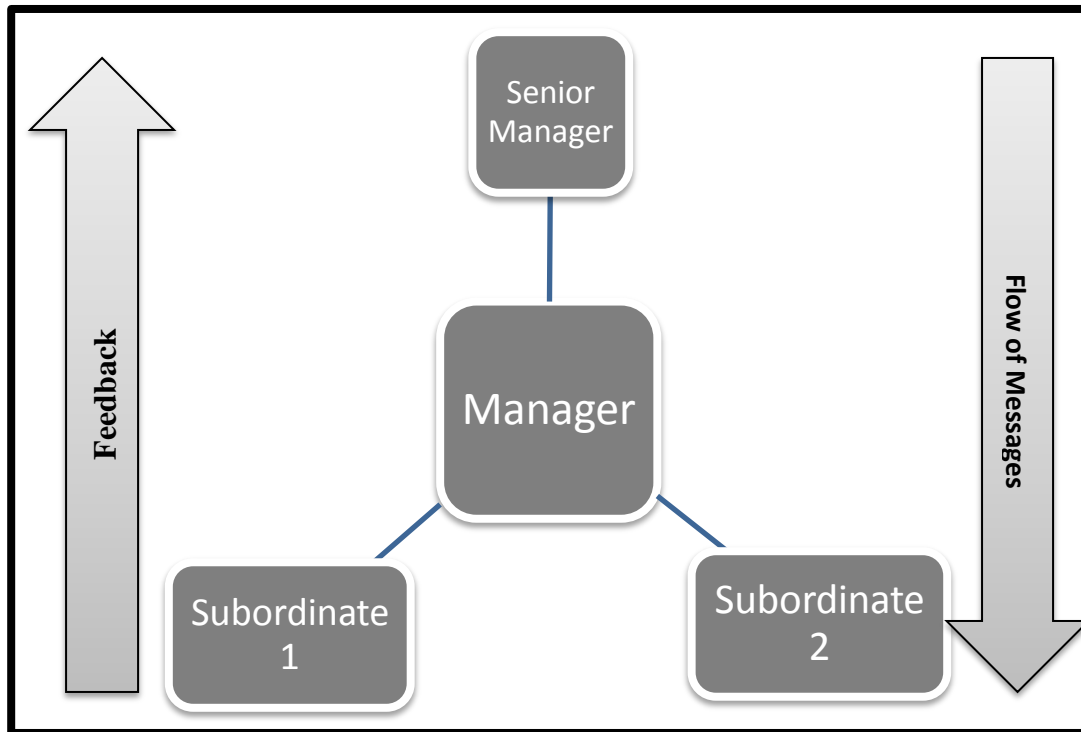


Figure 2.5: Y communication network (Fielding 2006)

c) Wheel network

Antonis (2005) indicates that the wheel communication network is conducted via a central person who links different individuals in an organisation. The central person could be the leader or any other person, as long as they are in charge of issuing orders and regulating the flow of communication. Van der Walt (2006) further notes that this network also occurs in the formal communication system and is characterised with fast communication messages that are task-oriented, accurate, consistent and effective in solving problems.



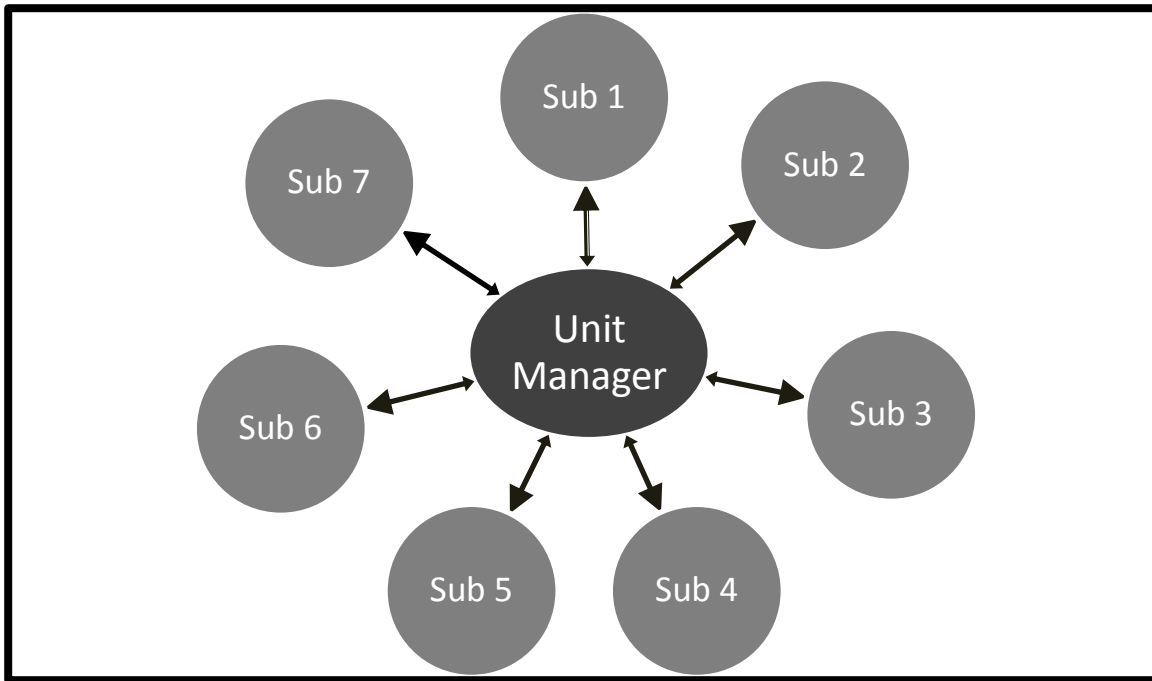


Figure 2.6: Wheel communication network (Fielding 2006)

d) Circle network

The circle network is the fourth communication network, which occurs in an informal communication system. According to Barker and Angelopulo (2006:77), in this network, interaction is critical with communication lines open to all levels of the organisation. The communication process is more employee-oriented; this implies that there is employee participation in decision-making and problem-solving.

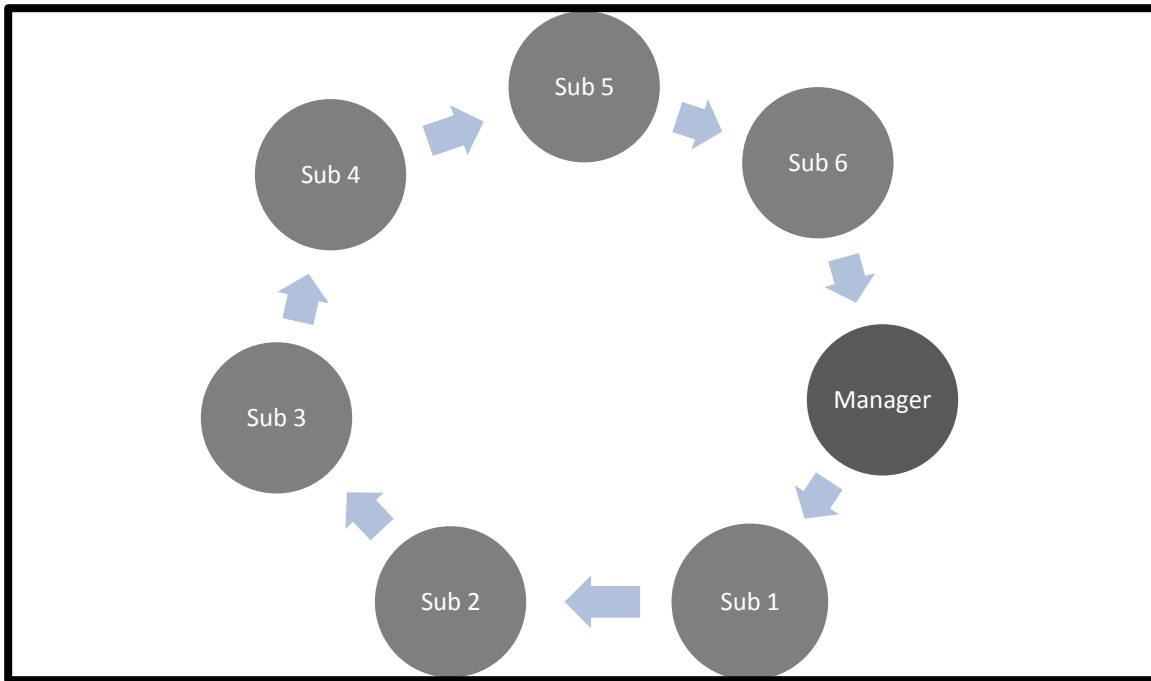


Figure 2.7: Circle communication network (Fielding 2006)

e) All-channel network

The all-channel network is the last communication network, which occurs within the informal communication system. In this network, the lines of communication are open to all individuals. There is free-flow of information with no restriction on members. Van der Walt (2006) observes that within the all-channel network, communication is fast with accurate and clear messages. The ability of members to communicate freely means that all members within an organisation are able to participate in making of decisions and solving problems.

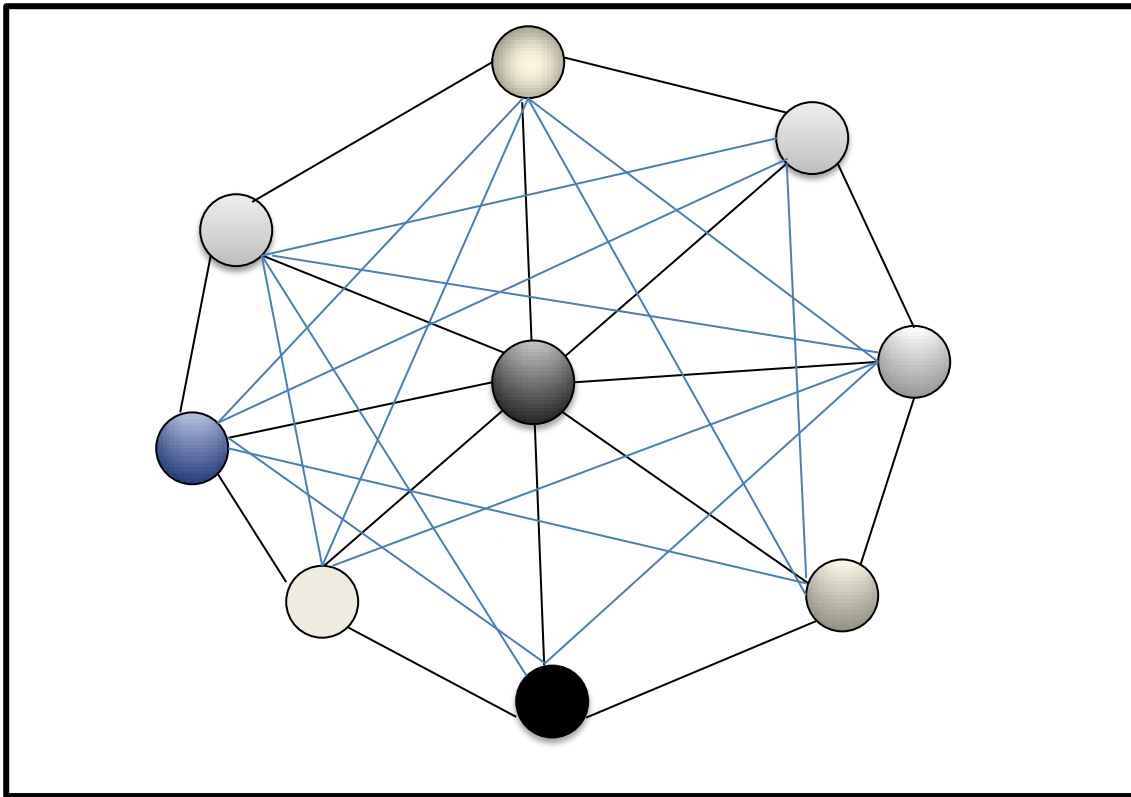


Figure2.8: All-channel communication network (Fielding 2006)

Furthermore, communication networks have a direct influence on the accuracy of communication messages, task performance and satisfaction of group members. Therefore, it becomes crucial for communicators to utilise the relevant communication network at all times, whether in formal or informal communication. According to Waltman (sa) informal communication arises from interpersonal relationships, where the exchange of information is usually unofficial and verbal. On the other hand, formal communication refers to meetings, training programmes, interviews, including any other official transmission of work-related messages, in an oral, written, or non-verbal format.

### 2.3.6 Perspectives of communication

A perspective is a reflection of an assumption that develops a situation. Organisational communication process relates to a specific perspective of communication (Neher 1997:25).

There are three perspectives of communication that an organisation may relate to, depending on the nature and culture of the organisation. The three perspectives of communication are functionalist, interpretivist and critical perspective. Each of the perspective is discussed in detail below.

a) Functionalist perspective

A functionalist perspective of communication is concerned with the administration and control of an organisation. It is mainly focused on the functions, roles and positions in an organisation, and maintains that these play a crucial role in shaping and determining the communication actions and operational activities in the organisation. The functionalist perspective relates to the mechanistic view of communication in an organisation which Van der Walt (2006:357) believes it implies that everything can be reduced to its essential parts, which can be understood and accurately measured. Following this ideal, all events resulting from the interaction of parts can be explained and predicted. Hence, the assumption exists that every aspect of the communication process under investigation can be isolated from all irrelevant phenomena and viewed and measured as if in a closed system. It is further argued that, in this perspective, the patterns of causality can be identified, and future predictions accurately made (Barker & Angelopulo 2006:5).

According to Neher (1997:25) a functionalist organisation is perceived as an entity or a system of interrelated parts acting together, while different communication functions are considered as variables that shape and determine the operations of the organisation. In such an arrangement, the different parts of an organisation, though with different duties, end up working together in controlled activities towards a single goal and same objectives. In concurrence, Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2002:136) maintain that the main aim of the functionalist perspective is to find variables that explain how an organisation works, in order to them with an intention of improving organisational performance.

Furthermore, the transmissional view of communication relates to the mechanistic or functionalist perspective where Angelopulo and Schoonraad (2006:6) explain communication as

a two-way process whereby a message is transmitted through a signal from the source to the receiving destination and feedback is transmitted in a reverse order. Hence, Littlejohn (1996:106) indicates that the transmissional view of communication is the view that considers basic elements involved in communication, such as the communicator who creates and sends the message, the message itself, the channel of communication that carries the message and the recipient. The functionalist perspective is also concerned with issues around the flow of information, networks and channels of communication.

Neher (1997:26) and Van der Walt (2006:357) state that functionalists emphasise the functions of different kinds of communication messages and behaviours, in terms of the task and maintenance functions they fulfil, which serve to carry on the work of the organisation. This is concerned with ensuring increasing and improving organisational efficiency and consequent productivity.

b) Interpretivist perspective

According to Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2002:136) the interpretive perspective to communication is overly idealistic in its endeavour to understand and widen the knowledge within the subjective realm of the interpreter. The main purpose of the interpretivist approach is to understand and interpret employee experiences, and how that affects the organisations. The interpretivist perspective differs from the functionalist perspective in a sense that it seeks to understand and interpret the lives of people and their experiences. This perspective of communication is related to an interactional view of communication explained by Angelopulo and Schoonraad (cited in Barker & Angelopulo 2006:8) as a social phenomenon, which cannot be analysed as a sum of constituent parts like in the mechanistic view. In the interpretivist perspective, the actions, experiences and feelings of individuals are taken into consideration rather than to merely focus on improving productivity. This is because the interpretivist perspective stresses that it is the people who exist and act to make the success or failure of an organisation. Hence, their experiences and knowledge are crucial for interpretation and understanding.

Concurring to that, Antonis (2005:89) asserts that the interpretivist perspective is focused on understanding and explaining human behaviour, and, typically, would concentrate on understanding people's experiences rather than productivity. It is therefore directed at gaining an insight into the intra-organisational communication from the employee's perspective. This argument means that the interpretivist perspective involves open communication and interactions because, in order to understand the experiences of employees, one would be compelled to communicate with them and study their communication messages. The interest of the interpretivist perspective is in the way employees act towards, respond to, and influence one another in society. Hence meaning is negotiated as communication produces new perspectives, expectations and boundaries used to assure continual future interactions.

#### c) Critical perspective

The critical perspective of organisational communication is concerned with issues relating to power, dominance and control. Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2005:136) maintain that critical theory argues that social discourses, such as corporate culture, are capable of producing a one-dimensional society where thoughts and existing alternatives are reduced to a unilinear dimension. Littlejohn (1996:17) observes that most critical theories are concerned with conflicts of interests and the ways in which communication perpetuates domination of one group over another in society. This argument implies that critical theorists look at the power structure of an organisation and try to understand the ways in which such power structure maintains itself. This differs from either the functionalist or interpretivist perspectives, which operates according to rules determining the administration and control, and seeks to understand the experiences of employees within the organisation, respectively.

Antonis (2005:91) notes that the issues and principles embodied in the critical perspective raise questions with regards to the organisation's purpose of existence, and demand that critical theories confront the issues of whether employees can have a democratic organisation community if the organisation that they work for is not managed by democratic principles. In concurrence, Neher (1997:27) and Van der Walt (2006:361) state that organisational communication should be studied in terms of hidden or implicit exercises of power and domination, since when

communication is inhibited or withheld the message becomes distorted. In a critical perspective, organisations are sites of hierarchy, dominance and power. Members of an organisation have varying degrees of power and status. As such, they have varying degrees of control over message-creation and message-meaning. For instance, powerful members can get others to accept their views and values on organisational goals, objectives and strategies.

In concurrence, Littlejohn (1996:226) indicates that the intention of the critical perspective is to reveal the constant conflicts between members within an organisation, the manner in which competing interests clash, and how these clashes are resolved in favour of a particular group that has power over others. Powerful members can establish an organisational culture that is more favourable to them and less favourable to the less powerful. In this case, the less powerful members accept the views and values of the powerful without question.

Organisational members exhibit choice in their response towards a communication situation, which is similar to employees of an organisation with an interpretivist approach whose behaviour can be determined by external influences. The communication processes are unrestricted, which results to new meaning and events being established. Van der Walt (206:363) points to the fact that the critical perspective does not interpret a situation within an existing context, it allows the situation to enter a new context form where interpretation can take place or be negotiated. As a result, it refrains from controlling situational variables by allowing a situation to unfold undistorted. This picture differs from the interpretivist perspective, which aims to redefine a situation by associating it to a familiar context.

### 2.3.7 Traditions of communication

In this section the concept of organisational communication tradition is explored and specific attention given to the positional tradition, the relational tradition and the cultural tradition. The traditions of communication are linked to the perspectives of communication and communication process within an organisation. An organisation would have a specific process, in which communication is conducted, and that process is based on a perspective that organisational members have on organisational communication and its role in an organisation. According to

Angelopulo and Schoonraad (2006:5), the approaches that organisations may have towards organisational communication can be divided into two streams, the first being the stream which defines communication as a mechanistic phenomenon, identifying some important components and properties of communication. The second being the stream that defines communication as a social, interactive and transactional phenomenon, that gives a more realistic picture of communication and its role in people's social existence. Respectively, the traditions of communication related to the perspectives of communication represent an approach and the process that organisations use to communicate.

Van Der Walt (2006:344) and Littlejohn (1996:307) maintain that organisational communication should be described from a network of theoretical perspectives that integrates the traditions of communication in relation to the process of communication in an organisation. There are three traditions of communication identified; positional, relational and the cultural tradition. Each tradition of communication is discussed in-depth, including the communication process to which the tradition relates, as well as the relevant networks of communication. According to Barker (2006:74), the communication networks are linked channels of communication by which information flows between organisational members. The networks of communication are patterns or lines of contact that are specifically created to transmit communication messages. The transmission of these messages can be downward, upward or horizontal, while the communication process can be formal or informal and one-way or two-way communication process.

Furthermore, the five networks of communication -chain, y, wheel, circle, and all-channel - are related to the traditions of communication depending on the organisational communication process.

a) Positional tradition

The positional tradition is the tradition of communication that concerns itself with formal structures and roles within the organisation. The structure of an organisation is regarded extremely important; members within an organisation, with a positional tradition, regard highly



of positions and power as these enable those superior to influence their subordinates and overcome any resistance. In such an organisation, there are sets of positions with strict reporting lines between senior employees, who serve as managers and supervisors, and junior employees who are mainly subordinates, all having certain functions and roles. According to Littlejohn (1996:307) the positional tradition reflects the organisation as a system of purposeful and interpersonal activities designed to coordinate tasks through the use of formal networks of communication to achieve the goals and objectives of managers, which are related to power and control. Therefore, the organisational members who hold senior and influential positions have more power over the organisation and/or the members who hold less influential and powerful positions.

This indicates that, organisational roles are associated with positions which specify designated behaviours and obligatory relations incumbent on those that assume the positions. According to Monge (2002:448), the positions and attached roles constitute the relatively stable and enduring structure of an organisation independent of people who fulfil the roles. The communication process within an organisation with a positional tradition, is formal, one-way and, mostly, downward. The superiors regard communication as a means to pass on instructions, rules and regulations. Van Der Walt (2006:356) maintains that the positional tradition strongly relates to a functionalist perspective, which argues in the similar vein that the roles and positions in the organisation shape and determine the communication acts and operational activities in the organisation. This tradition gives an understanding that the positions and roles in the structure of the organisation determine who communicates with whom and what communication networks are suitable for this formal process. Monge (2002:448) purports that the positional tradition of communication argues that people maintain attitudes, values and beliefs consistent with their organisational positions irrespective of the amount of communication that they have with others in their communication networks.

In the positional tradition, communication is perceived by the powerful members as a rational means to achieve various goals, objectives and desired outcomes, and as such, is restricted to formal communication process related to the chain, y and wheel networks of communication

which have similar objectives. Antonis (2005:55) and Monge (2002:440) agree that the communication networks are created by formal and informal patterns of communication, which organisation members engage in and thereby create the communication relationship between any organisational members.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:77), Antonis (2005:59) and Van Der Walt (2006:345) maintain that the chain network occurs within the formal communication system. Communication in this network is one-way directional and task-oriented. This means that communication takes place when a superior gives instructions to subordinates, and then the message can be passed on downward from one level to the next. Barker (2006:77) emphasises that communication in this case is downward and one-way, moving via several levels in the organisation to different receivers. Communicated information is also task-oriented and extremely accurate because the channels of communication used are clear and the commands are direct. In addition, Antonis (2005:59) purports that the chain communication network facilitates an average speed of information dissemination with an average level of accuracy, and morale in such a network is generally of an average level. Communication in the chain communication network is not always successful as messages are transmitted through various hierarchies and relay individuals who serve as gatekeepers of information entailed in the message (Van der Walt 2006:346). The second communication network, that is similar to the chain communication network and associated with the positional tradition, is the y-communication network.

The y-communication network is also part of a formal communication system whereby communication takes place through the bridge which connects two groups being part of both. Similarly to the chain communication network, information is task-oriented and very accurate; communication messages are one-way and downward with clear commands and direct instructions. Antonis (2005:60) maintains that the speed of communication dissemination is average, with high level of information accuracy and relatively very less distortion due to fewer levels through which the message is transmitted. Concurring to that, Van der Walt (2006:347) asserts that the y-communication network has a rather negative impact on employee morale and job satisfaction in that the needs of employees are not taken into consideration since the superiors

use their power and control to overcome resistance from employees. Another network of communication, that is related to the chain and y-communication networks and associated with the positional tradition of communication, is the wheel communication network.

As is the case in the chain and y-communication networks, the wheel communication network occurs in the formal communication system. This network is regarded a very organised, as its communication takes place through a central person. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:78) and Van der Walt (2006:348) agree that the wheel communication network makes coordination of actions, though creative, difficult because no pair of individuals can exchange messages except through the central figure. In addition to that, Antonis (2005:60) points out that the flow of communication in this network is very fast and the information being shared has high level of accuracy and the consistency of the message is very good. Also in this communication network, the leadership factor is high. However, Barker & Angelopulo (2006:79) argues that though the information is direct and commands are clear, and although the central person receives all and sends back all information, the content of the message can still be distorted and the morale of members in this network is low because communication is one-way and downward.

#### b) Relational tradition

The relational tradition is the second tradition of communication that deals with natural ways in which relationships develop through organisational communication and in which networks emerge from those relationships. Littlejohn (1996:314) indicates that the relational tradition views the organisation as a living changing system, constantly shaped and explained by the interactions among members. This tradition concerns itself with the processes of the organisation rather than the structure, which is accomplished through interactions between individuals. The relational tradition is associated with the interpretive perspective of organisational communication, which is perceived to exist as human interaction or human transaction. Angelopulo and Schoonraad (cited in Barker & Angelopulo 2006:9) maintain that communication is regarded as the process through which meaning is shared and associations are created in the formation of groups and cultures, and by which interpersonal transaction, social position, action, status and power are manifested, changed, and in some cases, diminished. For

Monge (2002:448) the relational tradition is primary focused on the direct communication that establishes and maintains communication linkages, which create an emergent communication structure that connects different people and groups in the organisation regardless of their formal positions and the powerful status.

The relational tradition is more concerned with the informal lines of communication and how employees accomplish objectives together as a team. According to Van der Walt (2006:350) and Littlejohn (1996:315), communication in the relational tradition is understood as a basis for human organisation, and it provides a foundation for understanding how people organise; which is proper than a structural organisation, essentially accomplished through a continuing process of communication, actions and reactions. The communication process in a relational tradition is informal and relates to informal communication patterns. Communication is interactive between individuals involved in a communication process; the transaction of messages between them leads to a development of relationships among them, which is related to the transactional view of communication that conducts two-way communication and makes use of different channels of communication.

This transactional view enables communicators to perform, understand and prepare for dynamic communication, and feedback is important to confirm receipt interpretation and understanding of messages. Angelopulo and Schoonraad (cited in Barker & Angelopulo 2006:9) purports that the core components of an organisation and its structure are communicating, interacting and transacting individuals who actively shape their own behaviour through the associations they make based on their experiences. This indicates that the relational tradition aims to explain communication by typically viewing the nature of communication and its role and objectives in the relationship that develop within the organisation.

The relational tradition is less concerned with the structure of the organisation and more with the processes within the organisation; this is where interpersonal relationships develop between organisational members because communication is free and informal. Monge (2002:448) indicates that this tradition emphasises the dynamic, constantly changing, enacted nature of

structure that is created by continuous patterns of person-to-person communication flow. The circle and all-channel communication networks are mostly associated with the relational tradition.

Antonis (2005:61), Barker and Angelopulo (2006:79) and Van der Walt (2006:350) all maintain that the circle communication network occurs within the informal communication system, where every member has an equal opportunity to communicate with another person, horizontally, between members at the same level, and communication is restricted to members communicating to those next to them only. A two-way communication process is applicable in the circle communication network, and employees can participate in the decision-making and problem-solving processes due to these interactions. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:80) asserts that the communication in the circle communication network is more employee-oriented than task-oriented; this is due to the fact that the input and opinions from employees is valued in a relational tradition. According to Van der Walt (2006:351), each member in a communication process has to communicate any idea or opinion to only two other members who have to distribute the information to two more members, and the sequence continues. This leads to communication being slow and less accurate because information is passed on from one group to another, which might lead to a distortion of messages. However, the morale and satisfaction of employees is higher due to an opportunity to participate.

Another communication network that is associated with the relational tradition is the all-channel communication network, and it shares some similarities with the circle communication network.

Antonis (2005:61), Barker and Angelopulo (2006:79) and Van der Walt (2006:350) observe that the all-channel communication network occurs in the informal communication system. There are no communication restrictions placed on members; members are able to pass on information to all others directly, and in return all members formulate their own answers in a problem-solving situation. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:79) points out that the all-channel communication network maximises opportunities for feedback and, therefore, results in greater accuracy of messages. Van der Walt (2006:352) argues that the all-channel network could delay decision-

making and simple task completions since each member has to provide input on information received and required. However, this network encourages high employee morale and satisfaction though it lacks leadership and control.

c) Cultural tradition

The cultural tradition is the third and final tradition of communication, concerned with sharing of symbols and meaning. The cultural tradition is defined by Monge (2002:449) as a tradition that examines symbols, meanings, and interpretations of messages transmitted through informal communication networks. In addition, Littlejohn (1996:320) purports that this tradition also examines ways in which people use these symbols and meanings to produce and reproduce their sets of understanding according to their beliefs and values. The cultural tradition attributes to the relational tradition in its association with informal and decentralised communication networks. According to Van der Walt (2006:353), this tradition is created by members in stories, rituals and task-work, and the real structure emerges from the informal actions of the organisational members in their daily work.

The communication process in this tradition is two-way and informal. Communication takes place with an intention to share symbols and meaning, as these are crucial variables of communication. Organisational members at all levels have access to each and communication messages are passed on to all members without any restrictions. Reference can further be made to a critical perspective of communication, which maintains that pure communication can be obtained in open discussion and free flow of information (Van der Walt 2006:361). The cultural tradition shares a similarity with the relational tradition in that it occurs within the informal communication system, gives preference to the unrestricted communication networks such as the circle and all-channel communication networks, and its communication is interactional.

Communication in the cultural tradition is informal and two-way. This tradition gives preference to communication networks that occur within an informal communication system, especially the all-channel network. For Van der Walt (2006:354) the cultural tradition gives preference to the all-channel communication network, as it allows for continuous, open and free communication

and emphasises shared symbols and meaning as important variables of communication. The all-channel network is also preferable for its unrestricted communication. Antonis (2005:61) asserts that the all-channel network is the least structured communication network, where messages flow freely between members in the network.

The above discussion of the traditions of communication indicates that communication can take place in different forms within the same organisation, as well as in different organisations. The positional tradition is concerned with carrying out of tasks and getting the job done, communication is merely perceived as a means to give instructions about the task and to report back. Hence, communication is formal, direct, downward, and task-oriented, and takes place through the chain, y and wheel communication networks.

Different from the positional tradition, the relational tradition is associated with interactions and relationships that develop between members within an organisation, to an extent that the associations are formulated into groups. As such, in this tradition, unions representing employees are seen playing a crucial role in connecting employees with their leaders within the municipality. In the relational tradition, communication is two-way, informal and employee-oriented and takes place through the circle and all-channel communication networks. The emphasis is on employees as individuals, their needs, thoughts, inputs and opinions matter in this tradition.

The cultural tradition is the third tradition of communication that focuses on symbols and meaning, and how organisational members produce understanding. In this tradition, there are no communication restrictions and the all-channel network is the most preferred type of communication. The cultural tradition is likely to bring confusion as it also looks at the structure, the tasks and work of an organisation, which is closely associated with the positional tradition; while the informal, open and non-restricted communication is also the case of the relational tradition. The criticism on this tradition is that it lacks leadership and may therefore not be as effective and recognised in an organisation.

## **2.4 Intra-organisational communication**

This section addresses one of the most important focus areas of organisational communication - communication within the organisation; intra-organisational communication is conceptualised and specific views of intra-organisational communication are explored.

Meade (2010) states that internal communication encompasses both overt communication, such as meetings, e-mails and newsletters as well casual forms of communication, such as office pleasantries and gossip, collectively these forms of communication define an organisation's internal communication culture. The relationship between communication and culture involves all aspects of communication, such as language, verbal and non-verbal communication, customs, perceived values as well as people's interpretation of space and time. According to Wood (1999) there are a number of common ways in which news within the organisation can be communicated down the line:

- Through personal communication between the manager and the staff;
- Through written communication such as memos; circulars; and
- Through mass methods such as in-house newsletters or notice boards.

Furthermore, definitions of internal communication vary greatly; the following common elements according to Goldhaber (1993) can be detected in many of the wide variety of viewpoints, which define internal communication;

- Internal communication involves messages, their flow, purpose, direction, and media;
- Internal communication involves people, their attitudes, feelings, relationships, and skills; and
- Internal communication occurs within a complex open system that is influenced by and influences its environment.

In concurrence, the handbook of government communications (2010) maintains that the following channels of communication are suitable for communication within organisations with a large number of employees such as government institutions, notice boards; internet; internal newsletter; meetings; briefings; intranets; plasma screens; CD-ROMs and other promotional



material. The use of online internal communication, which is defined as “online communication by an organisation using computer and specific internet resources to employ online actions to attain specific actions” is also on the rise in both public and private sector organisations as they attempt to keep pace with the rapid technological changes in addition to the change in the way these organisations communicate with their employees (Du Plessis 2005:3).

Furthermore, Barker and Angelopulo (2006:74) define intra-organisational communication as involving an understanding of the influence that communication has within an organisational context. They argue that, in addition, intra-organisational communication is a transactional and symbolic process whereby messages are exchanged and interpreted to establish and maintain mutual understanding between parties. However, organisations have differing approaches to communication depending on their perception and culture. Those approaches can be related to the viewpoints of communication namely; transmissional, psychological, interactional and transactional. The viewpoints of communication address the process of communication that takes place between communicator and recipient with an intention of getting a message across.

In addition, Antonis (2005) maintains that the context of intra-organisational communication indicates a data gathering function for members, as it provides them with relevant information to help them understand organisational activities in order to accomplish organisational change and goal. In concurrence, Goldhaber (1993:17) maintains that intra-organisational communication occurs within a complex open system, which is influenced by and influences its environment. Intra-organisational communication involves messages and their flow, purpose, direction and media or channels. It further involves people and their attitudes, feelings, relationships and skills. The importance of intra-organisational communication cannot be underestimated. As evidence of its importance and contribution, intra-organisational communication has often been referred to by various authors as “the lifeblood of the organisation”, “the glue that binds the organisation together”, “the oil that smoothens the organisation’s functions”, “the thread that ties the system together”, “the force that pervades the organisation”, “the binding agent that cements all relationships”, or “the organisational embalming fluid” (Goldhaber 1993:5)

Therefore, the organisation's management should formulate and implement an internal communication strategy which is technologically proactive in order to develop more direct, motivated, informed, committed and highly efficient workforce (Waititu 2015). The way an organisation conducts its internal communication process is based on the way it perceives internal communication. There are four theoretical views of communication. These are transmissional, psychological, interactional and transactional (University of South Africa, 2008:23). Van der Walt (2006) maintains that a good theory is one that directs a person's attention to a phenomenon that needs to be observed in order to meaningfully interpret the observation. How a person perceives communication determines the element of communication they see as important. The four theoretical views of communication are discussed in the next section.

#### 2.4.1 Transmissional view

According to Littlejohn (1996:106) the transmissional view of communication is the view that considers basic elements involved in communication, such as the communicator who creates and sends the message, the message itself, the channel of communication that carries the message and recipient of the communication message. Van der Walt (2006) indicates that in the transmissional view, the communicator is the active decision-maker who determines the meaning of the message and the destination is the passive target. Communication in this case is one-way. For example, in an organisation, a manager who wants to communicate a decision to staff members at once may make use one of the notice boards.

Furthermore, Vos (1994b:81) states that this theory of communication indicates the basic elements of communication within the context of an organisation. This implies that the organisation is using a one-way direction of communicating which does not recognise other elements of communication. Organisations using a transmissional view of communication are likely to be practising communication that is one-way, formal, and downward as reflected by the y and the wheel networks of communication. University of South (2008:23) assert that a transmissional view of communication is more apparent in organisations that have a functionalist perspective of communication. A functionalist perspective views an organisation as an entity in

which communication practices are considered as isolated and controllable variables that determine operations.

#### 2.4.2 Psychological view

According to Littlejohn (1996:106), the emphasis of a psychological view is on the individuals involved in communication rather than the channels or processes that they use to communicate and transmit messages. Van der Walt (2006) asserts that a psychological view of communication confirms the importance of open two-way communication by way of information communication networks. A circle network relates more to a psychological view of communication as all members have an equal chance of participating in the communication process, with an ability to resolve any conflict that may arise among them. This then creates mutual understanding and positive relationships. The psychological view is, therefore, related to an interpretivist perspective of communication, whereby interpersonal transaction, social position, action, status and power are manifested, changed, and in some cases, diminished (Barker and Angelopulo. 2005:8). The psychological view is, therefore, intended to gain an understanding of organisational communication through interactions.

#### 2.4.3 Interactional view

In the interactional view, communication is regarded as a process whereby meaning is created and shared between individuals in a form of a group or association or culture. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:9) and Littlejohn (1996) argue that interaction changes, manifests, maintains and establishes rules, interpersonal, transactions, actions, roles, norms, power and meanings with groups and cultures in an organisation. In this view, communication is two-way and participants can use any channel of communication regarded suitable for the message to be transmitted. The interactional view promotes interpersonal communication, the maintenance of mutual understanding, and good working relationships within an organisation.

In addition to that, when communication takes place in the interactional view, members involved in the communication process have an ability to take the role of another, that is, a communicator after encoding and sending the communication message becomes the recipient, and the recipient

after receiving and interpreting a communication message becomes the communicator with an intention of sending feedback (Barker & Angelopulo 2006:9). According to Van der Walt (2006), the circle network of communication relates well with the interactional view, as with the psychological view, because all members communicate equally in all directions but with limits, thus creating interpersonal relationships by engaging in discussions and resolving arising conflicts. The interactional view is also related to the interpretivist perspective, as it places emphasis on understanding human relations and human communication within an organisation. As a result, mutual working relationships are developed leading to greater productivity and achievement of organisation's goals and objectives.

#### 2.4.4 Transactional view

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:9) define transactional model of communication as an interactive approach to communication which can take various forms. This involves the transferring of information and meaning from one party to the other. According to Van der Walt (2006), transactional communication is whereby people involved in the communication process are mutually responsible for the outcome of the communication encounter as they transmit information, create meaning and elicit responses. The transactional view highlights that the creation of these meanings is negotiated between communicators and as relationships develop messages are continually passed between the communicators through the use of different communication channels. This enables a two-way communication. The transactional view enables communicators to perform, understand and prepare for dynamic communication. Similar to the interaction view of communication feedback is important as it completes the communication process. Transactional view is different from other views in that it is perceived from the context of a relationship between two participants who both involve themselves in negotiating the meaning. This means that the recipient does not wait for the communicator to finish encoding before they can decode. Instead they are simultaneously involved in encoding, decoding, sending and receiving the messages.

In addition, the process of negotiation developed within the transactional view leads to the creation of mutual and continuous relationships between the parties involved in the

communication process. Transactional view of communication is related to a critical perspective of communication which promotes employee involvement in the organisation's decision making, giving them freedom to express ideas and knowledge in their organisation and making them be a part of problem resolving. . Van der Walt (2006) maintains that both the transactional view and critical perspective of communication confirm the importance of using a two-way communication when they are two parties involved in the communication transaction in informal networks of communication. The network of communication which is suitable for organisations with a transactional view and critical perspective of communication is the all-channel network. In this network all members have an equal opportunity to communicate and participate without restrictions. This then imply that organisations intending to create and maintain mutual working relationships internally need to adopt a perspective of this nature.

## **2.5 The relevance of the functions, levels, flows, networks, perspectives, traditions and views of communication to the study**

To explain the importance the functions, levels, flows, networks, perspectives, traditions and views of communication within the framework of this study, the following argument is maintained.

From the discussion above it can be maintained that organisational communication in essence is about continuous, observable patterns of planned, sequential and systematic interactions of mutual awareness, and the sharing of facts and feelings, within the context of the organisation, among its members (employees and management), with the intent of motivating or influencing behaviour. Organisations need to provide a channel for employees through which they can express values, needs and motivations, such as a well-defined and well-developed communication system. The ensuing discussion indicates that integrated communication is about the management of long-term relationships between an organisation and its various stakeholders; this is done by managing all messages that are communicated to all and enhance purposeful dialogue. It is therefore logical to argue that the idea of integrated communication refers to communication management which combines communication functions.

From the above argument, it can be surmised that the intent with which communication is planned, formulated and executed (by management) in the organisation involves certain aspects of networks, perspectives, traditions and viewpoints of communication in its entirety and could in turn equally contribute to the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of organisational members (involved in the communication process).

According to Van der Walt (2006:334) it is therefore believed that the process of communication as a planned, observable pattern of sequential and systematic interactions in which facts and feelings are shared mutually could contribute significantly to the establishment of meaning and purpose in the organisation. As part of its functions, flows and levels, communication plays a fundamental process of organising human actions. According to Neher (1997:19) the process of organising requires the gathering of people to accomplish some purpose. Therefore, organising is the primary requirement in bringing people together to achieve individual or organisational goals. He states that an organisation consists of a pattern of interactions among people, and in bringing these people together and in establishing interactions between them, the process of communication is essential.

It can be understood that communication in the organisation provides insights for understanding the working and role of an organisation; this can be evident through the organisations choice of communication networks, perspective, tradition and applicable viewpoint. Van der Walt (2006:334) maintains that the study of communication in the organisation can enable effective relations between an organisation and its members to prevent anomie in the organisation. Communication is the key to sound decision making within the organisation and having communication skills form the basis for effective leadership in the organisation.

From the above discussion it can be maintained that organisational communication has a prominent role in the organisational context;

- Reflects a fundamental process of organising employee actions,
- Provides insight into the role of organisations (and society) in the lives of employees,

- Forms the basis for leadership versus managerial interaction with employees,
- Is a necessity in sound decision making practices, and
- Creates awareness for the consideration of diversity, and as such flexibility, in the organisation.

Furthermore, the functionalist perspective, which is historically the most widely used, focuses on the goals and outcomes of intentional communication acts. The interpretivist perspective is more concerned with understanding the experiences of people engaged in organisational communication than in predicting and controlling outcomes, whereas scholars supporting the third perspective, namely the critical perspective, are more concerned with questions of dominance and political control in organisations (Van der Walt 2006:337). In addition to this argument, Neher (1997) also states that the perspective an organisation chooses reflects definite philosophical differences about the perceived nature of reality and society. Hence, the above discussion is a means of establishing a context in which organisational communication can take place; also taking into consideration that there can be no integration without communication.

## **2.6 The level of integrated communication**

As business processes and management styles are changing, there is a need to change the traditional models of practice in organisational communication. Hunter (1999) indicates that integrated communication is an approach to communication management that no longer separates or divides the communication function, and viewed from the stakeholder's perspective, such a separation is irrelevant in an organisation. Organisations need to look at stakeholders and determine what kind of communication they might need to satisfy their interests. Therefore, the integrated communicator needs to manage organisational communication in a way that would adhere to the expectation of the stakeholder, by using communication instruments that appear more successful in reaching this goal. It can be understood that communication pervades all settings within an organisation and forms an integral part of all organisational processes. It also highlights the multifaceted nature and role of integrated communication in the organisation as well as the importance of an inclusive and holistic management of all communication within the context of an organisation.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:367) state that as yet there is no single, ready-made evaluation instrument for measuring integration. However, the authors point out that, depending on the point of departure, various models of communication integration have developed over time. They contend that the basic principles and concepts contained in these models could provide criteria for measuring the integration of organisational communication. Therefore, this section of the chapter discusses the emergence, concept and models of integrated communication. The models include Ehlers' (2002) framework for structuring integrated communication, Gayeski and Woodward's (1996) renaissance communicator, Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) 10 strategic drivers of integrated communication, and Van Riel's (1995) model of organising and co-ordinating communication processes. Additionally, this section explores the proposed measuring instrument for determining the integration of organisational communication as applied by Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:437) developed using concepts from different models of integrated communication.

#### 2.6.1 The emergence of integrated communication

Niemann (2005:86) states that there are conflicting views as to when integrated communication was first devised and put into practice since the concept of integrated communication is traced back to integrated marketing communication. Du Plessis and Schoonraad (2006:374) indicate respectively that integrated communication is concerned with the corporate brand that is, what the organisation stands for and integrated marketing communication is concerned with individual products and service brands. Schultz and Schultz (1998:1) indicate that the basic concepts of integrated communication have been practiced since the 1970s, when the role and impact of advertising in the marketplace started shifting. According to Niemann (2005:87) the idea behind integrated communication emerged and gained importance in the early 1980s in the public relations and corporate literature of the 1980s.

Gayeski and Woodward (1996) differentiate between integrated marketing communication and integrated communication by stating that integrated marketing communication establishes a model for coordinating marketing, advertising and public relations efforts, all of which are promotional and external in nature, whereas integrated communication is a model that encompasses both internal and external communication and their joint application to information



dissemination, collaboration, learning and performance support. Furthermore, Gayeski and Woodward (1996) maintain that integrated communication is the application of analysis, communication and evaluation techniques to create and manage integration, multifaceted interventions (combining information, instruction, collaboration, business process design, feedback and incentive schemes to improve human performance in the workplace) in order to achieve an organisation's mission, vision and goals. Barker and Angelopulo (2006:58) point out that in the integrated approach, attention is focused on the integration of various communication activities in the organisation in order to face the increased challenges of maintaining a positive image of the organisation and remaining competitive in a changing global environment.

#### 2.6.2 Conceptualisation of integrated communication

In the early 1990s there were several definitions of integrated communication; Schultz (1991:101) defined integrated communication as an inclusive process managed actively. Mariarty and Duncan (1992:631) defined integrated communication as the planned management of all the messages and avenues used by organisations to jointly influence their perceived brand value. These definitions highlight the importance of strategic coordination which calls for joint efforts in managing different and complementary messages, underscores the need for messages and channels of communication to be jointly used to influence positive perception of the brand and calls for attitudinal change (Niemann 2005: 70). Furthermore, Duncan (1997:63) defined integrated communication as an organisational process influencing messages in a planned manner and motivating planned dialogue, intended to generate and sustain valuable stakeholders and customers. This definition is mainly focused on the enhancement of relationships, engagements of stakeholders with an intention of finding ways of meeting their needs and wants. In order to achieve this, all departments within an organisation should work collectively in planning, designing, implementing and maintaining brand relations. The combined definition of integrated communication in this era can be rationalised as a process of strategically influencing messages and encouraging purposeful dialogue to generate and sustain favourable relationships with stakeholders.

Barker & Angelopulo (2006:242) define integrated organisational communication as the process of managing, coordinating and controlling all forms of communication that are generated by the organisation, whether planned or not, so as to ensure that the organisation achieves its set goals. It is the cross-functional process of creating and nourishing strategically determined relationships with stakeholders, by controlling or influencing all messages to these groups and engaging in purposeful dialogue with them (Angelopulo 2000:40). Integrated communication proposes a communication approach that includes stakeholders in the operations and management of the organisation, in order to ensure their participation, in a two-way communication process, drives internal and external communication messages and contributes to the brand of the organisation; this is important because target audiences are continuously bombarded with loads of messages thus communication channels and messages should be focused if organisations are to continue to be relevant. According to Barker and Angelopulo (2006:40) the focus of integrated communication is on two-way communication that should be data-driven. This is due to an increasing amount of communication taking place between the organisation and the stakeholder, based on information obtained and captured on a database.

Furthermore, integrated communication is also seen as an amalgamation of the dimensions of communication as fundamental interdependent and interrelated components of all organisational processes, in order to improve interactions and collaborations to achieve organisational success (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2006). Therefore, an integrated communication approach suggests that all communication efforts are coordinated and planned, that ideas and meanings are shared in order to achieve a mutual understanding of the purpose of communication that helps the organisations make a choice of integrating their communication activities to establish their priorities in re-designing their processes, and possibly even restructuring their communication functions. In concurrence, Barker and Angelopulo (2002:2) maintain that integration should happen on the following levels:

- Integration of communication activities;
- Integration of relationships with various stakeholders;
- Integration of functions;

- Integration of the organisational structure, and;
- Integration of the environment, both internal and external.

Additionally, integrated communication is important because it coordinates verbal or written messages to bring into equal messages of the different parts of an organisation; it establishes mutual beneficial relationship among the different parts of an organisation and enables an organisation to achieve its targeted interests. Integrated communication is built on the premise that there must be interaction between the two forms of communication (internal and external), in an on-going, interactive, independent and synergistic manner (Maenetja 2009:27). This, therefore, indicates that there should be no barriers, between these types of communication, despite their often different functions, as both are ultimately equally crucial to driving the business forward. The value of an integrated communication process in an organisation also resides in a consistent and mutual understanding that it creates between both the internal and external stakeholders in relation to all aspects and processes of the organisation. It is also in its ability to assist the organisation to internalise the principles of shared purpose, commitment and collaboration. However, for optimal efficiency, measures should be taken to ensure strategic consistency in the implementation of integrated communication (Maenetja 2009:29).

It is therefore logical to argue that the idea of integrated communication refers to communication management which combines communication functions. In today's fast changing world, integrated communication is critical. It is a means of developing a competitive advantage and of allowing an organisation to adapt fast to evolving needs and demands of the communities. Taking into consideration the literature reviewed so far, there is no doubt that skilfully developed organisational communication is more and more part of overall tactical planning and action. In the next section, the study discusses some of the models for integrated communication.

In terms of the current study mainly focused on internal communication, internal integrated communication originates within the organisation involving all interactions within the organisation first including employee satisfaction, employee engagements and dialogue; the management of expectations and creation of integrated internal messages. Integrated

communication represents a fundamental shift from manipulating employees to genuine organisational involvement, from telling employees to rather asking, listening, empowering and sharing information, to achieve this, an organisation needs to create a continuous and purposeful dialogue with employees (Mutinta 2015:76). Integrated communication and internal communication combine to form integrated internal communication, a concept defined as the application of internal analysis, communication and evaluation techniques so as to create and manage integrated, multifaceted interventions, in order to achieve organisational communication goals and objectives which are aligned to the corporate brand and internal communication efforts (Gayeski & Woodward 1996).

Furthermore, it is evident that all organisations have unique internal organisational and communication environment. Mutinta (2015:76) expounds that these environments combine to form the internal organisation communication environment referring to the collective views and interpretations of employees towards organisational practices, as well as employee satisfaction towards their own situation within the organisation; within this internal organisational communication environment, the role of integrated communication is a key factor in recognising that every department and function within an organisation has a communication dimension and that all messages, systems and processes must be aligned with the corporate brand of the organisation. Internal communication is the medium by which integrated internal communication is accomplished within an internal organisational communication environment (Mutinta 2015:77).

### 2.6.3 Models of integrated communication

#### a) Ehlers model for organising integrated communication

Ehlers (2002:400) recommends a theoretical framework that can be used to structure integrated communication in organisations. The framework presented in figure 2.9 below highlights the need to pay attention to four elements that can enhance integrated communication, being stakeholders, cross functional relations, team of integrators and databases.

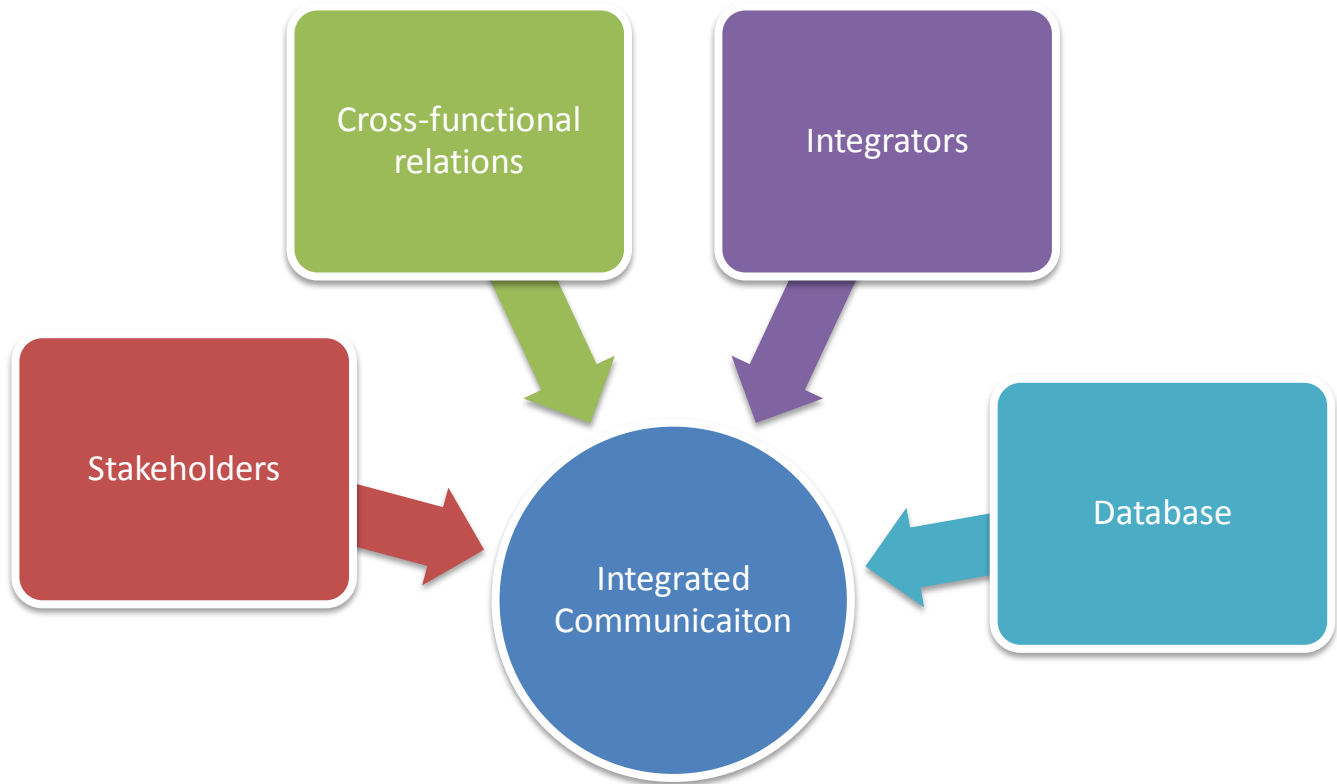


Figure 2.9 Ehlers model for organising integrated communication (Ehlers 2002:400)

According to Baker and Angelopulo (2005:372) the stakeholders of an organisation should be the starting point during the integration of communication, adding that employees should be considered as part of stakeholder orientation because of their ability to influence interaction with other stakeholders. Ehlers (2002:339) proposes that an integrator or team of integrators who have a total stakeholder focus should be responsible for coordinating communication in the organisation and should be multi-skilled to be able to contribute effectively to that process. She maintains that genuine integration is possible only when cross-functional relations exist between the different parts of the organisation as cross-functionality is essential so that all the departments in the organisation are able to co-operate with one another in the planning and monitoring of relationships with stakeholders and the brand. Ehlers (2002) further identifies databases as a central force in the integration process. When centrally kept, information collected from research

and other sources can be stored and used by all concerned for the effective planning and integration of communication in an organisation (Barker & Angelopulo 2005:372).

b) The renaissance communicator

In the renaissance communicator model, Gayeski and Woodward (1996:12) suggest that to have effective integrated communication, an organisation needs to recognise that organisations and environments change constantly. It is a more integrated and strategic model of communication with an idea that there is a need for a current and professional practice of creating and executing communication rules and tools to enhance the dissemination, comprehension, acceptance, and application of information in ways which help to achieve an organisation's goals and also to understanding the business issues that the organisation faces. Additionally, there are five prerequisites that are pivotal in the functioning of the renaissance communicator, discussed below:

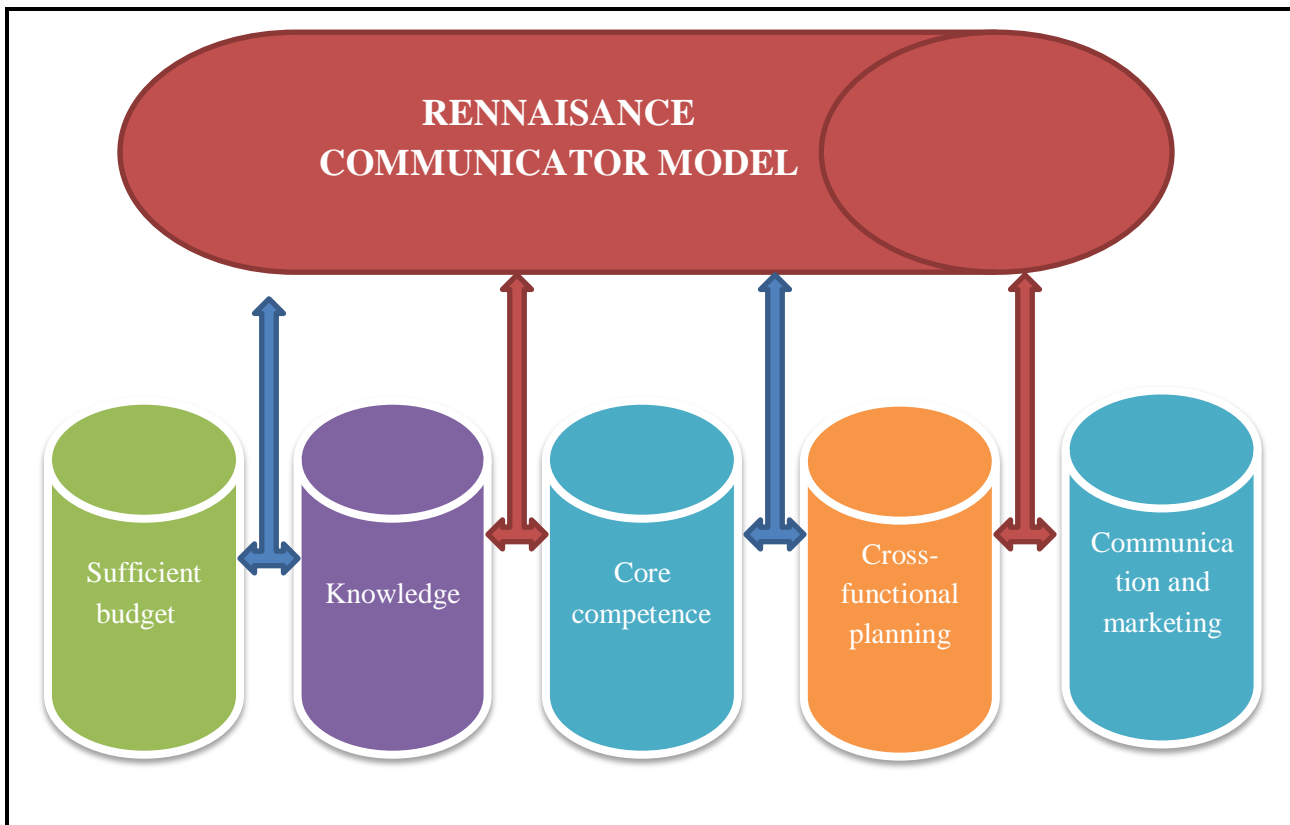


Figure 2.10: Renaissance communicator model (Gayeski & Woodward 1996:12)

- *Sufficient budget*

According to Gayeski and Woodward (1996:11) the first prerequisite for the functioning of the renaissance communicator is that integration on the various levels in the implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication requires a sufficient budget in order to ensure effectiveness. In organisations, this issue seems to be the most threatening barrier to integrated communication implementation. For the renaissance communicators to work effectively there should have resources such as a team of communication professionals with skills in message design, training, persuasion, incentive systems, media, information technology, and others to accomplish organisational communication activities (Mutinta 2015).

- *Knowledge and comprehension of core competencies*

The second prerequisite for the functioning of the renaissance communicator is that this incumbent should have exceptional knowledge and comprehension of core competencies. It is important that renaissance communicators are able to carry out their mandate effectively to make stakeholders understand the brand being promoted. The organisation's mission should be considered as important in enhancing corporate core competency (Niemann 2005).

- *Strategic consistency*

The third prerequisite for the functioning of the renaissance communicator is to ensure that strategic consistency is inherent in all efforts in the organisation to ensure ultimate "unity of effort". (Niemann 2005)

- *Cross-functional planning*

The fourth prerequisite that is essential in the functioning of the renaissance communicator is cross-functional planning, a plan which further integrates managers from different departments and agencies who are working on the same brand in order to plan and manage the messages an organisation sends to – and receives from the stakeholders (Mutinta 2015).

- *Communication and marketing planning*

The last issue that is central in the functioning of the renaissance communicator is that planning in this function, should be zero based. According to Niemann (2005) zero based communication planning is the idea that communication tools are used based on an assessment of what needs to be done now and not based on the previous year's budget allocation.

Hence, Gayeski and Woodward (1996:28) support the idea that renaissance communicators should be considered important in the execution of integrated communication in order to ensure the alignment of communication objectives with the strategic purposes of organisations.

c) Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:15) have identified ten strategic drivers through research and integrated marketing communication audits that organisations are using, benefiting from integrated communication. The authors indicate that it is not necessary for all ten drivers to be fully in place before an organisation can begin to benefit from integrated communication. The ten drivers of integrated communication are divided into three categories: infrastructure, corporate focus and corporate processes, as shown below:



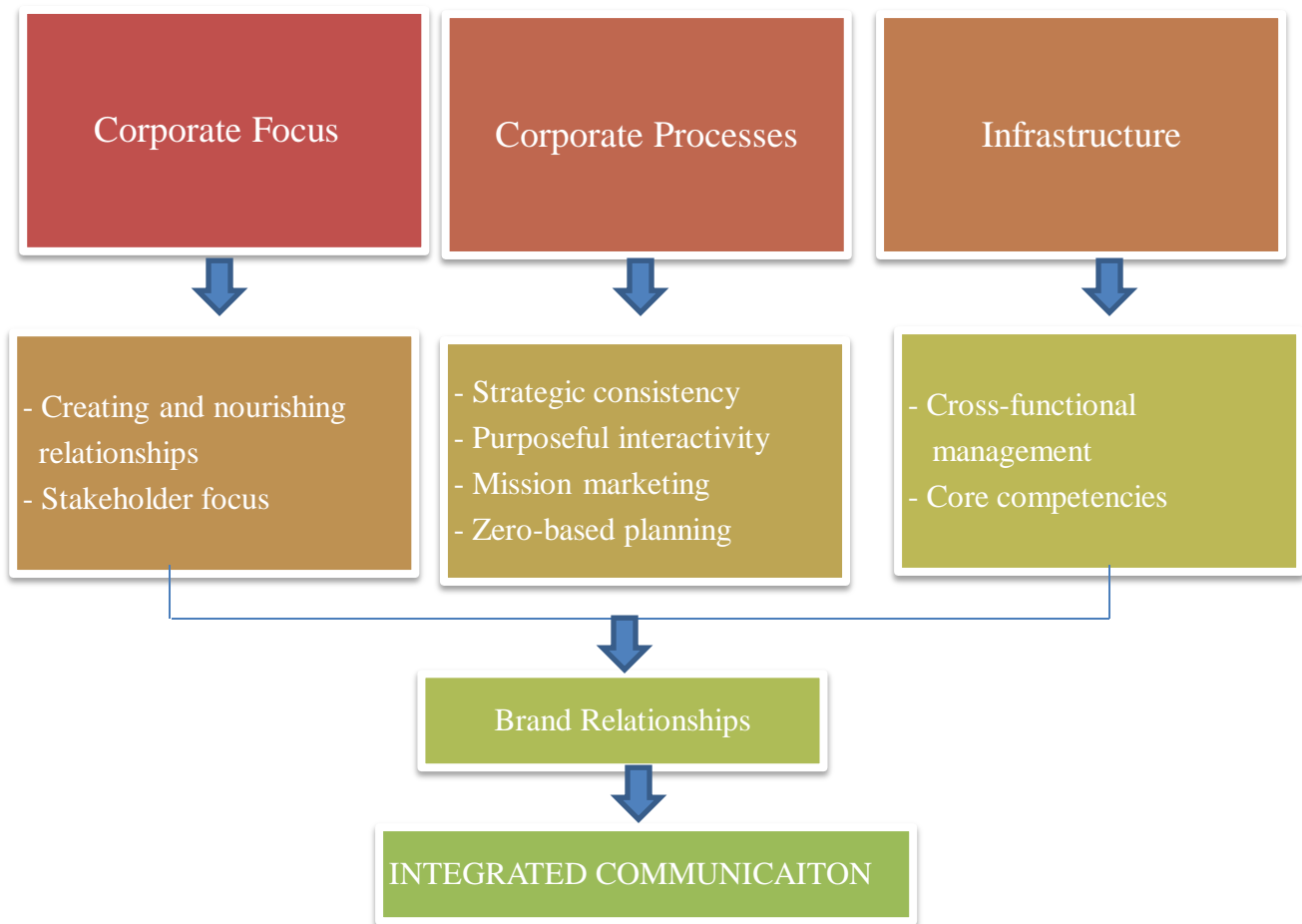


Figure 2.11: Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:16)

The 10 drivers of integrated communication are based on the following three focus areas according to Maenetja (2009), Niemann (2005) and Mutinta (2015):

- *Corporate focus* - stresses that top management focuses on building relationships with customers and other stakeholders and not just focus on making sales or transactions. Organisations need to get to know their customers and build up customer information databases.

- *Corporate processes* - focuses on strategic consistency of brand messages. This includes purposeful interactivity rather than mass media monologue, marketing a corporate mission rather than just product claims, and using zero-based planning rather than just tweaking last year's plan.
  
- *Infrastructure* - focuses on cross-functional planning, as opposed to departmental, planning and monitoring. Cross-functional planning and monitoring facilitates shared expertise and customer information so as to enhance consistency. The aim is to create core competencies rather than just communication specialisation and expertise. Using an integrated agency, rather than a traditional, full-service agency is recommended and so too is building and managing databases so as to retain customers, rather than simply acquiring new customers.

d) Model of organising and co-ordinating communication processes

Van Riel (1995:162) proposes a framework for organisations to stimulate co-operation among all the relevant communication functions; the following tools are identified to help the co-ordination of communication, namely: common starting points, common operational systems and co-operative structures for decision-making in communication.

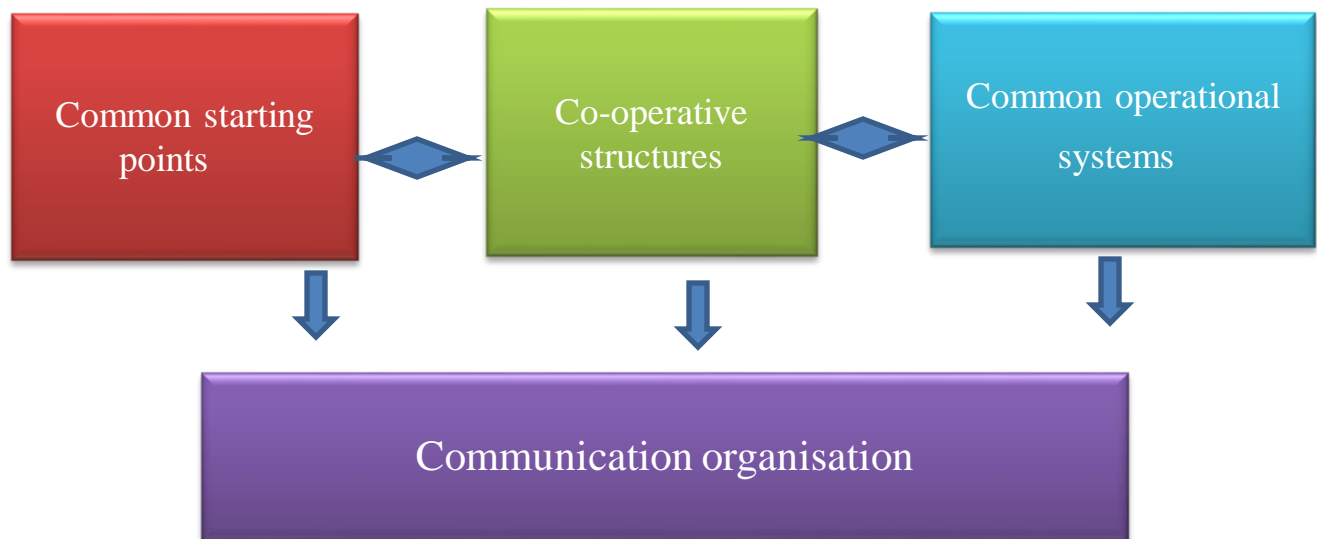


Figure 2.12: Van Riel's model of organising and co-ordinating communication processes (Van Riel 1995:161).

- *Common starting points*

Van Riel (2001:301) indicates that common starting points are considered central values that function as the basis for undertaking any kind of communication envisaged by an organisation; adding that establishing common starting points is particularly useful in creating clear priorities such as to facilitate an eventual control and evaluation of the total communication policy. Furthermore, Van Riel (2001:301) points out that the degree to which an organisation wants to co-ordinate the content of its key messages (content co-ordination) has a strong impact on the type of corporate communication policy the organisation constructs.

- *Common operational systems*

According to Barker and Angelopulo (2006:53) operational systems are important because they are conditions on how communication programmes can be implemented; the operational systems draw attention to areas of communication programmes that deal with integration. The authors

believe that one way of making protocols clear is to initiate computerised decision-making process to deal with important communication decisions.

- *Coordination of decision in communication*

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:371) indicate that different methods exist when it comes to the coordination of communication in an organisation, however, there must be an intentional effect to coordinate communication which can be carried out by:

- One person in the organisation being in charge of all communication functions
- A steering committee which ensures that all relevant department are represented and participate
- Ad hoc meetings in which several communication managers are grouped together in a location and are forced to interact frequently both privately and professionally.

Maenetja (2009) states that the model strongly advocates that integrated communication is and should be a cross-functional process involving all key business activities and taking all the stakeholders into account. The intent is to develop a communication plan in which the communication disciplines work together as an integrated whole, to achieve maximum communications impact and deliver a consistent brand identity. The aim is to achieve greater consistency and synergy among all programme elements. Accordingly, all communication functions in an organisation should be integrated and function as an overall, centralised communication department, as opposed to a communication department which may promote turf battles between the various communication functions.

#### 2.6.4 The measuring instrument for integration of organisational communication

Barker and Du Plessis (2002:58) indicate that to achieve an integrated approach, attention should be focused on the integration of various communication activities in the organisation in order to face the increased challenges of maintaining a positive image of the organisation, and remaining competitive in a changing global environment. It is through integrated communication that an organisation can establish meaningful relationships with its stakeholders. Hence, Du Plessis and

Schoonraad (2006:381) state that for communication integration to occur in an organisation, much of the effort towards achieving this integration should be aimed at the following:

- Consistency of messages and media in and from the organisation;
- Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions;
- Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation;
- Stakeholder orientation and differentiation;
- Sharing of information and free flow of information, and;
- Infrastructural integration

In the current study, a new measurement instrument for integrated communication, identified in Barker and Angelopulo (2006:380), was applied to meet the second objective of this study, namely to measure the level of integrated communication within the organisation. It is the first time that the measurement instrument has been applied in the organisation. The above-mentioned measurement instrument for determining whether integration is realised and effective is illustrated and discussed below:

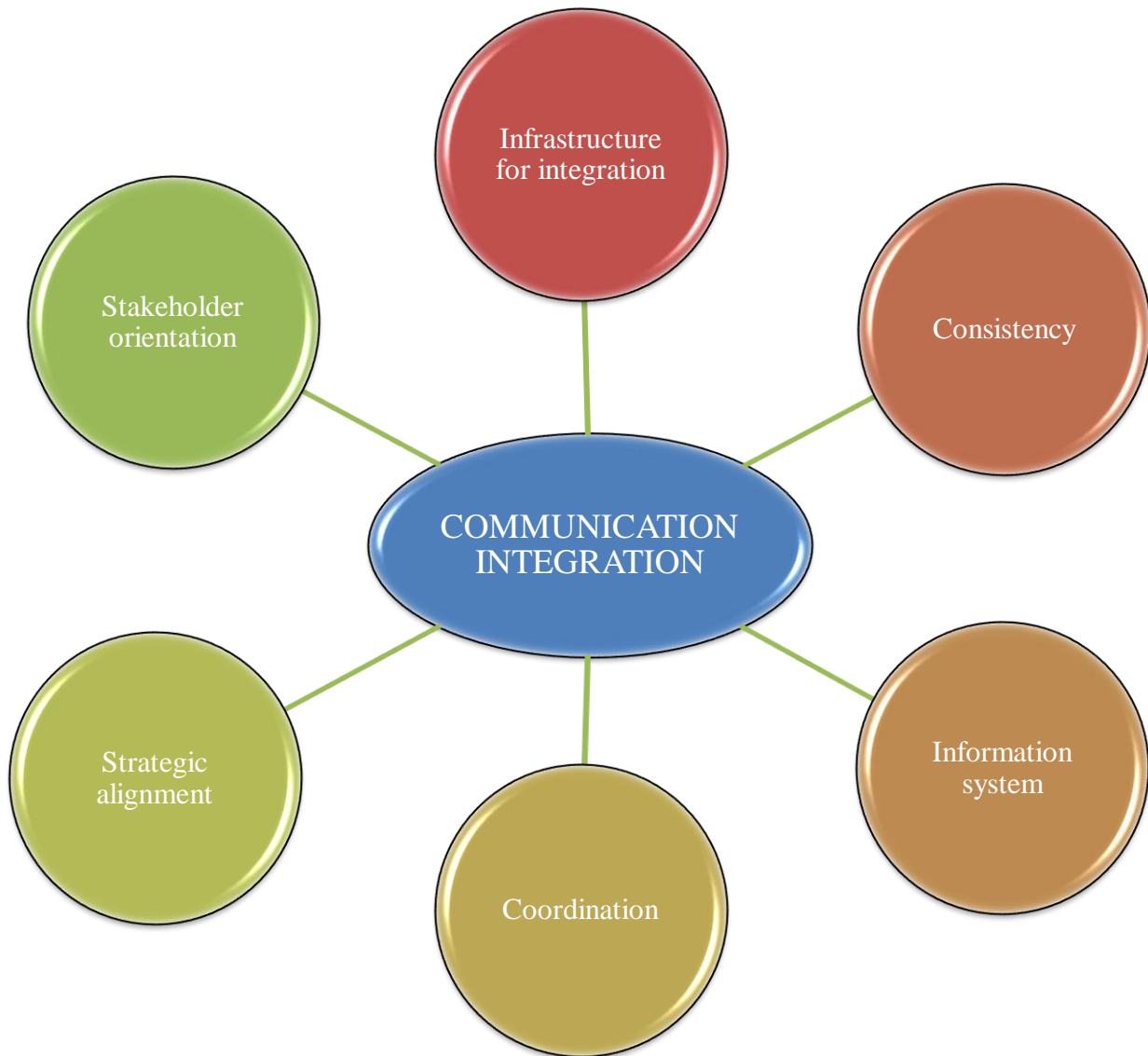


Figure 2.13: Measuring instrument for determining the integration of organisational communication (Du Plessis & Thomson 2013:437)

a) Stakeholder orientation and differentiation

Stakeholders ought to be integrated into the total operations of the organisation. Therefore, communication managers have to focus on the stakeholder as the starting point for the integration of communication, and work together to ensure a true stakeholder orientation. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:440) indicates that the integration of stakeholders into the processes of

organisations is an important strategy in ensuring effective integrated communication, adding that organisations should have purposive dialogue to enhance regular interaction with stakeholders, encourage feedback from stakeholders, and prioritise and optimise contact points with stakeholders. This therefore means that organisations should learn to manage relationships with stakeholders by nurturing stakeholders and make information of stakeholders available to all divisions in the organisations. Information on stakeholders should be shared with different divisions and ensure that links developed with stakeholders are built.

b) Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation

According to Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:439) to have integrated communication, an organisation's strategy should be aligned to its corporate mission, the organisation's corporate mission should be incorporated into all operations of the organisation, employees should understand the corporate mission of the organisation and the corporate mission should be operationalised into clear and strategic objectives. Furthermore, an organisation should communicate its objectives regularly to employees and these objectives should be formulated in such a way that employees can relate to them, therefore, the objectives should be operationalised in such a way that enables employees to apply them in their work in addition to reminding employees the values of the organisation (Du Plessis & Thomson 2013:439).

c) Consistency of and media messages

The value of integrated communication resides in the consistent and mutual understanding that it creates among employees in relation to all aspects and processes of the organisation, thereby assisting the organisation to internalise the principles of shared purpose, commitment and collaboration within the organisation. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:438) maintain that messages communicated by organisations should be clear but consistent; meaning, messages and channels used should conform to the standardised norms, and should be assessed regularly for consistency. This allows recipients to be presented with consistent messages. This implies that the same internal brand message is communicated at all times, through every employee contact point, including initial recruitment, through training, when compensated and incentivised, to information sharing and two-way communication channels.

d) Sharing of information and free flow of information

The communication process is incomplete if it flows only one way. This means that organisations should ensure that their communications invite a response, whether formal or informal. Mutinta (2015) maintains that information sharing and free flow of information improves the feeling of belonging and trusts among employees and builds up communication climate within organisations. To have effective communication therefore, communication personnel should develop mechanisms to centralise information about stakeholders, to maintain research information and to ensure that cross-functional processes are oriented towards data-base management systems that provide comprehensive target audience information and organisational memory (Du Plessis & Thomson 2013:437).

e) Coordination of communication efforts and actions

Maenetja (2009) indicates that integrated communication is the strategic co-ordination of all messages (internally and externally) to create dialogue between the customer and the organisation, which will attitudinally and behaviourally move the customer towards brand loyalty. This indication highlights the use of strategic co-ordination, which implies synergy through the co-ordination of complementary messages. The intent is to develop a communications plan in which the communication disciplines work together as an integrated whole, to achieve maximum communication impact and deliver a consistent brand identity. The study would determine therefore, how the Msunduzi Local Authority uses integrated communication efforts to ensure that the employees remain informed and involved.

f) Infrastructure for integration

The way in which an organisation is structured can create functional divisions, silos and departmentalisation. Therefore, an organisation's communication infrastructure plays a critical role in how communication takes place, as it provides the basic framework within which communication occurs. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:438) argue that organisations should have people responsible for communication integration and formal policies about communication integration shared to every division in the organisations. It can be argued that without an



effective communication infrastructure, communication cannot be effective. Below is the discussion of the two infrastructural organisational drivers, namely cross-functional management and data-driven communication:

- *Cross-functional management* – indicates that the way in which an organisation is structured can create functional divisions, silos and departmentalisation (Mutinta 2015). Many organisations now realise that creating cross-functional teams, rather than working in isolated silos, allows for enhanced internal performance, which ultimately benefits service delivery. This means for the Msunduzi Local Authority, creating cross-functional teams would ensure empowerment of employees, for them to feel a part of the greater whole that contributes to the achievement of the organisational strategy; rather than having business units working in structural silos, with little or no contact with employees. Therefore, cross-functional teams could enhance employee performance, ultimately impacting on service delivery.
- *Data driven communication* – Maenetja (2009) indicates that this driver refers to the extent to which employee information and behaviour are captured and can be utilised as a strategic tool to enhance strategic communication in an organisation; adding that management communication with all relevant stakeholders, the use of databases for communication is becoming increasingly important and organisations should look at using the full potential of the web to enable their integrative communication efforts. Through interviews, the researcher would establish the infrastructure that the Msunduzi Local Authority has in place to execute its messaging and to communicate effectively and more consistently, data would determine whether there is an overall and centralised coordinator for organisational communication.

## **2.7 Strategies to improve organisational communication and enhance integration**

Wells (2002) maintains that employees are regarded the most important constituency, which organisational leaders should ensure that they have a positive perception of communication practices in order to have a positive image of their organisation. As a result, employees will identify with their organisation, show greater support, especially in times of crisis, honour the promises made by the organisation to the external stakeholders, and feel good about the

confidence that their employer shows towards them. Evans (2008) points out that when communication takes place, communicators should ensure that the message is consistent, so that all members, irrespective of their whereabouts and positions, are able to receive the same communication message. There is, therefore, a need for a solid internal communication strategy in all organisations in order to achieve this objective.

The Msunduzi Local Authority is a large organisation with most of its employees fulfilling different site-based functions ranging from waste collection, grass cutting, water and sanitation, roads, electricity and community development projects. All these employees are as entitled to receive communication messages as those who work in offices. Hence, Evans (2008) maintains that even with members of staff located all over the world, or in different places at different times, it is still very essential to engage with them and to ensure that messages are communicated, expectations are met and interaction is achieved at all levels of the organisation. Furthermore, Yates (2006) believes that companies with effective communication processes are higher in market premiums, shareholder returns, levels of employee engagement and commitment, than companies with less effective communication practices. Any organisation that does not practice a two-way communication system is doomed to failure because the practice of good communication brings coherence to the workplace and allows for better coordination and integration.

In addition to that, Wyatt [sa] (cited in Yates 2006), maintains that effective organisational communication plays a crucial role in educating employees about organisational culture and values, helping employees understand the business, aligning employees' actions with customer needs, providing employees with information related to financial status and objectives of the organisation, providing information on the values of the organisation's total reward programs, explaining and promoting new programs and policies, integrating new employees into the organisation, and also exhibiting strong leadership by management during organisational change. Hume [sa] advises that improving internal communication requires careful thought, creativity and detailed planning, as well as ensuring that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are built on every communication plan. Organisational executives and communicators should always practice

accuracy, honesty and ensure comprehension when communicating, and their communication needs to be timely prepared and delivered competently in order to be successful.

In any organisation, including Msunduzi Local Authority, it is crucial to practice effective communication in order to create and maintain mutual relationships between the management and workers. Researchers and writers mention factors that need to be considered in order to address communication challenges within organisations, and improve internal organisational communication. In this regard, organisations are advised to;

- Create a documented communication strategy that is linked to the business and focuses on both deliverables and results (Yates 2006)
- Conduct on a regular basis, quantitative and qualitative research on platforms, media, products and language preferences to deepen employees understanding of the organisation's programs and activities (Handbook of government communications 2010).
- A loose-tight structure; a solution oriented approach, a collaborative effort and also a bottom-up assessment are important tools to audit internal organisational communication (Orsini 2001).
- Become familiar with face-to-face communication as it is more effective than indirect methods.
- Develop a long-term focus, identify clear values, define clear goals, use comprehensive and pervasive methods and be consistent at all times (Hume [sa]).
- Have regular meetings with staff even if there are no problems to resolve and have employees provide regular status reports (McNamara 2007).
- A clearly written policy and procedures manual that is known to all members of an organisation is another factor that is necessary for effective communication; consideration of the appropriate language and clear terms of communication is also important. Therefore monitor, evaluate and update the communication plan. (Meade 2010).
- Establish two-way communication channels that facilitate employee input into decisions (Yates 2006).
- Give managers better tools and training so they can be successful as they take on a greater share of communication responsibility (Yates 2006).

- Each time information or instruction is given ask the question ‘Is this message clear and understand how the employees listen to messages they receive from their employers (Wood 1999).

Hume [sa] believes that when an organisation communicates effectively, employees can make more informed decisions as they would have the tools and information to know the right decisions that are in line with the goals of the organisation. In this context, day-to-day conflicts would also be reduced because conflicting ideas on what is important to the organisation and rumours about decisions being taken would be avoided. Effective internal communication can go a long way towards building an organisational culture where people work together effectively towards a common goal. Lung (2007) emphasised that an organisation can improve its employee engagement, dramatically, by facilitating the building an effective communication strategy, which will see employees supporting the organisation and its goals. When employee engagement is enhanced, through effective internal communication, employee morale will be boosted, and challenges such as lethargy, absenteeism, and low creativity will be reduced. Organisations should base communication processes on current communication theories in order to ensure that the relevant aspects of communication such two-way communication, employee engagement and dialogue are practiced in the organisation.

As local government, the Msunduzi Local Authority could strengthen relations with the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) to develop and sustain communication efforts that promote participation and integration of employees. The contribution of GCIS would enable Msunduzi Local Authority to promote an understanding of the programmes, thereby ensuring that employees play their role, to full capacity, in accelerating progress towards achieving all the set objectives. This will also enhance creating deeper understanding and appreciation of the programmes, activities and decisions on specific matters of policy amongst the employees. As a result, employees will be mobilised to take part in the implementation of programmes as partners for the improvement of services. This would also enable the sharing of best practices and information on organisational communication, including

distribution platforms, products, and the coordination of annual programmes. (Handbook of Government Communication 2010:6)

Furthermore, GCIS promotes the view that municipalities should lay down principles to be adhered in internal communication, such as to supplement communication on the ethics of public service with more communication that builds an understanding of the content of departmental programmes, beyond circulars and workshops. The handbook of Government Communications (2010:68) advises that careful thought should be given to media products and platforms that will effectively reach the employees in a manner that mobilises them for implementation. In order for internal communications to be a success, the handbook of Government Communications (2010:68) emphasises the importance of conducting research in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of communication, and to identify and assess information needs for employees. This will also help to identify appropriate messages and strategies to effectively communicate with the employees, identify the appropriate media platforms for communication, as well as to ensure that the communication needs of the employees are communicated to the management, and are addressed.

As organisations are attempting to “re-engineer” and strive to become “learning organisations”, communication professionals should look for opportunities to employ new integrated communication approaches. Some specific approaches recommended by Gayeski and Woodward (1996) are:

- Focus communication strategies on teaching the employees how to better learn about and respond to the needs of the community. Then, all communication can be integrated and aligned (training, incentive plans, marketing materials, etc.), so that people don't have to put fragments of uncoordinated messages together for themselves.
- Communicators should network and collaborate with other communication-related professionals within their organisations. Look for opportunities to share resources and information and to develop integrated approaches to major performance gaps.

- Managers should work towards identifying and quantifying performance gaps and presenting those gaps — rather than “work orders” — to teams of professionals in employee communications, public relations, human resources, training, and marketing / advertising.
- Specific deficiencies should be defined and operationalised and goals should be set so that communicators can target a specific objective.
- Executives should form teams or committees to investigate new approaches to communication. Leadership and support from the top of the organisation is crucial to the kinds of systemic changes that integrated communication demands. Integration cannot be accomplished by middle managers or from those in the lower levels of the organisation. It must come from the top, and it can't be just a memo or a directive. There must be a commitment from top management to integrate and to remove the barriers which prevent integration.

Furthermore, Niemann-Struweg and Gobler (2006:70) also recommend that the following aspects should be taken into consideration when new models of integrated communication are developed for implementation in an organisation:

- The strategic intent of the organisation should be the point of departure for any organisation considering the implementation of integrated communication.
- Strong emphasis should be placed on all stakeholders of the organisation, to include key players beyond merely customers.
- If the organisation wishes to ensure interactivity with all stakeholders and the consequent environments in which they function, it should consistently monitor and adapt to the greater environment in which it functions.
- Integrated communication should undoubtedly be practised and implemented at a strategic level within the organisation.
- Communication objectives should be aligned with the organisational goal and, more importantly, the strategic intent of the organisation.
- The organisation must learn from its environment and stakeholders in order to build and nourish profitable relationships with the organisational brand.

- The organisation should constantly reposition itself and its strategic goal according to what is learnt from the environment in order to survive in dynamic, challenging circumstances.
- Communication should be regarded as a business approach rather than merely another function of the organisation.

The review of existing literature and previous research studies on the topic is a crucial exercise that gives the researcher an idea of how far researchers and authors have gone in exploring and explaining the concept of strategic communication and its integration. This therefore builds a crucial foundation for the current research study.

## **2.8 Overview of Msunduzi Local Authority**

In preparation for the study, the researcher reviewed a range of documents in order to gain a deeper insight into the organisation. The information extracted can be found in documents such as the organisation's Integrated Development Plan, policies, strategy, legislative framework and operational procedures, which provide background into the organisation's way of business and structure.

### **2.8.1 Geographical and demographical information**

Msunduzi Local Authority is located in Pietermaritzburg, which is the second largest city in Kwa-Zulu Natal and is its capital, as well as the administrative and political hub of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The Municipality is located along the N3 Corridor, which links Durban and Johannesburg. The Municipality covers an area of approximately 590, 6 km<sup>2</sup> and consists of 37 wards. It is predominantly urban to peri-urban in nature, with some areas of rural residential. Its location has a strong influence on regional channels of investment, movement and structuring of the provincial spatial framework for growth and development. It is the site of best schools, technikons and university; the home of Comrades Marathon, the Duzi, the Midmar Mile, the Royal and Garden Shows, and Art and Cars in the Park, as well as International cycling events like the UCI BMX World Championships. The Municipality is also closely associated with highly respectable individuals such as Gandhi, Mandela and Allan Paton (Msunduzi Municipality 2010:10)

Pietermaritzburg is a vibrant African city set in Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands. Steeped in history that speaks mainly IsiZulu, Afrikaans, English and Indian influences, and a growing number of IsiXhosa speaking and a significant number of Sotho speaking individuals; the city has a cultural treasure-trove brimming with diversity and colour (Msunduzi Municipality 2010:10). The population of the Municipality was estimated at nearly 620 000 people in the 2011 Census, with an annual average growth of 1.12%. Education levels are reportedly high, with constant reduction in adult illiteracy over the past 20 years (Msunduzi Municipality 2010:10).

Msunduzi Municipality has a primary responsibility of ensuring that all its communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, have equal access to resources and services.. The services provided by the Msunduzi Municipality include, inter alia:

- Supply of water
- Sanitation
- Removal of refuse
- Supply of electricity
- Municipal Health services
- Roads and storm water drains
- Street lighting
- Parks and recreation
- Public participation (management of ward committees)
- General administration
- Marketing and tourism
- Local economic development
- Town planning and building control

### 2.8.2 Organogram of Msunduzi Local Authority

The following diagram summarises the recently adopted functional organogram of the Municipality, as well as functions associated with each of the departments.



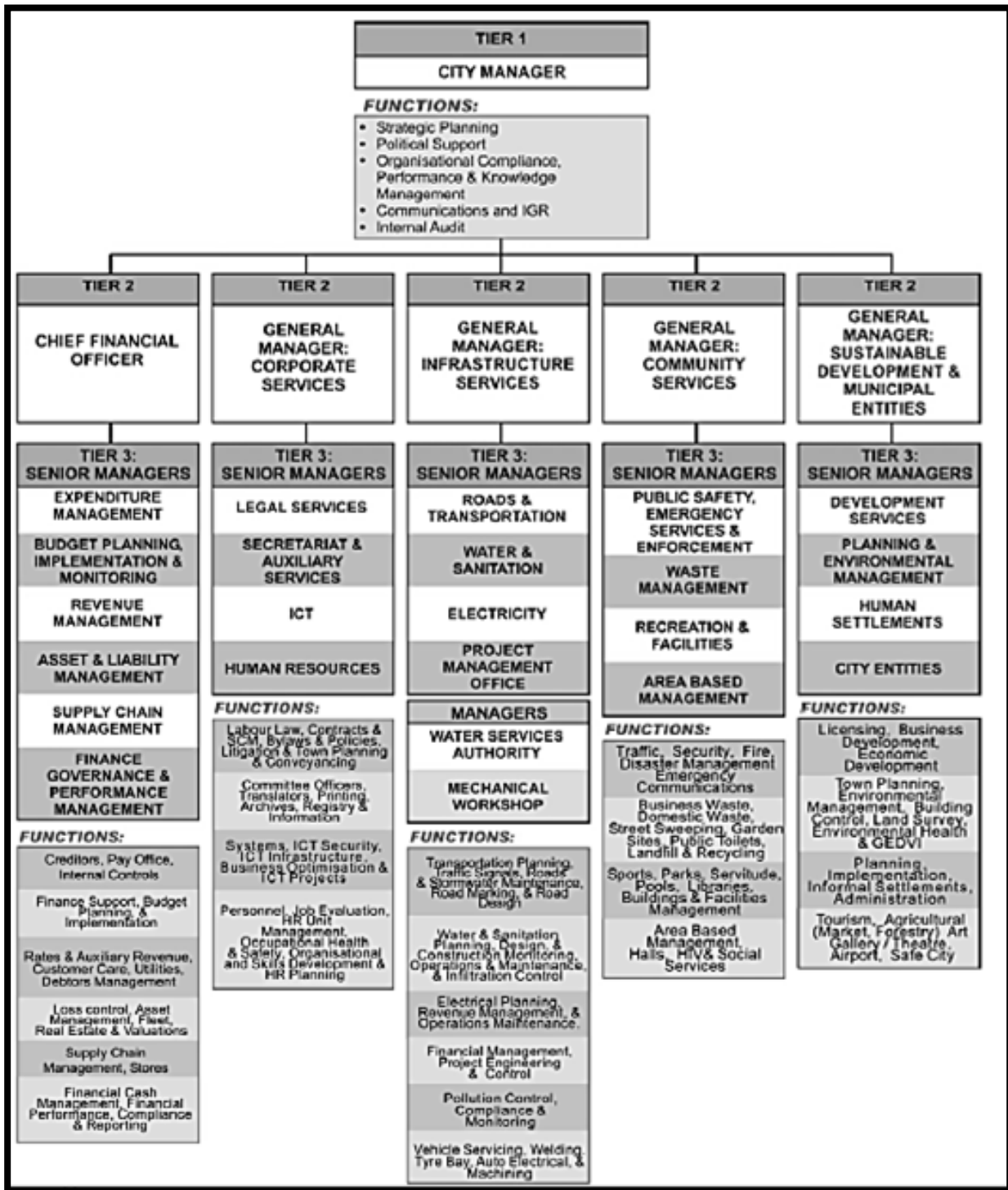
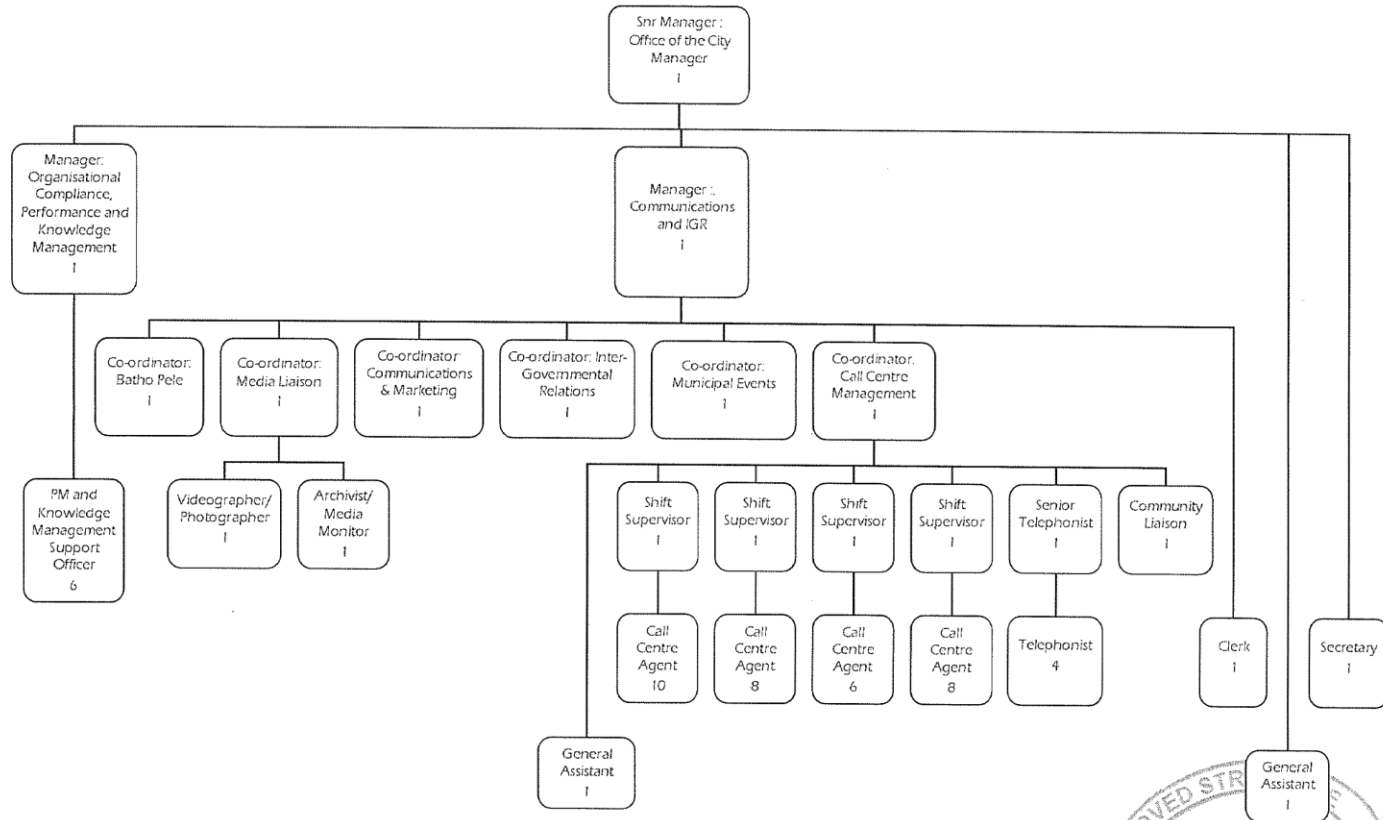


Figure 2.14: Functional organogram (Integrated Development Plan Review 2015/16:19).

**CITY MANAGERS OFFICE: OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
APPROVED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE 1 OF 2**



\* Graphical representation of post position is not an indication of grade.

Figure 2.15: Communication organogram (Msunduzi Municipality structure 2013)

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter has discussed and presented the literature review, based on the objectives of the study as indicated. It further discussed the theoretical framework which was adopted for the study, including the relevance of the chosen theory to the study. The review of literature on the topic of organisational communication and integrated communication was crucial in order for the researcher to have an understanding of how authors and researchers have thought about organisational communication and integrated communication. This therefore, builds a crucial foundation for the current research study. The literature review has revealed that communication is indeed the lifeblood of the organisation, and that integrated communication plans are crucial in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation.

Furthermore, the elements of the existing measurement instrument for integration of organisational communication proposed by Barker and Angelopulo (2006) are used to determine the extent of integrated communication at the Msunduzi Local Authority. The authors developed an instrument consisting of six dimensions, which include consistency of messages and media in and from the organisation, co-ordination of communication efforts and actions, communication alignment with the strategic focus, stakeholder orientation and differentiation, sharing of information and the free flow of information and infrastructure for integration.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) provides a discussion of the research methodology applicable to the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The ensuing discussion is based on the research design and various stages of the research methodology implemented by the researcher to collect and analyse the data. This chapter focuses on the methods and principles adopted to reach a particular destination, or to achieve particular goals. This indicates that the methodology is practical in nature and focuses on the specific techniques that the researcher can use to understand the research topic better.

This chapter aims to provide an insight into the practical ways and methods employed to gather information for the empirical part of the study. Firstly, the research design and method is discussed. The research method includes sampling techniques and data collect techniques. The second part of the study concerns data processing and analysis methods. The chapter outlines the measurement instrument used to measure the level of integration of intra-organisation communication. The measurement instrument consists of six areas of integration as proposed by Du Plessis and Schoonraad (2006), namely, stakeholder orientation and differentiation, communication alignment with strategic focus of the organisation, consistency of messages and media in and from the organisation, infrastructure for integration, sharing of information and free flow of information, and coordination of communication efforts and action. Furthermore, the chapter then expounds on the issues of reliability and validity, the limitations of the study, the anticipated findings, as well as the anticipated contribution of the findings to the organisation.

#### **3.2 Research method**

After the problem has been formulated, the next step is to determine the appropriate research design and to lay a foundation for conducting the research. A research design is a programme that is designed to guide the researcher in collecting, analysing and interpreting observed data. Mouton (2001:107) states that the main function of a research design is to enable the researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be so as to maximise the validity of the eventual result.

This study adopted a qualitative approach. To bring clarity and understanding why qualitative research was the suitable design to explore the role and extent of integrated organisational

communication, it is important to give some background on qualitative design. According to Baker (1999:8) qualitative research is often carried out to investigate important concerns of human existence. It mainly relies on the informal wisdom that has developed from the experience of the researcher. Du Plooy (2009:33) concurs that qualitative research differs markedly from quantitative research in that it is “analytic and interpretative, and attempts to examine phenomena in a holistic manner”. The advantage of using qualitative research methods is that the researcher can view behaviour in natural surroundings, rather than in a laboratory or artificial setup (Mouton 2001:161).

Furthermore, Mouton (2001:161) notes that qualitative approaches are regarded as exploratory, where the goal of exploratory research is to formulate more precise questions that future researchers can answer. In concurrence, Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) and Du Plooy (2001:88) indicate that a qualitative research study is concerned with exploring explanations, reasons, meanings and processes, as well as focusing on expected outcomes. Qualitative research approach generally does not generate specific numerical data; it attempts to understand the story behind the numbers, through interpretation.

The primary aim of qualitative research is an in-depth description that allows for understanding events and actions in their specific context. A qualitative research design is flexible in accomplishing the set goal and objectives of the study, firstly because the method of reasoning is inductive, which according to Du Plooy (2009:88) is applied when analysing the responses of respondents or participants to confirm theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, Niemann (2005:184) maintains that the advantages of a qualitative research method include its appropriateness in intensifying a researcher’s depth of understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative research methods are flexible and allow a researcher to engage with any phenomena and ensuing data in a context-specific and subjective way. Such flexibility makes the qualitative design suitable for this study because, should new ideas arise the study can be adapted to provide meaningful results.

Qualitative studies usually aim for depth rather than breadth of understandings. The variables are not controlled as in the quantitative studies; it is exactly the freedom and natural development of action and representation that researchers wish to capture. The understanding is therefore not placed within the boundaries of an instrument designed beforehand (Henning 2004:3).

Additionally, the advantage of taking a qualitative approach to the study is that it stems from an interpretative perspective and will, therefore, enable the researcher to understand the meaning of organisational communication and its integration at the Msunduzi Local Authority. Through the qualitative design, the researcher will be able to explore participants' accounts of meaning, experience and perception of the topic. The researcher will also be able to produce descriptive data using participants' own spoken words from in-depth interviews.

Du Plooy (2009:88) further points out that the qualitative researcher is concerned with understanding rather than explaining, naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurements, and subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of insider as opposed to the outsider perspective that is predominant in the quantitative paradigm. The flexibility of qualitative research methods will allow the researcher to investigate new ideas of concern. This is advantageous for the current study as the method is adaptable and accepts the possibility of new ideas that might appear during data analysis, and hence open to more meaningful results.

### **3.3 Area of study**

The interviews were conducted at the Msunduzi Local Authority in Pietermaritzburg. However, in order to minimise the costs and to ensure the least disruption in terms of time and travel for the participants, the interviews were conducted at the venue suitable for each participant within their designated area of work. The setup was also intended to allow the participants to move and be comfortable in their own space.

### **3.4 Population**

Mouton (2001:134) refers to the population as a collection of objects, events, or individuals having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. It is therefore the complete set of elements and their characteristics about which a conclusion is to be drawn, based on a sample. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:85), the units of analysis are those elements that researchers examine with an intention to construct summary descriptions of and explain the differences among them. The unit of analysis is what the researcher actually categorise and count. It is a measurable unit which provides the researcher with a standard method of analysing the data (Du Plooy 2001:157). For the purposes of this

study, the units of analysis are both individuals (for the interviews) and artefacts (texts for the qualitative content analysis).

The first unit of analysis was artefacts, namely documents, related to organisational communication which includes the communication strategy and publications. These documents are reviewed to ascertain the current state of organisational communication within the organisation. Content analysis can use the following units of analysis (Du Plooy, 2001: 191):

- Physical units, such as the medium of communication, the number of pages, size and space in print media, time duration in broadcast media and nonverbal codes in interpersonal communication.
- Syntactic units, such as paragraphs, sentences, phrases, clauses or words.
- Thematic units, which are repeating patterns of propositions or ideas related to issues
- Propositional units, such as questions, answers, statements, assertions or arguments.

The second unit of analysis are individuals tasked with communications within the organisation. These units of analysis enabled the researcher to clearly demarcate the domains of this study and ensure a focused in-depth analysis.

#### 3.4.1 Target Population

According to Ramodibe (2014), target population refers to the sub-set of the population with similar characteristics which the researcher is interested in studying, and from which inferences will be made to the entire population. Therefore, the target population for this study constituted communication personnel at Msunduzi Local Authority which is the study area.

#### 3.4.2 Accessible Population

Furthermore, Ramodibe (2014) indicates that the accessible population is the population which is accessible or at the disposal of the researcher from which the researcher can select samples and can apply conclusions of the study. In the current study, the accessible population were those employees within the Corporate Business Unit (CBU) of Msunduzi Local Authority, a department responsible for organisational communication according to the organisational structure indicated in Chapter 2.

### **3.5 Sampling**

Du Plooy (2001:100) describes sampling as a rigorous procedure of selecting units of analysis from a larger population. Good sampling, therefore, implies a well-defined population, an adequately chosen sample and an estimate of how representative of the whole population the sample is. This study adopted a non-probability sampling technique. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:290), a non-probability sample is employed when a researcher seeks to obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of the study; resulting in looking for participants who have had different experience or think differently about the topic.

Purposive sampling method was suitable for the study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:166), purposive or judgment sampling is also suitable when the study is intended for a small division of a larger population, in which members of the division can easily be identified. The researcher had knowledge and understanding of the population and, therefore, utilised own judgment to select participants from the organisation. Additionally, the researcher understood that the data sought could be obtained from the one division (CBU) of a large population. Hence, the study participants were sampled from the Corporate Business Unit within the organisation.

#### **3.5.1 Sample size**

Cornish (2006) maintains that a sample size can be referred to as the number of respondents possessing all characteristics or traits of the population selected for a study and from whom data will be gathered, analysed and findings generalised. A number of ten (10) participants was selected from employees within the Corporate Business Unit. This is because this study requires the expertise of informants who can reasonably give accurate and perceptive accounts of communication integration in their respective sections. In order to maximise the breadth of information collected, an effort was made to involve people who were information-rich, based on their positions or experience within the organisation.

With respect to the sample of documents, Du Plooy (2009:225) cautions that when relying on content analysis the sample of documents must be of a manageable size to allow for a thorough review of the data at hand. The researcher thus purposively selected only those



documents specifically related to communication as more data would be obtained through interviews. The sample of documents is indicated in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Sample of documents for the qualitative content analysis

Document	Number of pages
Communication organogram	1
Communication strategy	12
Internal Newsletter	12

### 3.6 Data collection method

#### 3.6.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. According to Swart (2010), semi-structured interviews have an advantage of flexibility, which allows the researcher to use an interview schedule with predetermined open-ended questions as a framework that will guide the researcher throughout the interview, to ensure that relevant issues or sub-problems are covered. This also allows the researcher to develop a relationship of mutual understanding with participants, and hence be able to have access to them should follow-up interviews be required. Walliman (2005:285) purports that through semi-structured interviews, a researcher is able to achieve defined responses to defined questions, while leaving time for further development and elaboration of those responses.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews questions enabled the researcher to obtain an understanding of how organisational communication is practiced within the organisation. This data collection method indicates that the interview questions are open-ended, which will allow participants to speak their minds with minor limitations and elaborate on their responses as may be required. This is an advantage to this study because, open-ended interview does not suggest the terms in which the participants should answer a question.

Furthermore, the researcher chose in-depth interviews with an intention of uncovering the current state of organisational communication and level of integration. Open-ended and free narrative was developed and used to gather required information. In concurrence, Du Plooy (2009:199) indicates that open-ended questions are more conversational whilst closed-ended

questions are typically ‘yes or no’ answers. Whilst this method is flexible and enables for more rich data, it also has challenges. The researcher can become too involved in the conversational structure of the interview and therefore bias the results. To address this, the interview questions were logically developed listing the topics to be covered, and potential questions. The questions went from the general to the specific allowing the respondent to ease into the interview and thus build rapport (Du Plooy 2009:199). As a result, the researcher was able to achieve two important goals; firstly, to create some form of conversation, whereby both the researcher and participants were involved, and secondly, to obtain accurate and detailed data. Also participants were free to respond openly; expounding on their views, opinions, beliefs and understanding of certain issues within the organisation.

### 3.6.2 The interview schedule

The interview schedule served as a guide in the planning and preparation of the research questions. Mutinta (2015) notes that interviews must follow a structure consisting of an opening, body and closing sections. The schedule contained the research questions and guidance on how to conduct the interview. The interview questions were generated from pre-determined themes gleaned from the reviewed literature and objectives of the study. These themes are outlined in the interview schedule that was used by the researcher to prepare for interviews and collect data. The questions in the interview guide are attached as addendum A and the objective of each category is explained in table 3.2 below;

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Objective of interviews</b>
The state of organisational communication	Stakeholder orientation	This category would focus on the current state of organisational communication of the Msunduzi Local Authority. Information gathered will enable the researcher to understand more specifically, the entire communication process including the functions, perspectives, networks, viewpoints as well as the traditions of communication.
	Communication alignment with strategic focus of the organisation	
	Consistency of messages and media within the organisation	
	Infrastructure for integration	
	Sharing of information and free flow of information	

	Coordination of communication efforts and actions	
Level of integration communication	-	This category would focus on measuring integration of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority. The data obtained would enable the researcher to measure the level of integration in the areas including stakeholder orientation and differentiation, communication alignment with strategic focus of the organisation, consistency of messages and media in the organisation, infrastructure for integration, sharing of information and free flow of information, and coordination of communication efforts and action.
Strategies to improve integrated organisational communication	Intra-organisational communication	The findings of semi-structured interview and content analysis would enable the researcher to make recommendations of strategies that can be implemented to establish and/or improve an integrated approach to organisational communication.

Table 3.2: Objective of the interview guide

### 3.6.3 Recording of interviews

The researcher took notes and recorded non-verbal responses and key points, for further investigation. The time of interviews was determined by the availability of participants. All interviews took place in the offices of the participants during working hours and the time allocation for each interview was from 45 minutes to one hour, over a period of three weeks.

A tape recorder was used to capture responses during the interviews; it enabled the researcher to freely become part of the conversation without the need for strenuous note-taking, thus obtaining a clear understanding of issues. Participants were informed ahead of time that the meetings would be recorded and their permission was obtained. Notes were only taken for non-verbal cues, such as silence, gestures or facial expressions, which would help the researcher understand how respondents felt about the subject of the interview questions. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:303) maintain that it is of value to annotate the text with notes on also non-linguistic expressions such as signs, laughs and silence which an interviewer may have missed in the transcription and to add information from the note. The researcher designed a log sheet to use for note taking, a copy of which is attached in this report (see Addendum B).

#### 3.6.4 Qualitative content analysis

Content analysis is used in various types of communication research, such as the analysis of mass media content, transcripts of group discussion, or in organisational communication by analysing memos, electronic mail, transcripts of meetings and policy documents (Du Plooy, 2001: 191). A common use of content analysis is to record the frequencies with which certain symbols or themes appear in messages. Steinberg (2007:32) indicates that, in communication research, a qualitative content analysis is a method through which the researcher can measure the amount of something found in a representative sample of a mass communication medium, such as newspapers or television.

In concurrence, Baker and Angelopulo (2006:351) emphasise in the field of organisational communication research, content analysis can be used to identify the intentions, focus, or communication trends of an individual, group, or organisation or to describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communication within an organisation. For the purpose of this study, qualitative content analysis was used as a technique to identify and describe patterns in the collected documents such as communication strategy; formal written and electronic internal publications were assessed. Content analysis findings were compared to the views of the participants gathered through semi-structured interviews.

The sample for this study is a purposive sample. The research samples were reviewed and the documents coded and placed into the relevant categories. To this end, one monthly newsletter to all Msunduzi employees and one newspaper – Msunduzi News (monthly to the

communities) and the communication strategy were selected in order to provide an overall picture of communication messages. The corporate identity in all forms of internal communications was analysed to determine to if there are standard templates for announcements and presentations. The Msunduzi Webpage messages was also analysed to determine how their content; and how the key messages are aligned with the corporate strategy.

### **3.7 Pilot study**

A pilot study is a mini-version of a full-scale study or a trial run, done in preparation of the complete study. The former is also called a 'feasibility' study. It can also be a specific pre-testing of research instruments, including questionnaires or interview schedules (De Vos 2002:409). The pilot study was done to ensure that the researcher had a clear vision of, the research topic and questions, the research techniques and methods which would be applied, and what the research schedule would look like.

In additional, the pilot study could thus indicate whether the proposed methods and /or instruments are appropriate, and hence could also give advance warning of possibilities where certain types of techniques or the study as a whole could fail. The pilot study can, therefore, be of value for testing the feasibility of both research instruments and data collection instruments like questionnaires, interview schedules, or other testing instruments and also of the research process itself.

The pilot testing was done by passing the questions to the two managers who were not part of the sample; this was done to ensure that the key issues were captured, to ensure that questions were worded unambiguously. The pre-test indicated that the questions were clear and well-understood.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Data analysis is a crucial step in the research study; this is where the responses are analysed to make sense of the collected data. The researcher conducted the study with an intention to collect information that would provide responses to the questions on intra-organisational communication and integration. The objectives of the study were to explore the above and then describe the findings. Walliman (2005:301) mentions several reasons why data is analysed, which include making comparisons, exploring, explaining, measuring and also to

examine relationships. Qualitative data analysis is, therefore, interpretive in a way that it brings meaning to the research problem or phenomena, which results to concept or theory development.

### 3.8.1 Thematic analysis

Data collected in this study was analysed using thematic analysis method to analyse data and gain an understanding of the entire communication process within the Msunduzi Local Authority. Thematic data analysis is an inductive type of analysing data, in which the researcher creates pre-determined themes from the interview schedule prior to conducting interviews, and then using these themes to frame interview responses after data collection. In this type of analysis, data collection and analysis takes place concurrently, as the researcher constantly goes back and forth between scanning the data and allocating it into suitable categories. Thematic analysis is assumed suitable to analyse data to be collected because the technique briefly organises data collected and then describes the data sets in detailed. The approach was used because it enables data to be treated in a way that makes it possible to interpret the research problem or topic.

Furthermore, thematic analysis is closely connected to comparative analysis, where the researcher undergoes an iterative process of comparing and contrasting the data in order to place it into suitable categories according to set themes. Interaction analysis, on the other hand, was used to evaluate how the municipality uses communication messages in settings such as staff meetings, briefings, and in written messages. This was done to get an understanding of the municipality's efforts to reach its employees when communicating.

The answers to the various questions were grouped into these categories and subsequent sub-categories. In the process of coding data, the researcher did a transcript of all responses from the interviews (notes made after each interview), notes written by researcher during interviews, and review of communication documents in order to interpret and present the results (see copy of interview transcript in Addendum C). A summary of data analysis stages followed in this study are presented in table 3.3 below:

Thematic analysis steps	Explanation of step and application to study
Familiarisation with the data	This stage involved the reading and re- reading the data, to become intimately familiar with the content.
Coding	Codes identifying important features of the data were generated and thereafter the researcher collated all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis. Data coding is an inductive process, which consists of data and code meanings, searching for patterns and relationships, developing categories, reading and re-reading transcripts, comparing responses and categories, and developing new or relating to existing theoretical model (Walliman 2005:312). The coding process allowed the researcher to generate basic categories of the raw data collected to be assessed in a way that made it possible to understand the research problem. The process of coding allowed the researcher to link the data collected to the ideas about the data. In doing so, the researcher was able to think about the data collected that allowed her to make categories that acted as points of analysis in the data analysis process.
Searching for themes	This stage involved examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning. It involved collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so as to work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.
Reviewing themes	As there were interviews, the researcher had to brainstorm and develop a plan of integrating all data for it to be presentable; by immersing herself through all the responses provided. In this way, the information becomes more presentable and understandable.
Defining and naming themes	This stage was done to develop a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the ‘story’ of each. It also involved deciding on an informative name for each theme.
Presentation of data	This stage would entail the presentation of the qualitative findings

	<p>according to the research objectives. This stage for the purpose of this study would also entail obtaining a holistic view of qualitative findings and literature which would result in the presentation of recommendations.</p>
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Table 3.3: Application of thematic analysis process

### 3.8.2 Analysis of qualitative content analysis

According to Mayring (2000:2), the qualitative content analysis is the process of analysing textual communication such as written, verbal or visual communication messages, through a rule based systematic process in order to develop categories or themes. The method involves a systematic and objective means of describing and analysing documents and reporting this narratively. This method is guided by questions and reported in a descriptive format such as characteristics, visual codes, themes and focuses on the direct (manifest) or underlying (latent) meaning of messages (Du Plooy 2009:219).

Furthermore, qualitative content analysis can be achieved in two ways - either inductively or deductively. Du Plooy (2009:27) states that an inductive approach means the themes identified are linked to the data itself whilst deductive reasoning is based on prior theory; and further identifies three approaches for qualitative content analysis, based on the level of inductive reasoning. These are namely: conventional qualitative content analysis, summative content analysis and directed content analysis. In conventional data analysis, the researcher codes the data directly and inductively from the raw data. Within summative content analysis, the researcher condenses the text by counting specific words or exact content, from which the underlying meanings and themes emerge. Directed content analysis relies on the researcher having some level of theoretical knowledge to start the coding process Du Plooy (2009:27). During the data analysis phase, the researcher becomes engrossed in the data and allows themes to develop from the data. This method is often used to confirm or propose a conceptual framework or theory. Therefore, in the current study, the qualitative content analysis is done inductively through the application of conventional data analysis.



### 3.8.3 Operationalisation of the measurement instrument for integration of organisational communication

This section illustrates the measurement instrument used to measure the level of integration of organisational communication within the Msunduzi Local Authority. As discussed in Chapter 2, the measurement instrument includes six areas of integration as proposed by Du Plessis and Schoonraad in Barker and Angelopulo (2006:381). These are:

- Stakeholder orientation
- Communication alignment with strategic focus of the organisation
- Consistency of messages
- Coordination of communication efforts and action
- Infrastructure for integration
- Sharing of information and free flow of information.

Earlier in this chapter, a discussion of the data collection methods and how they were applied in order to obtain the necessary information was provided. The information gathered through the semi-structured individual interviews and the qualitative content analysis enabled the researcher to measure the six areas of integration of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority as proposed by Du Plessis and Schoonraad in Barker and Angelopulo (2006). Therefore, a brief discussion of the six areas of communication integration included in the measurement instrument is outlined in table 3.4 below:

Area of communication integration	Outline and application of data collection method	Desired outcome
Stakeholder orientation and differentiation	<p>The internal stakeholder orientation will be measured via the semi-structured interviews and content analysis. The researcher will ask questions to establish whether the organisation has mechanisms in place to segment its internal communication to tailor its messages.</p>	<p>The answers to will reveal whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Msunduzi Local Authority has developed direct channels of continuous dialogue with its key stakeholders</li> <li>- The management interacts regularly with all stakeholders</li> <li>- There are feedback mechanisms that the organisation uses and that feedback from stakeholders is maximised</li> <li>- Contact points with stakeholders are optimised</li> <li>- Current stakeholders are being nurtured.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The content analysis will determine whether stakeholders are clearly defined and that whether communication strategy is tailored for different stakeholder groups.</li> </ul>
Communication alignment with strategic focus of the organisation	<p>Communication objectives should be aligned with the organisational goal and, more importantly, the strategic intent of the organisation (Niemann-Struweg &amp; Gobler 2006:70). It is vital for any communication plan to be aligned to the business strategy and to specific business</p>	<p>The content analysis will determine whether The Msunduzi Local Authority mission is incorporated into all operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The brand position is integrated into all brand messages</li> <li>- Organisational objectives are clearly communicated</li> </ul>

	<p>goals and objectives. Maenetja (2009) indicates that alignment refers to the sharing of a common vision and common understanding of corporate goals and methods. Stakeholders, particularly employees, want to know where their organisation is headed, and they want to know how their behaviour and roles can contribute towards achieving that vision. Therefore facilitating alignment is through high-quality employee communication.</p> <p>The communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation was measured via content analysis to establish whether the Msunduzi Local Authority uses internal communication to make sure that individual and corporate goals are in alignment and that the organisation's vision is shared by its employees.</p>	<p>regularly to all staff members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication objectives are clearly related to the objectives of the organisational</li> <li>- Strategic organisational objectives are formulated in such a way that all employees can relate to them.</li> </ul>
<p>Consistency of messages and media within the organisation</p>	<p>Careful thought should be given to media products and platforms that will effectively reach the employees in a manner that mobilises them for implementation. This will also help to identify appropriate messages and</p>	<p>Internal publications are assessed to determine whether consistent messages are delivered and received in a consistent way by every member of the organisation.</p>

	<p>strategies to effectively communicate with the employees, identify the appropriate media platforms for communication, as well as to ensure that the communication needs of the employees are communicated to the management, and are addressed (handbook of Government Communications 2010:68). In this study, the consistency of messages and media is measured via both interviews and content analysis of all planned communication messages.</p>	
<p>Coordination of communication efforts and actions</p>	<p>The measurement of coordination will be assessed through the interviews. Participants will be asked whether the organisation has established central contact hubs into which all employees' communications are channelled, rather than having separate departments with their own communication records. These hubs can integrate business units, but do not have to be under one department or even in one location.</p>	<p>The data will determine whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cross-functional planning and monitoring exist across divisions</li> <li>- There is strategic coordination of complementary messages</li> <li>- There is the sharing of information across divisions</li> <li>- There is formal interaction between internal groups</li> <li>- There is informal contact between members of divisions.</li> <li>- An integrated business unit forum has been established at every business unit.</li> </ul>

<p>Infrastructure for integration</p>	<p>The communication infrastructure of an organisation plays a critical role in how communication takes place, as it provides the basic framework in which communication takes place. It is also necessary to consider whether the organisation is utilising the most appropriate medium for the transmission of information throughout the organisation (Maenetja 2009). Internal groups must interact more frequently in order to ensure integration through the sharing of expertise and information to enhance consistency. A cross-functional management orientation must be instilled to ensure that an integrated brand identity is communicated at every point of contact with the brand. Consistency in brand identity is achieved through the cross-functional integration of the organisation, its operations, and communication messages (Maenetja 2009).</p> <p>The infrastructure for integration will be measured through the semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Participants will be asked whether the organisation has a variety formal communication</p>	<p>the researcher will be able to understand how effective the Msunduzi Local Authority's internal communication systems are in conveying information to various employee groups and will determine the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The delivery methods used for employee communications, for example, e-mail, voicemail, website, et cetera</li> <li>- Whether the communication infrastructure provides the various constituencies of an organisation such as employees with multi-source feedback processes and mechanisms</li> <li>- Whether, internally, communication supports collaboration between employees so that it is easy for them to work together</li> <li>- The tools (innovative and integrated processes) available to help the organisation plan its messaging and to communicate effectively and more consistently.</li> </ul> <p>Furthermore, the discussion will establish whether the Msunduzi Local Authority delivers its communication</p>
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	channels that keep employees well informed about the developments of the organisation for which they work.	messages in a planned way through multiple organisation media channels, such as e-mail, newsletters, posters, and written correspondence and whether the communication function is coordinated centrally.
Sharing of information and free flow of information.	The evaluation of the sharing of information and free flow of information will be measured via semi-structured individual interviews and qualitative content analysis to establish whether mechanisms existed to share information upward, whether the organisation has mechanisms to share work group and strategic information as well as whether organisational executives encourage employees' input.	With respect to the flow of information the data collection techniques will determine whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information flows openly from the top of the organisation downward and from the bottom upward</li> <li>- Information flows openly between work groups/departments and throughout the overall organisation.</li> <li>- There is established equitable employee participation in decision-making processes</li> </ul>

Table 3.4: The operationalisation of measurement instrument for integration of organisational communication.

### **3.9 Reliability and validity of the study**

Reliability and validity are two important considerations to ensure that all data collection methods and findings are sound. Reliability refers to the degree to which an operational definition is consistently applied to measure a variable and validity measures the degree to which the operational definition actually measured a variable (Babbie 2005:146). The reliability of the study is highlighted by the analytic procedures from the data to the reported findings. This means that, data analysis begins consistently with data collection. Morse and Field (1996:104) maintain that the process of making sense of the data begins as the researcher makes sense of the setting and learns what is going on. The stage of comprehension is reached when the researcher has enough data to be able to write a complete, detailed, coherent, and rich description (Morse 1994:26).

The discussion of the relevance of the study in chapter one gives an indication that the topic of the research is relevant and that the study is feasible. Conducting the study and collecting data had minimal costs involved. The study required a proper plan and work schedule to guide the researcher for the duration of the research. The reliability of the data is concerned with the question of whether the study will yield the same results on different occasions. Thus, reliability refers to dependability and consistency. It was, therefore, necessary for the researcher to inform the participants of the context of the study to ensure its reliability.

The validity of the research was determined by the use of qualitative research to obtain accurate data about the object of the study. In an effort to reduce bias and increase the validity of the study, the data was recorded through multiple methods during the interviews (tape recorder and note books). To achieve a response rate necessary to provide an acceptable level of validity, the researcher made use of follow-up telephone calls and e-mail to ensure a sufficient return.

#### **3.9.1 Reliability and validity of semi-structured in-depth interviews**

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, the researcher ensured that the interview questions posed relate directly to the research objectives, and irrelevant questions were avoided. Piloting also ensured that questions were unambiguous and not misleading or confusing. The

conditions under which interviews were conducted were similar to the participants' everyday surroundings. The researcher also ensured that structured questions were used as far as possible. Lastly, a full record of one-on-one interview was recorder and individually transcribed.

Furthermore, in this study, the possible risk that the participants might have felt uneasy to answer certain questions, due to the presence of the other participants, was minimised, as interviews were conducted at the participants' workplace, which created a comfortable interview environment. The researcher endeavoured to eliminate any discomfort on participants by sending the questions to them prior to the interviews to ensure that they are comfortable with the research topic.

To overcome possible time constraints, the interviews were recorded using a tape-recorder, as opposed to taking hand-written. The semi-structured format also allows prompts and probes, and did not restrict the participants to certain answers. Although the research methods were time-consuming, data rich insights were produced as intended.

### 3.9.2 Reliability and validity of qualitative content analysis

The qualitative content analysis may be presumed to have a high degree of validity, as it is based on a collection of the most important texts by the Msunduzi Local Authority. The researcher relied on those materials which also provided a chain of evidence to corroborate interview data. The researcher also ensured the accuracy of information through cross-checking all information obtained through the interviews. In terms of internal validity the researcher constantly referred to the research questions to keep within the theoretical boundaries of the literature review.

### **3.10 Anticipated findings**

Previous research studies have revealed that organisations are still struggling with the implementation of an integrated communication system, even though the concept has been widely accepted in principle. It is expected that the research study will show that Msunduzi Local Authority, as a large government institution which also has a big staff compliment, has a comprehensive integrated communication plan in place. The organisation needs to understand that communication, or the exchange of information among various business units, is crucial as it provides information about various issues that help reduce uncertainty related to decision-



making, problem-solving and other processes. This means that when unity and co-operation is integrated into all organisational processes, the performance and satisfaction is thus improved.

The researcher also anticipates understanding organisational plans to constantly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication processes. The study and its findings hoped to lead to recommendations appropriate to the findings of the study.

### **3.11 Anticipated contribution of the study**

The research methods that have been used in this study are a combination of descriptive and exploratory studies, in addition to an in-depth literature review as foundation. These methods were combined to make the following contributions:

- Obtain new insights about the communication relationship between organisational management and employees by indicating the current state of organisational communication as such the consideration of Stakeholder orientation and differentiation, communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation, consistency of messages and media within the organisation, co-ordination of communication efforts and actions, sharing of information and free flow of messages and infrastructure for integration as a variable within the integrated organisational communication process.
- Provides new insights and new knowledge regarding the structure of existing models of integrated communication.

This study indicates that the relationship between all the elements in the organisational communication process needs to be emphasised. However, the study proposes that integrated communication should be regarded as central for organisational communication through sustainable stakeholder relationship building.

### **3.12 Ethical consideration**

In this study, the research ethics were considered when data was collected from human subjects through the administration in-depth semi structured interviews. The researcher has sought permission from the Msunduzi Local Authority before collecting data from respondents. A letter describing the purpose of the study and also seeking permission to participate was written to the Manager: Office of the Municipal Manager and attached to the questions which was asked during

interviews. The subjects of the study were informed about the nature of the study being conducted and their verbal permission to participate were sought. Participants were also afforded an opportunity to use pseudo names instead of their real names to protect their confidentiality, should they wish to do so. The participants were further informed of their right to withdraw from the study, should they wish to do so.

The participants were guaranteed by the researcher that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous, and that they will be used solely for the purpose of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The name and numbers of the researcher were made known to participants and commits to provide a complete research project to the government representatives.

The researcher has read and understood the ethics policy of the university (University of South Africa, 2009), and has endeavoured to abide by all the ethical requirements of the university to ensure the study does not cause any harm to the respondents and all those related to the study in any way. The researcher further committed to maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about research participants, and has maintained security procedures for the protection of privacy.

In relation to the interviews participants were briefed in advance about the purpose of the research in order to gain their informed consent. An interview background information note was prepared explaining the aims, objectives and outcomes of the research and their permission was obtained to record the interview. Only the audio was recorded, and detailed notes were taken to aid the transcription of the interviews. The researcher stressed that their comments and/or certain information provided would remain confidential. This helped the respondents to share their views more openly, allowing for gathering detailed information. Furthermore, with respect to qualitative content analysis, the researcher sought permission from the Chief Information Officer to access the documents.

### **3.13 Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the research methodology applied in this study. The study is described as an exploratory research, which uses qualitative methods to gain insight into the

research problem. This chapter described how the research was conducted. This involved the research design of this study, sampling procedure, data collection, procedures in relation to reliability and validity. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis, the study gathered enough data to conduct a thematic analysis and apply the measurement instrument for integration of intra-organisational communication. The suitability of these methods to the present study was discussed in detail, and their advantages and challenges noted.

The next chapter (Chapter four) will provide the interpretation and presentation of data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology used in gathering and interpreting data to answer the research questions of the study. This chapter presents the findings with regards to organisational communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority. The presented data are excerpts from interview schedules, relevant to particular pre-determined themes. The presentation and analysis of findings are based on the study objectives, as indicated below:

- To evaluate the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority
- To measure the level of communication integration

#### **4.2 Section A: demographic analysis of participants**

Respondents were asked to indicate their personal information, namely, the section that they are employed in within the Msunduzi Local Authority, level of position they occupy and the number of years they have been employed in the organisation. These questions were asked to determine the relationship between the demographic characteristics of respondents and their level of influence in their organisations. From ten (10) employees who participated in the semi-structured individual interviews six (6) were female and four (4) were male. The majority of employees interviewed were aged between 28 and 45 years, had at least a first tertiary education degree, and between 1 and 12 years work experience within the organisation.

#### **4.3 Section B: The state of organisational communication**

In order to address the first objective of the study, which was to evaluate the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority, the responses are presented in accordance with the areas of communication integration discussed in chapter 2. The presentation of findings according to these areas enabled the researcher to address the second objective of the study, to measure the level of communication integration through the measurement instrument of integration of organisational communication. The findings are presented as follows:

#### **4.3.1 Stakeholder orientation and differentiation (employees)**

The participants were asked to comment on the involvement of employees in the communication messages and decision-making. The findings showed that different units in the organisation functioned in isolation; as such there was no organisation-wide integration of all employees or a centralised communication system.

One participant mentioned that:

*“There is no involvement and/or consultation of each other when units develop and plan strategies and policies, unless when a problem arises or when there are duplications between activities”* (semi-structured interviews 2014).

This perspective is in agreement with what another participant who said:

*“.Even departmental structures have duplication of functions, such as law enforcement officials titled peace officers, a town planning section has a number of individuals employed as peace officers, waste management section, public safety and licensing are sections that also have individuals employed as peace officer but who do not work within the same umbrella unit”* (semi-structured interviews 2014).

The participants further indicated that the employees did not receive enough information and were not included in a more interactive communication process, which indicates that communication is one-way and downward with no provision made for feedback. From the responses received, it became clear that the Msunduzi Local Authority does not make an initiative to involve employees in decision-making and there are no clear plans to integrate organisational communication.

When participants were asked to talk about their views of the nature of the relationship between the organisation and employees; they reported that the organisation has quality relationships with stakeholders.

This is echoed in what a respondent said:

*“Satisfactory formal relationships exist between management and employees maintained. We communicate to, and interact with employees regularly”* (semi-structured interviews 2014).

On the other hand, some participants indicated that the relationships between the management and employees within Msunduzi Local Authority were poor.

This is deduced, for example, from what a participant said:

*“The relationship is miserable because there is no mutual unity. Communication is rare and one-sided; only senior employees communicate their junior employees”* (semi-structured interviews 2014).

Some participants did not believe that the Msunduzi Local Authority was doing well in its communication processes, due to the fact that it is not improving whereas the management is aware of the problems that employees encounter in terms of not being informed. They indicated that the organisation does not have communication plans and initiatives meant to improve relationships and promote employee engagement, and the decision-makers have no touch with employees at lower levels.

A participant indicated that:

*“Managers are always attending meetings but they do not update their staff and anything that happens involves only senior officials and no proper communication is done.”*

Another participant indicated that:

*“It is heart-breaking to hear news about your employer through external media without being told...Employees feel betrayed and cheated to read on the newspaper about decisions that have been taken by their employers, especially when it impacts on them as employees.”*

One of the questions posed in this study was to establish whether there were mechanisms put in place to encourage feedback from employees. Responses indicated that the only mechanism of encouraging feedback was on only visible in staff meetings. The findings also revealed that Msunduzi Local Authority operates under legislated policies; the only decisions that the management is able to make are of operational nature. The participants indicated that executive managers within Msunduzi Local Authority serve on a management committee, which is responsible for making recommendations to the Executive Committee for final decision-making, especially on financial and administrative matters. This means that the employees are not part of any decision-making processes. This indicates a very formal delegation of authority being developed for all aspects of the business.

The analysis of the 'draft' communication strategy indicated that the communications component has the following objectives, which made no mention of the internal stakeholder or employees:

- To comply with the legal obligations as prescribed in the constitution and other relevant acts of government in the upholding of democratic values and principles.
- To provide a mechanism of communication between the Msunduzi, the community and other sector departments and stakeholders.
- To promote and make public aware of the programmes undertaken by the municipality, as well as understanding the functioning of the municipality in its mandate to bring services to the people.
- To communicate with the community on business opportunities available to improve Local Economic Development.
- To encourage co-operation among government departments as well as the different spheres of government, in the spirit of Intergovernmental Relations.
- To ensure that we are a transparent, open, accountable and responsive local government.
- That we create and maintain a good working relationship with the media.
- To market and promote the Msunduzi to local and international tourists and potential investors, and to attract big events to the city.
- To encourage communication between various municipal departments, and between the politicians and officials so that we do not send conflicting messages to the public.

- To create an interest to the public to play a role in improving different environments within the municipality (Communication strategy 2010/11).

#### **4.3.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation**

Through the content analysis, the researcher established that the Msunduzi Local Authority had recognised the importance of having a functional communications component. As a result, a communications and intergovernmental relations organogram has been adopted and the Msunduzi was planning to ensure that the vacancies within the component were filled in order to address gaps that had already been noted.

Moreover, the interviews revealed that the management had recognised the importance of ensuring that quality relationships were established and maintained between employees and the organisation, to be achieved through constant, clear and integration communication. When participants were asked to share their perceptions of communication alignment with the corporate strategy, some stated that the ‘draft’ communication strategy was aligned to the programme’s strategy.

One respondent said:

*“The communication strategy was agreement with the corporate strategy when it was initiated; however the document remained a draft since the year 2010 whereas the corporate strategy is reviews annually so the alignment between the two cannot be confirmed”* (semi-structured interviews 2014).

This perception suggests that the communication strategy is not aligned with the corporate strategy of the organisation due to the communication strategy remaining unconfirmed and out-dated for a number of years.

#### **4.3.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation**

Consistency of messages within the organisation was measured through the research method of qualitative content analysis. Generally the findings suggest that there are common practices in terms of communication planning across the organisation. With regard to the overall identity of



the organisation which is communicated to internal stakeholders through the information and communication technology, the results suggest that the organisation has a standard procedure for approaching business issues. The logo, along with certain other graphic elements, serves as a visual representation of the organisation. The organisation uses the logo on all communications and much more. The organisation always presents one uniform, consistent visual interface to all stakeholders and markets. All employees in all divisions apply the same corporate identity specifications.

In terms of the Msunduzi Web-page (intranet), it is recognised that the responsibility for the technical aspects of Msunduzi-web and website rests with ICT. However, respective business unit or divisions are responsible for ensuring that the content is updated and this is not done accordingly. The information on the intranets remains out-dated and there is no plan in place to monitor the adequacy of the content. This is another method of top-bottom communication within the organisation.

In terms of publications it was established that the organisation has a monthly internal newsletter that is controlled by the Marketing and Communication unit currently serviced by a manager and interns. The content of the internal newsletter does not cover organisational information, including what each division is doing. It covers events that have taken place in the month, especially the activities of the principals, being the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Municipal Manager. The internal newsletter does not place a role of facilitating the flow of information between management and employees about the direction in which the organisation is heading and why it is important. Messages emanating from the publication are not consistent nor aligned with and support the organisation's overall strategy. Basically, the information in the newsletter is does not cover relevant organisational information, including what each division is doing.

#### ***4.3.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions***

The question relates to the medium the organisation frequently used to communicate across the organisation. The results revealed that the organisation mainly made use of e-mail messages and that most of the organisation's staff members' contact details were available on the intranet for communication purposes across the organisation.

Participants were also asked if they knew a person responsible for co-ordinating communication efforts across the organisation. Responses indicated that communication was not centrally co-ordinated and that it was the responsibility of each manager to ensure that relevant information was communicated to the staff. However, participants indicated that central communication, where it existed, was largely restricted to the dissemination of formal policy and procedures.

One participant said:

*“Communication currently plays a role of informing the employees about decisions, regulations, administrative related matters, operational related matters and passing of instructions. Examples of administrative and operational related information include supply chain management information such as placement of orders, generation of orders and tender requisitions, human resources information such as salaries, job evaluations, vacancies and short-term acting appointments.”*

Other participants indicated that communication across business units was still prone to silos. They stated that there appeared to be no clear or consistent mechanism for effectively cascading information to other staff members in the various municipal business units.

Basically, participants indicated that communication throughout the organisation is often not conducted in an interactive process, and employees are not entirely informed about other developments within the organisation.

An example of such comment was:

*“The Municipality is more focused on messages to external stakeholders, without sufficiently emphasising internal messages to its internal stakeholders, such as employees”*

This perception was supported by another participant who said:

*“We read more in the newspapers about our Municipality than we are formally informed, even about information which concerns workers at a personal level, we read about it in the newspapers first and receive information later, often upon inquiry too”.*

Participants revealed that even managers are sometimes surprised to learn in the newspapers that the Municipality is in a state of collapse due to insufficient funds, which shows the insufficient flow of information. As such, most participants expressed dissatisfaction with how the situation was handled in terms of communication.

For example one of the participants indicated the following:

*“If the management does not communicate with their staff, there will be problems...Like the situation we facing at the moment, we do not know where we stand in terms of our jobs, and that really puts us down in terms of doing our current jobs and it makes one not want to come to work because of feeling that one has no value in this organisation. But if management explains the situation to us and constantly keep us informed, things would be much better.”*

The participants indicated that the communication challenge faced by the organisation was due to the communication organogram not being implemented in order for communicators to advise management respectively with respect to the communication processes. The language used to communicate was another problem raised by the participants.

*“You find all circulars and memos written in English; whereas the majority of employees are Africans...Consideration is not given to the less-educated staff members who might not understand the terms used in these circulars”.*

#### **4.3.5 Sharing of information and free flow of messages**

To a question relating to the perspectives of senior managers on organisational communication, participants who are senior officials within the Municipality showed an understanding of the important role that communication should be playing internally. This question was asked in order to understand whether the people at strategic level of the organisation seemed to understand communication and integration as they have influence over organisational operations. Participants argued that it was very important that employees have the same understanding of what is going on in the organisation, since their main goal is to provide good services to the

community, which means that the employer or management should ensure that employees are informed and updated about activities and developments. The findings revealed that the organisation was lacking in this area. For example, one participant commented;

*“It becomes such a challenge when one is a supervisor because the subordinates keep asking and blaming their supervisors for not keeping them informed about what goes on in the organisation, without knowing that the supervisors are also in the dark.”*

Some participants made an example of this, in which when the Msunduzi Local Authority was once planning to review its organisational structure, no-one knew their positions in the new structure and, therefore, could not respond to enquiries regarding where other staff members stood if they did not know their own status. The challenge was that the task team reviewing the structure did not communicate with the managers either, and the staff found it difficult to believe that. This finding revealed that the importance of communication and employee engagement is not recognised, even in change management and organisational development initiatives.

The participants also indicated that internal communication should play a more crucial and influential role within the organisation. Communication should be a fully-fledged and centralised component that is responsible for the overall communication activities, intended to improve and increase staff knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives of the Municipality; to promote ways of improving interaction between business units by creating and maintaining two-way flow of information internally; and ensure that all internal stakeholders are informed about the decisions, programmes, events and issues in a timely, effective, accurate and consistent manner; and are engaged where possible in decision-making processes.

The participants indicated that in terms of the organisational structure, the responsibility of internal communications lies with a communication department which has been non-existent for many years, until recently that a new organogram was adopted. However, each manager has a level of accountability for the dissemination of formal communication in their own units with their subordinates. The posts within the newly established communication department were currently not filled.

Each unit is responsible for communicating with its employees; as a result the flow of messages becomes one-way and very formal.

The participants were asked to comment on the process followed by the Local Authority to ensure effective information-sharing and the free-flow of messages. The participants did not believe that the way some communication messages were structured was suitable and professional for a large organisation with so many employees.

One participant pointed out that:

*“Most of the time, emails are used to send through messages, which is not good for communicating with employees because not all of them have access to computers, and at times even those who have access to the internet may not receive these messages for many reasons”.*

This was supported by another participant who highlighted that:

*“English is the only language used, especially in written communication, where is the logic in that? There is just no planning and, unfortunately, it is not within our power as we have so much to do, but there is much more that needs to be taken care of within the Municipality in terms of communication strategies, policies, monitoring, research and evaluation”.*

The participants felt that the Msunduzi Local Authority need a push in the right direction in order for higher authorities to recognise the importance of communication and the contribution that it makes in creating and maintaining internal relationships. However, most participants indicated that they do not have authority to influence decisions of the Executive Committee, which serves as the final decision-making body. They argued that even though they had discussed issues connected to lacking communication processes, nothing had been done.

The participants were also asked whether the population characteristics have any bearing on the challenges of communication within the Msunduzi Local Authority (educational background,

years of experience and language choice). The responses received indicated that some population characteristics create problems, which could be uncovered and necessary training programmes conducted to capacitate staff members.

*“Education plays a very big role in affecting the communication process, but the problem experienced by this organisation’s is political interference, in everything from employment of people to decision-making. Some people think just because they have been around for a while they deserve to be on top, as well as the age gap; the younger you are the more they think you are not capable of doing what they can, but surprisingly you could do so much more even better than what they could do.”*

The participants maintained that having a qualification would help towards performing jobs well, because it is assumed that one should have formally been taught about that subject matter and that:

*“It should be noted that a qualification does not actually perform the job, but it’s the individual that performs, because you find that there is a hard-working individual with no qualification, who has experience or a lazy graduate that does not add value to the organisation.”*

The participants also expressed concern regarding some individuals who, for example, studied financial management but work at electricity, as they do not have enough skills and expertise to do a good job.

#### **4.3.6 Infrastructure for integration**

The participants were also asked to comment on the directions of communication messages and channels used, in order to meet the objective about the communication infrastructure of Msunduzi Local Authority. The findings revealed that the Municipality communicates through electronic mediums such as the intranet and email. However, it was also discovered that these channels of communication are not accessible to all employees within the Municipality. Participants indicated that there are notice boards in all Municipal buildings, but could not

confirm whether these are updated and monitored. When asked how the site-based employees with no access to the information communication technologies received information;

The following responses were received from a participant:

*“If it does not affect their work, they miss out because there is currently no way of reaching out to them ... and those who have access to the email and intranet are encouraged to inform others”.*

The findings revealed that managers and supervisors do not call staff meetings unless when they want to give instructions and the frequency of meetings is very low as they rely on emails.

One participant indicated that:

*“Computer technology is seen as the main communication tool, of which a large number of employees do not have access to either a personal computer or the internal electronic network, especially on distant sites of the organisation, for example,; email is the most used method for receiving and giving formal and work-related information, it is very fast and effective”.*

Most participants also mentioned that the sharing of information normally occurred at senior level and did not flow down to lower levels as expected, and when it does there are no provisions for feedback.

Another participant cited that:

*“Providing and receiving feedback takes place through written reports, presentation of reports, reply emails and rarely staff meetings”.*

The communication officials revealed that within the previous organisational structure, they were not able to interfere with departmental communication, unless requested.

Participants were asked to comment about what would need to be included in an integrated internal communication strategy in order to ensure staff participation and satisfaction;

One participant responded as follows:

*“At least once a month there should a meeting to report to employees on organisational issues, encourage and motivate staff, address concerns, provide updates on the changes that are taking place or if there were issues that needed follow up; these meetings would also help the managers to get an understanding of what goes in the lower levels of units they manage.”*

Another participant suggested an establishment of a communications team, or a structure that would be responsible for addressing all challenges facing the organisation in terms of information flow.

*“The channels of communication that are used would be reviewed to see if they are suitable for reaching employees when communication takes place; for example, emails can be used but there should be regular meetings to make sure that both the employer and employee understand what is expected from or the role they should be playing or that everybody knows what is going on at their work place. An internal newsletter would be developed in order to communicate in an integrated form where activities of all units would be communicated to all employees.”*

Furthermore, it is indicated in the communication strategy that the following were the official internal channels of communication:

- Staff meetings
- Intranet
- Workshops
- E-mail
- Municipal Newspaper-MsunduziNews
- Notice boards
- Water and Lights accounts
- Billboards
- Internal Newsletter (communication strategy 2010/11)



When participants were asked to comment on the communication channels, the following responses were received:

*“ Staff meetings serve the purpose of signing an attendance register as portfolio of evidence for managers because most of the time, the issues raised are never address, the intranet is never updated and the notice board have gone stale as nothing is ever posted there”* (semi-structured in-depth interviews 2014)

This perspective was supported by another participant who said:

*“The internal newsletter, though we receive it monthly, it will be about twelve (12) pages of with pictures of events, there is hardly information about the developments taking place within the Msunduzi Local Authority that should be of interest to us and emails are only received to inform us that a certain manager is away and another will be acting in the position, something we do not even bother ourselves to read”* (semi-structured in-depth interviews 2014).

According to the findings, it can be understood that a framework does not exist for infrastructure for integration as no person has been appointed specifically for communication integration in the organisation and that the channels of communication are utilised in a manner that is inconsistent.

#### **4.3 Section C: Operationalisation of the measurement instrument of the integration of organisational communication**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher is now able to complete the integrated communication evaluation table, as proposed by Du Plessis and Schoonraad and cited in Barker and Angelopulo (2006:381). Table 4.1 below presents a summary of the findings of the study pertaining to integrated communication at the Msunduzi Local Authority. The various items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 on the items that were tested. This variable gives insight into whether or not integration of communication is practised at Msunduzi Local Authority. A rating closer to a 1 score signifies a favourable evaluation. The scale includes an average rating of 3. The rating closer to a score of 5 signifies an unfavourable evaluation.

**A: STAKEHOLDER ORIENTATION AND DIFFERENTIATION** (in relation to Internal Stakeholders)

1. It always happens
2. It happens most of the time
3. It happens sometimes
4. It almost never happens
5. It never happens

Dimension	Activity	Measurement				
		1	2	3	4	5
Stakeholder focus	Are stakeholder changes monitored regularly?				x	
	Are stakeholder groups differentiated?				x	
	Is message consistency to overlapping stakeholder groups monitored?				x	
	Do quality relationships exist with all stakeholder groups?				x	
Purposeful dialogue	Does the organisation interact regularly with stakeholders?			x		
	Is feedback from stakeholders maximised?				x	
	Are contact points with stakeholders prioritised?			x		
	Are contact points with stakeholders optimised?			x		
	Does the organisation strive towards a balance between mass, personalised and interactive media in its communication with stakeholders?				x	
Relationship Management	Are current stakeholders being nurtured?				x	
	Is information about current stakeholders made freely available to all divisions of the organisation?					x

	Do the various divisions make use of existing information about current stakeholders?					x
	Are relationships with stakeholders personalised, based on organisation-wide available information?				x	
<b>B: COORDINATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS</b>						
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It always happens</li> <li>2. It happens most of the time</li> <li>3. It happens sometimes</li> <li>4. It almost never happens</li> <li>5. It never happens</li> </ol>						
Dimension	Activity	Measurement				
		1	2	3	4	5
Cross functional planning and monitoring	Coordinating of planning across divisions			x		
	Cross-functional budget allocation				x	
	Sharing of information across divisions				x	
	Formal interaction between internal divisions		x			
	Informal contact between members of divisions				x	
Zero-based planning	A SWOT analysis is done annually in all planning				x	
	Zero-based planning is done in every division annually				x	
	Organisation-wide, zero-based planning is done annually			x		
Create core competencies	In every division, employees are being trained in communication skills and				x	

	competencies					
	Key members of staff (for example those who have contact with stakeholders) are trained to understand stakeholder behaviour				x	
	Staff members are informed about how the organisation functions across divisions				x	

**C: INFORMATION SHARING**

1. Well established and functional
2. Established but not functioning optimally
3. Established but not functional
4. Exists informally
5. Does not exist

Activity	Measurement				
	1	2	3	4	5
Mechanisms to centralise information about stakeholders		x			
Mechanisms to maintain research information (not tested)					
Mechanisms to make the same information available to all parts of the organisation					x

**D: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

1. It always happens
2. It happens most of the time
3. It happens sometimes
4. It almost never happens
5. It never happens

Dimension	Activity	Measurement				
		1	2	3	4	5
Corporate mission	The corporate mission is incorporated into all operations			x		
	All staff members know what the corporate mission is				x	

	The corporate mission is regularly operationalized into clear, strategic organisational objectives.				x	
	Clear strategic organisational objectives are communicated regularly to all staff members				x	
	Strategic organisational objectives are clearly related to communication objectives				x	
	Strategic organisational objectives are formulated in such a way that all employees are able to apply them to what they are doing				x	
	Employees are reminded about what the organisation stands for (that is, its values)				x	
Strategic consistency	Is the organisation's brand position strategically integrated into all brand messages (the big idea)?			x		
	Are the communication dimensions of all brand contacts consistent (not only the planned brand contacts)?			x		
<b>E: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INTEGRATION</b>						
1. Well established and functional 2. Established but not functioning optimally 3. Established but not functional 4. Exists informally 5. Does not exist						
Activity		Measurement				
		1	2	3	4	5
A person or group is responsible for communication integration (integrators)						x

A formal policy regarding communication integration exists at the corporate level					X
A formal policy regarding communication integration exists in every division of the organisation					X
The organisation regularly makes a content analysis of visual corporate identity elements, measuring consistency					X
The organisation regularly makes a content analysis of a sample of all messages originating within it, measuring consistency					X
On a quarterly basis, the organisation updates criteria (derived from the strategic organisational objectives) to be applied in the measurement of message content consistency					X
Mechanisms exist for interaction between internal groups (divisions)		X			
Mechanisms are in place to facilitate interaction with stakeholder groups			X		
Mechanisms are in place to maximise stakeholder feedback				X	

Table 4.1: Outline of key findings pertaining to the measurement of the level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority (Barker & Angelopulo 2010:438).

#### 4.4 Summary

Chapter four provides the empirical research findings, focusing on the current state of integrated organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority. The purpose of this chapter was to conduct data analysis and present the data gathered through in-depth individual interviews and qualitative content analysis that were focused on the current state of intra-organisational communication and communication integration at the Msunduzi Local Authority. In this chapter, the collected data was analysed using the thematic analysis procedure. Based on the data, all research sub-problems listed in Chapter 1 were addressed and research questions answered.

The next chapter (Chapter five) will provide a discussion of the analysed and categorised data.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented data collected in this study. Data presented in the previous chapter is discussed in this chapter in accordance with the objectives of the study as indicated below:

- To evaluate the state of organisational communication within Msunduzi Local Authority
- To measure the level of communication integration

For the sake of clarity, the findings in this chapter are discussed according to the six research questions and phases of the study outlined in chapter one. Therefore, chapter four and five should be regarded as inter-related rather than discrete, linear phases. The purpose of the study was to provide answers to the following six key research questions:

- Does Msunduzi Local Authority communication have internal stakeholder orientation?
- Is communication aligned with the strategic focus of the organisation?
- How consistent are messages and media used within Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What are the mechanisms put in place to coordinate communication efforts and action within the Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What is the status of free flow of information within the Msunduzi Local Authority?
- Is there infrastructure for the integration of communication messages?

This chapter presents study findings in relation to the above research questions. As outlined in Chapter four, the data was analysed, in part, according to the six integrated communication concepts formulated by Du Plessis and Thomson (2013:437-443). Accordingly, the data was organised into six themes. The findings reported in this chapter are therefore, related to the patterns that emerged from the ten in-depth interviews with employees as well as the content analysis, respectively.

## 5.2 Section A: demographic analysis of participants

This brief section discusses basic demographic data on the subjects that participated in the study. Demographic data discussed include gender, age, ethnic affiliation, level of study and work experience and designation of the participants.

### 5.2.1 Gender and estimated age for employees

From ten (10) employees who participated in the in-depth interviews; four (4) were males and six (6) were females. Table 5.1 below suggests that the majority of employees interviewed were aged between 28 and 45 years.

Age	Number
25-30 years	3
31-36 years	3
37-45 years	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 5.1: Employee age groups

### 5.2.2 Level of education

The majority of employees had at least a first tertiary education degree. Two of the employees had master's degrees. This is pointed out in table 5.2 below.

Level of education	Number
National Diploma	3
First degree	3
Postgraduate degree	2
Masters / doctorate	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 6.2: Employees' level of education



### 5.2.3 Ethnic affiliation

The Msunduzi Local Authority comprise of African, Indian, Coloured and White employees. The majority of participants were Africans and Indians, respectively. Table 5.3 below shows the participants' ethnic distribution.

<b>Employees</b>	<b>Number</b>
African	5
Indian	4
White	0
Coloured	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 5.3: Employees' ethnic affiliation

### 5.2.4 Designation

The majority of employees had between 1 and 12 years work experience. Most of the employees were working with Corporate Business Unit (CBU) and were therefore in a good position to speak clearly about organisational communication and its integration applied within the organisation. Table 5.4 below shows the various sub-units with CBU from which employees were drawn from.

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
Office of the Municipal Manager	6-12
Office of the City Mayor	5-8
Marketing and Communication	10
Call centre	1-5

Table 5.4: Designation

In summary, basic demographic data presented above reveal that the majority of the employees and students participants were Africans and Indians respectively. Most of the employees had between 1 and 12 years work experience and had at least a first tertiary education degree.

### **5.3 Section B: The state of organisational communication**

The following section entails the discussion of findings as per six areas:

#### **5.3.1 Stakeholder orientation and differentiation (employees)**

Data presented in the previous chapter indicates that there is an agreement among employees that the external stakeholders are principally perceived as the most important stakeholders of the Msunduzi Local Authority. The results show that there is an imbalance between the perceived importance of internal stakeholders and the actual attention and resources given to them. Although the Msunduzi Local Authority does to a certain extent recognise the importance of employees, the main focus is predominantly on the external public.

Literature reviewed in chapter three of this study in the context of integrated communication, indicate that the focus is on communication itself implying a two-way process. Integrated communication is built on the premise that there must be interaction between the two forms of communication (internal and external) in an on-going, interactive, independent and synergistic manner (Christensen 2002:162). This is against Duncan's (2001:30) view, who maintains that integrated communication must first exist internally if a company is to communicate effectively externally. To this end, Duncan and Moriarty (1997:23) acknowledge the role of every employee as a corporate brand ambassador and the extent to which every employee needs to support the corporate brand in everything that is said and done. The implication is that internal communication plays a secondary role in the organisation.

It can be concluded that a holistic approach has not yet been taken to focus on internal stakeholders, as the focus is predominantly on external integration. Instead, public relations have played a large role in this process of communication as the organisation seems to focus mainly on building relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, by not giving emphasis to internal communication, there is no way to ensure that one of the fundamental principles of integrated communication, namely that everyone in the organisation has the potential to touch the customer (Maenetja 2009), is put in place.

The findings further revealed that the Communications and Intergovernmental Relations Sub-unit is currently vacant, which imposes challenges on implementation of integrated communication strategy. This contributes to the impediment of the flow of information and ideas within the organisation.

- Political influence and power

Politics and power are highly influential in government organisations, and Msunduzi being a Local Authority is no different. Managers are somewhat threatened by junior employees who hold higher party political positions. There are feelings of prestige and position that have in many cases been hard-won, that the combining of responsibilities as required by integrated communication seems to threaten (Niemann, 2005:175). This is regarded as one of the difficult barriers to overcome, and will have a long-term effect on the acceptance of integrated communication.

- Managerial perceptions

Niemann (2005:173) indicate that the manager's perception on integrated communication causes a barrier, especially when they come from different backgrounds and have different perceptions of what constitutes integrated communication. This challenge also overlaps to the roles that various employees should play in the implementation of integrated communication.

- Resistance to change

Mbatha (2013b) notes that some technologies are not adopted in organisations because people who should adopt them are resistant to change; hence they always prefer to do things in a more traditional way. In situations where integrated communication has to be implemented for the first time, some managers may feel that certain powers are being taken away from them; as such they may resist the change.

In summary, these findings indicate that communication integration is not fully recognised at Msunduzi Local Authority, since the units still function in isolation from one another. This might have been caused by the absence and inefficiency of cross-functional communication that creates a barrier to the communication processes, and therefore contributes to the lack of cohesion.

A study by Nieman (2005:153) indicated that employees can also be integrated through internal marketing, which is defined as a program intended to promote customer-focus and keep employees constantly informed about important activities that affect them and other organisation's stakeholders, who are mostly members of the public. This would in turn increase the morale of the employees and customer-satisfaction. Most of the employees work closely and directly with the consumers, therefore, they should be entitled to access any information that would make them better equipped to perform their work.

In summary, the findings suggest that the Msunduzi Local Authority has not employed integrated communication to include employees in its strategic focus. The attempt to create and maintain good public relations seems to play a big role in the organisation's process of communication. This is perceived so because the organisation focuses largely on developing relationships with external stakeholders at the expense of internal stakeholders, employees. Failure to pay attention to internal communication makes it very hard for the Msunduzi Local Authority to ensure that one of the important measures of integrated communication, recognition of all stakeholders is achieved.

The following section is a discussion on communication alignment with the strategic focus of the Msunduzi Local Authority.

### ***5.3.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation***

There seems to be little connection between the alignment of communication and the corporate strategy. The evidence suggests that employees have a clear understanding of the objectives of the organisation. The organisation seems to have communicated the organisation's vision to its employees and introduced new employees to the culture of the organisation. Evidence further suggests that the organisation uses internal communication to ensure that every employee understands the organisation's objectives, and their role in achieving the vision. This finding is in agreement with literature reviewed that suggests that engaging employees and promoting a strong vision is one of the strategies of creating a strong communication strategy linked to the programme strategic focus (Gayeski & Woodward1996).

The literature shows that engaging employees with a strong vision is one way of building a strong internal brand. It was clear from the content analysis that efforts were made to communicate the values and the vision of the organisation to the employees via the annual report. This notion is supported by Lung (2007) who emphasised that an organisation can improve its employee engagement, dramatically, by facilitating the building of an effective communication strategy, which will see employees supporting the organisation and its goals. When employee engagement is enhanced, through effective internal communication, employee morale will be boosted, and challenges such as lethargy, absenteeism, and low creativity will be reduced. The organisation seems to have capitalised on the use of an intranet as a mechanism for information sharing and promotion of the organisational values (Mutinta 2014). For instance, as the organisation is able to put the annual report information on the organisation intranet site, one can only assume that a great deal of information has been shared throughout the organisation and that the organisation's employees are living the corporate values. Creating this alignment is vital for the organisation, as companies depend on their employees for the achievement of their strategic objectives (Maenetja 2009).

The following section discusses the consistency of messages within the Msunduzi Local Authority.

### ***5.3.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation***

Evidence showed that the components of the Msunduzi Local Authority adhere to a corporate template (letterhead, memo, report-writing and presentation). Stationery, signs or emblems are printed in the correct colours, in the correct typeface and in the right size. This demonstrates corporate integrity and provides a platform for integrated communication and message consistency. This is in line with Kitchen (1999:235), who contends that the raising of a corporate umbrella over all communication activities makes sense, the characteristics of which are: order, uniformity, rules and regulations, policies and procedures with an emphasis on stability, predictability and smooth operation. In concurrence, Du Plessis and Thomson (2013) and Du Plessis and Schoonraad (2006) argue that to have effective integrated communication, a programme or organisation should have a unique design or symbol to make stakeholders distinguish and identify the brand.

The findings suggest that there is no forum for employees to engage each other on several communication matters and to guide the development and implementation issues of the communication strategy. Duncan (2002), states that when an organisation has no clearly established internal communication system, the whole process of internal communication lacks influence on stakeholders.

The following section discusses the coordination of messages within the Msunduzi Local Authority.

#### ***5.3.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions***

In the broader sense the intranet was indicated as being an increasingly used communication tool for interacting with stakeholders.

However, central information from senior management does not appear to be adequately disseminated to the divisions. What emerges is that the organisation is still working in departmentalism. For instance, the various sections or divisions of the organisation still function in isolation from one another to a large extent. In this regard, a situation exists where divisions operate in silos when dealing with the same stakeholders regarding different issues. It appears that it may be the absence and inefficiency of cross-functional communication that creates a barrier to the communication processes and therefore contributes to the lack of a sense of cohesion. In other words, operational plans and policies in internal divisions are developed without input from other divisions. This is contrary to the views of Duncan (2002:58) who advocates that integrated communication is and must be a cross-functional process which involves all key business activities and takes all the stakeholders into account. The goal is to get all the communication messages lined up so that the organisation can send out consistent and clear messages to its employees. Integrated communication therefore involves the creation of links between all departments and employees in an organisation. It requires organisations to co-ordinate their various strategies and messages so that they can engage coherently and meaningfully with their target audience. The analysis reveals that there is continuous fragmentation of communication activities, due to insufficient co-ordination and planning, therefore losing efficiency.

Additionally, the study found that intra-organisational communication at Msunduzi Local Authority is a one-way formal process, in which a manager would only communicate with an intention to give instructions, to inform about rules and regulations, and to inform about decisions that have already been taken. As such, the communication flow is downward and makes no provision for the engagement, interaction with or getting feedback from employees unless otherwise indicated. The level of communication within Msunduzi Local Authority is one that takes a form of multi-group communication as it involved the formal sharing of work-related information.

The responsibility of intra-organisational communication at Municipality Local Authority is shared in a way that each source of information is a communicator at that time and hence responsible for selecting the suitable channel of passing the information. All strategic executives who serve as heads of departments are responsible for communication related to their units/departments and are thus accountable for disseminating information within their units. However, their target recipients are those managers who report directly to them, who in turn are then also accountable and responsible for cascading communication and information to their subordinates. Some strategic executives or heads of departments made efforts to communicate with staff while some do not.

Mutinta (2014) indicates that poor cross-functional communication may be caused by the fact that communication strategies are devised without departments effectively exchanging information with each other. This notion is in agreement with the theoretical framework underpinning the study that holds that to have internal integrated communication all key stakeholders should work together. In addition, Du Plessis and Thomson (2013) argue that integrated communication can only be realised when there is a cross-functional process on all communication activities in an organisation. What Plessis and Thomson (2013) recommend is that all communication messages should have a control place where they are sent to. The latter will ensure that messages circulated to stakeholders are consistent and clear.

Furthermore, the organisation faces a challenge that there has never been an adopted communication strategy and communication policy in place, which should facilitate the provision of effective and efficient organisational communication. There is also no alignment between the organisation's strategic focus and communication. Therefore, this indicates that there is a great need to adopt a cohesive and strategic approach to communication processes in order to be able to communicate information concerning the available mechanisms, processes and procedures, to encourage and facilitate participation. The development of such a communication strategy would also result in a cohesive connection and alignment between the communication strategy and the strategic focus of the entire organisation, which will result in employees being constantly informed about the progress that the organization makes towards achieving its objectives.

These findings indicate that the organisation is currently following the critical perspective, discussed in Chapter two, which is more concerned with issues of power, dominance and control, and pays little attention to the interactions and interrelations between departments and employees, which should ensure satisfaction and growth of the organisation.

The theory of dialogue states that communication should be a two-way, unrestricted and continuous, authentic process, which makes use of the all-channel network of communication in order to enable communicators an equal opportunity to communicate and participate freely. This is in line with the transactional view of communication, which emphasises that unrestricted, simultaneous, mutual and continuous communication should occur in every communication transaction between employees in an organisation.

Based on these findings, this study contends that Msunduzi Local Authority needs to realise the need for integrated communication processes and that the engagement of employees is a critical aspect of organisational communication strategy.

These findings are in line with the study conducted by Swart (2010) who established that participants felt that strategic communication is a matter of utilising resources optimally in order to maximise returns and to implement strategy, as communication strategists will be able to give advice on the outcomes of business decisions, as opposed to merely implementing top



management decisions and serving a technical function. Swart also argued that strategic communicators must work closely with stakeholders in order to advise top management of the necessary actions to be taken during a crisis. Also in support of these findings, Hayase (2009) argues that organisations that effectively and openly communicate with employees will experience greater organisational commitment, a factor of engagement, but to address open communication, organisations should strive for transparency by providing information that is accurate, timely and reliable.

The following section discusses the sharing information and free flow of messages within the Msunduzi Local Authority.

### ***5.3.5 Sharing of information and free flow of messages***

Findings in chapter four show that the Msunduzi Local Authority does not have adequate plans to help maximise feedback from stakeholders. The programme makes use of information technology by utilising intranet, the main communication strategy. Intranet seems to be a replacement of traditional face-to-face communication and meetings that are no longer used in spite being the most favoured by employees.

Findings reveal that there is uneven flow of information from the top to the bottom and the other way around making communication incomplete or one way. The theoretical framework underpinning this study postulates that to have integrated communication in an organisation, messages should flow evenly to all directions and different ranks to enhance coherence. Findings indicate that communication from junior to senior employees is frustrating and inefficient. Further to this, the findings indicate that each manager at Msunduzi Local Authority was responsible for ensuring that their subordinates were in receipt of crucial organisational information. It was also found that there are communication processes, channels, networks within the Msunduzi Local Authority, which are ineffective, probably due to the fact that the Municipality has not adopted an integrated communication strategy. The Msunduzi Local Authority's process of communication takes the form of a transmission model because it is one-way, formal and downward, through chain, y and wheel networks, explained by Antonis (2005) in the previous sections.

Van Der Walt (2006:418) indicates that the functionalist perspective towards organisational communication is related to the transmissional view of communication, which perceives the practice of communication from a rational approach and regards communication as an event of isolated and fragmented elements that can be observed independently. The language choice, literacy and educational level of target group have often not been taken into consideration when communication messages are sent. The findings indicate that the central information from senior management does not appear to be adequately disseminated to the units or departments; all units/sections of the organization still function in isolation from one another, to a large extent. In this regard, a situation exists where the units operate in silos when dealing with the same stakeholders regarding different issues. It appears that it may be the absence and inefficiency of cross-functional communication that creates a barrier to the communication processes and therefore contributes to the lack of a sense of cohesion.

In addition to that, the transactional view of communication, as explained in Chapter two, is seen as the view of communication that is most capable of presenting a communication model that could contribute to the establishment of a context in which employee's needs are addressed. It makes communication flexible in a way that a communicator and recipient are equal in the communication process. In concurrence, Van Der Walt (2006:419) maintains that the transactional viewpoint regards communication as an event where authentic relationships should occur between the communicators in the process of communication, to ensure a true and pure process. The purpose is to emerge into a new understanding of a situation by re-contextualising through dialogue. It further implies the importance of role-taking between the sender and the receiver in a communication transaction, by indicating that both communicators need to enter into the context of the other to enable a true understanding of the other person's circumstances, to ensure an effective communication process.

These findings indicate that there is a need to supplement communication on the ethics of the organisation, in order to build an understanding of the content of departmental programs. Also of note is that careful thought should be given to media products and platforms that will effectively reach the target audiences. Communicators should also ensure that their work involves

integrating the programs of each department into one organisational program of action. This would help develop a cohesive culture, where everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives.

These findings are also in line with the study conducted by Maenetja (2009), which revealed that the organisation was working in separate silos with little horizontal communication.

### ***5.3.6 Infrastructure for integration***

The theoretical framework underpinning this study postulates that infrastructure for integrated communication provides different areas of a programme or organisation such as employees with the information and keeps organisations viable (Du Plessis and Thomson 2013). From the findings, it was noted that the organisation communicates via electronic channels such as emails and intranets. This came as no surprise because these information communication technology tools have transformed the way communication is conducted in many organisations (Mbatha, Ocholla, and Le Roux 2011; Mbatha 2013). The email was the most used method of passing and receiving work-related information. In support of this finding, Mbatha and Ocholla (2011) in their study on the use of information communication technologies in government departments in Kwa-Zulu Natal established that the email system was the main communication method used by civil servants.

However, messages by e-mail can only be received by certain groups, particularly those with access to the internet of computers. Other challenges with email communication such as misinterpretation, conflicts and problems related to technology, were ignored by the Msunduzi Local Authority, making this kind of communication system ineffective. In line with these findings, Mbatha (2013a) notes that information communication technology tools such as intranet, internet, email, to name but few, are playing a major role in facilitating communication in organisational and societal contexts. For example, the findings depict the intranet as a widely used communication tool for interacting with employees, however serious consideration is not given to those employees who do not have access to the intranets.

Face-to-face communication such as one-on-one meetings, staff meetings, briefing sessions and forums are restricted to managers. The channels and networks of communication utilised within

the organisation are not effective enough as computer technology is the main communication tool, of which a large number of employees do not have access to either a personal computer or the internal electronic network, especially on distant sites of the organisation.

Furthermore, in terms of the Msunduzi's websites, it is recognised that, the responsibility for the technical aspects of the intranet and website rests on the Information Communication Technology sub-unit or section of the Corporate Services Business Unit. These information communication technology experts are responsible for ensuring that the corporate style guidelines are adhered to, and that the quality of the website messages is consistently high. Each department has its own webpage, or section, on the intranet where information about its functions, policies and strategies is posted. There is, however, no monitoring of whether the relevant updated information is maintained on these pages. Mbatha and Lesame (2013) argue that for websites to be relevant and effective to their target audience, they must always display updated information. The study also found that communication channels at Msunduzi Local Authority make no provision for feedback.

The Handbook of Government Communications (2010:68) warns that careful thought should be given to media products and platforms that will effectively reach the employees in a manner that mobilises them for implementation.

Furthermore, the findings prove that intra-organisational communication at the Local Authority does not conform to the systems theory, as there are no evident mutual relations between different organisational components. This does not reflect positively on the organisation since, in reality, each component is dependent on the others to function effectively. This only indicates that no framework exists which incorporates all communication in the organisation.

In line with the study by Maenetja (2009), the findings have shown that although communication infrastructure exists in the organisation in terms of enabling effective communication to take place, the appropriateness, relevance and accuracy of the source of information and the channels through which it is transmitted are not adequate enough. The organisation as a whole appears to be autocratic and directive in nature, with decision-making being centralised to the top of the

organisation. This has in turn resulted to a direct and negative impact on the perceived effectiveness of communication and the level of satisfaction that employees have with communication in the organisation.

#### **5.4 Section C: Summary on the measurement instrument for integration of organisational communication**

Section C of this chapter intends to establish whether or not the applied measurement instrument for integration of organisational communication was effective in measuring integrated communication within Msunduzi Local Authority. A full explanation of the measurement instrument used to evaluate the integration of organisational communication with Msunduzi Local Authority is provided in Chapter three. The measurement instrument includes the six areas of integration as proposed by Du Plessis and Schoonraad and cited in Barker and Angelopulo (2006: 381). These are:

- Internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation
- Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation
- Consistency of messages and media within the organisation
- Co-ordination of communication efforts and action
- Sharing of information and free flow of information
- Infrastructure for integration

The application of the measurement instrument resulted in the following outcomes:

##### **5.4.1 Internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation**

The application of the stakeholder orientation and differentiation measurement instrument helped the researcher to understand that the Msunduzi Local Authority focused primarily on external stakeholders. The integration of internal stakeholders was discovered to be very minimal. This therefore means that the organisation does not place sufficient emphasis on employees as primary stakeholders.

#### 5.4.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation

As a result of the applicability of the alignment of the communication to the corporate strategy of the organisation, it was revealed that the organisation placed minimal emphasis on the alignment of communication to the strategic focus of the organisation. This is because the organisation's current communication organogram has not been filled. However, eminent efforts were made to ensure that communication is aligned to the corporate strategy in the achievement of strategic objectives, and ultimately the achievement of strategic mission.

#### 5.4.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation

The researcher performed a qualitative content analysis to determine message consistency within Msunduzi Local Authority. The researcher therefore, established that all communication processes were controlled separately but were consistent in the terms of the corporate identity in all forms of internal communications and website messages.

#### 5.4.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and action

The measurement instrument for assessing the co-ordination of communication efforts and actions helped to locate specific shortcomings relating to integrated communication, such as the lack of cross-functional planning, which resulted in divisions functioning in silos.

#### 5.4.5 Sharing of information and free flow of information

Through the measurement instrument for assessing the free flow and sharing of information, it discovered that necessary systems for communication were in place, however, they were not used in an efficient and effective manner; the organisation communicators take time to understand the stakeholders and the suitable channels for reaching those stakeholders.

#### 5.4.6 Infrastructure for integration

The applicable infrastructure for integration measured the typical aspects of communication, such as communication structure and systems. The measurement instrument established that information technology had created an infrastructure and numerous opportunities for information sharing within the organisation and such opportunities were not entirely explored.

In conclusion, the researcher maintains that the measurement instrument offered important insights into the way in which communication operates within Msunduzi Local Authority. In essence, the measurement instrument succeeded effectively in measuring the level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority.

### **5.5 Strategies for improving organisational communication**

The study found that employees felt that they were not involved in shaping the direction of the organisation or its operations. Employees revealed that their executives and seniors do not consult them, and when they do express their views, managers are not even interested. This would make them feel that their work was neither appreciated nor recognised, because managers did not really know what they do so they cannot acknowledge or reward it. This, therefore, has resulted in poor performance due to shortage of resources. Most participants also felt that there was a clear dichotomy between management and staff, an 'us' and 'them' syndrome, which crippled efforts of integrated communication.

In order to improve organisational communication, it is crucial to create and maintain mutual relationships between the management and workers. Hume's [sa] shares the same sentiments, arguing that improving internal communication requires careful thought, creativity and detailed planning, as well as monitoring and evaluation of every communication plan. Organisational executives and communicators should always practice accuracy, honesty and ensure comprehension when, and their communication needs to be timely, prepared and delivered competently in order to be successful.

These findings concur with the employee engagement theory, which postulates that an organisation needs to involve its employees in the communication channels as this will motivate them and increase organisational productivity, and in turn greater customer-satisfaction.

This study then argues that, in line with these findings, the organisation needs to prioritise its communication strategy, as a level of communication failure is evidently taking place in each unit/department. This improvement, therefore, should be in line with enhancing communication integration among different units. As Mbatha (2009) rightfully puts it, for any organisation to

achieve its goals, its communication system has to be sound and well understood by everyone in the organisation.

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings as presented in the previous chapter, focusing on the state of intra-organisational communication at the Msunduzi Local Authority, and issues surrounding the controversial implementation of integrated communication. The study found that the theoretical measuring instrument for determining integration of organisational communication underpinning the study (Plessis and Thomson 2013:437-443) offered important insight into the manner integrated communication is applied in the organisation. Based on the findings, the research hypothesis of the study was found true.

The study found that organisational communication at Msunduzi Local Authority was one sided and top down; which indicated that there was little emphasis on feedback from employees. The study revealed that there were more external communication messages than internal, to an extent that the internal stakeholders depended on external media to learn about their organisation. Findings on the consistency of messages revealed that all communications are managed by senior employees within their respective departments and sections; the status of the consistency of messages can be improved if a comprehensive approach can be adopted in communicating internal messages in addition to employing diverse communication channels. On infrastructure for integration, the study found that there is infrastructure and several prospects for information sharing in the organisation created by information communication and technology though not fully explored. With regards to the free flow and sharing of information, the study established that the required systems for communication exist but not adequately utilised. Findings on the co-ordination of communication efforts and actions to promote integrated communication showed flaws. It also appeared that the departments in the organisation function in silos due to lack of cross-functional planning.

The next chapter (Chapter six) summarises, concludes, and recommends, based on the findings of the study.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter six completes the full circle of the research study. This chapter summarises the findings of the study. It also presents conclusions drawn from the reviewed literature in chapter two and from research findings obtained from the interviews and content analysis, as presented in chapter four and discussed further in chapter five. The main conclusions of the study presented are encapsulated by focusing on the six research questions underpinning the study. Limitations of the study are briefly discussed. The recommendations stem from a consideration of the responses, at the general level of concern about the current position of organisational communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority, taking into account and drawing on information from other sources. In this same chapter recommendations are made also based on the objectives of the study. The recommendations made are, however, not intended to be prescriptive, but are rather road maps for improving communication and developing a comprehensive and integrated communication in the organisation.

#### **6.2 Summary**

##### ***6.2.1 Stakeholder orientation and differentiation***

The study found that the organisation predominantly focuses on external messages communicated to external stakeholders but does not sufficiently communicate with its internal stakeholders for example its employees. The two aspects of communication, the internal and external, has been pursued separately, whereby significant amount of communication has been directed to external and not internal stakeholders. The working relationship is not mutual between the managers and the staff. The organisation is divided in terms of communication and relationship; the managers have their own group and the staff their own. The employees are not part of the decision-making process. They will be lucky if they receive information about decisions taken. The study also found that the lack of communication between managers and employees often lead to conflicts.

Research findings show that employees, especially those in lower positions are not integrated in the organisation at Msunduzi Local Authority. These employees do not have a clear

understanding of the organisation's vision and are not educated enough to be focused. The organisation does not consider internal marketing, intended to promote customer focus and keep employees constantly informed about important activities which affect them and the organization's stakeholders as members of the public. This will in turn increase employees' morality and satisfy consumers. Most employees work closely and directly with consumers, therefore should be able to access any information that can equip them to perform their work better. The participants indicated that it is only in the strategic management level that integration takes place. There is a Strategic Management Committee and an Operation Management Committee that take decisions on all matters that concern the running of the organisation. This confirms the hypothesis made in chapter one, that communication integration is practised at the strategic or senior level of the organisation.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:77) purports that communication in this case is a downward and one-way movement via several levels of the organisation to different receivers. Information in this regard is task-oriented and extremely accurate because the channels of communication used are clear and the commands are direct.

### ***6.2.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation***

According to Angelopulo (2000:40) integrated communication is defined as 'the strategic management process of organisationally controlling and influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful, data driven-dialogue to create and nourish long-term profitable relationships with stakeholders'. It becomes clear that each member of the organisation have a role to play to ensure that integration is achieved. Niemann-Struweg and Globler (2006:58) indicate respectively that integrated communication enables the organisation that uses its mission to be prominent in the long-term strategic organisational plan (strategic intent) in building the brand relationship with stakeholders by emphasising the corporate integrity of the organisation. The effect of integrated communication would result in a centralised planning, implementation and budgeting in all its communication functions. Neuman (2000:179) indicates that integrated communication create true accountability by maximising resources and linking communication activities directly to organisational goals such as the business management of the organization which then positively affect the organisation's income statement through increased effectiveness.

In terms of the organization's Integrated Development Plan (2012)

The Vision of the 'City of Choice, Second to None' is to develop a city where its entire citizenry can:

- Own a financially viable and well governed city
- Live peacefully
- Move about freely and in a cost-effective manner
- Work to earn a living, thereby reducing unemployment, poverty, and inequality
- Play to lead a healthy lifestyle, thus increasing life expectancy

It is clear that every employee has a role to play in ensuring that the vision is realised, however, employees also need to know how the vision will be achieved and what role they need to play. Duncan (2002:22) states that many employees do not have a basic idea about what their organisation do or manufacture, how it operates or what their specific role is in building and maintaining stakeholder relationships. The most common reason for this is they would not been integrated into the organisation.

### ***6.2.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation***

The findings suggest that there is lack of common practices across the programme as far as internal communication planning was concerned. Reports show that there is no consistency in the manner internal messages are planned since each department seem to do its own planning. The majority of the participants were concerned about the lack of distribution channels for messages as a means of communication. Participants thought that the use of various proper and accessible channels of communication can be useful strategies of ensuring that the important information reaches the stakeholders. The model underpinning this study states that employing specific media to facilitate the flow of information in different departments within the programme can help to give direction in which the organisation is going and why it is important to head that specific way (Du Plessis & Schoonraad 2006).

#### ***6.2.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions***

The findings indicate that intranet is mostly used to enhance the exchange of messages among employees within the organisation. However, messages developed and communicated by the top management team are not effectively communicated to all employees as some channels used to disseminate the information are not accessible to some employees; as a result, departments work in silos even though they interact with the stakeholders. Therefore, the main problem facing the organisation in terms of the co-ordination of communication efforts and actions is the lack of cross-functional communication making it difficult to have efficient communication and the lack of cohesion. Mutinta (2014) contends that poor cross-functional communication may be caused by the fact that communication strategies are devised without departments effectively exchanging information with each other. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013) argue that integrated communication can only be realised when there is a cross-functional process on all communication activities in an organisation. What Plessis and Thomson (2013) recommend is that all communication messages should have a control place where they are sent to.

#### ***6.2.5 Sharing of information and free flow of information***

The findings presented revealed that Msunduzi Local Authority does not have a proper and coordinated communication system. The departments work in vacuums and priority is put on external communication. There are also no communication strategies or policies that guard the communication of managers and supervisors with subordinates. The study also discovered that the organisational structure of Msunduzi Local Authority was being reviewed and that the organisation was in the process of soliciting intervention from the Government Communication and Information System to ensure that role of communication is recognised and that communication components are established.

The employees felt that they were not involved in shaping the direction of the organisation or its operations. They mentioned that no-one consulted them about anything and that when they expressed their views; managers did not listen to them. The staff also felt that their work was not appreciated or recognised because managers did not really know what exactly they do, therefore could not acknowledge or reward them. This resulted in poor performance of employees as they also lacked resources. This was cited as the main reason for not delivering quality services. Within the organization was an 'us' and 'them' syndrome and also a problem of listening.

### ***6.2.6 Infrastructural integration***

The study found that there is efficient infrastructure at Msunduzi Local Authority for an integration mechanism. However, the channels and networks of communication utilized within the organisation are not effective enough. Computers are the main communication tool used yet most employees do not have access to either a personal computer or the internal electronic network, especially when working distant sites of the organisation. The communication process is formal, written and one-way. The communication system is not integrated and no provision of two-way communication is made for formal communication. The study revealed that the organisation uses only English as a language of communication; therefore consideration is not made for the different levels of literacy among the employees who do not understand English, especially if there are difficult terms in the communication messages.

## **6.3 Conclusion**

### ***6.3.1 Stakeholder orientation and differentiation***

Based on the findings regarding internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation, the researcher is now able to present the following conclusions.

There was an agreement among employees that the communities are perceived as the primary stakeholders of the organisation. This is revealed through the practical resources and attention given to the communities compared to employees. The main criticism is that the Msunduzi Local Authority focuses predominantly on external messages to stakeholders, without sufficiently emphasising internal messages to its internal stakeholders, such as employees. Limited attention has been giving to internal stakeholders. In other words, the two aspects of communication, namely internal and external communication, have apparently been pursued separately with a significant amount of communication being directed to external stakeholders. Hence by implication, internal communication plays a secondary role in the organisation's communications which consequently implies that the employees are not receiving important information before the external stakeholders do.

Hayase (2002) asserts that effective organisational communication extends beyond employees satisfied with receiving information; employees also want to work for an organisation that believes that they can contribute substantially to the value and decision-making process. Smith (2005) believes that organisations need to improve employee engagement in order to ensure that employees have an understanding of the organisation's mission, objectives and that the contribution of employees is recognised.

### ***6.3.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation***

Based on the results of the study regarding the alignment of communication with the corporate strategy, the researcher presents the following conclusions.

The findings indicate that many employees and peer educators understand the strategic objectives of the programme. Findings reveal orientation activities were led by the human resources sub-unit within corporate services business unit. These orientation activities were used as internal form of communication to ensure that employees had an understanding of the objectives and vision of the organisation and how employee would be contribute towards the achievement of the objectives and vision. The study indicates that the strategy of employing orientation activities was effective in imparting the objectives and vision of the organisation to employees. This finding is in agreement with literature reviewed that suggests that engaging employees and promoting a strong vision is one of the strategies of creating a strong communication strategy linked to the programme strategic focus (Kitchen and Schultz 2001:12).

### ***6.3.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation***

Based on the findings regarding the consistency of messages within the Msunduzi Local Authority, discussed in Chapter 5, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions.

The Msunduzi Local Authority has ensured that its services and information are consistently represented in a recognisable corporate style. With regard to the uniformity of the look and feel of posters and newsletters, the organisation is always consistent. All published material adheres to the accepted corporate style and is easily and instantly identifiable. According to Kitchen and Schultz (2001:67), for an organisation to consider true integrated communication, it should create

global processes for the internal and external standardisation of operating, producing, transporting and communicating. The reason for the standardisation is to ensure the consistency of all messages. Findings show that all communication activities in the organisation are managed by senior employees and consistent in terms of programme identity by using the organisation's identity. The status of the consistency of messages within the Msunduzi Local Authority can be improved if a comprehensive approach can be used in communicating internal messages.

#### ***6.3.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions***

Based on the findings regarding the co-ordination of communication efforts and action in the organisation, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions.

The findings indicate that there is an overwhelming focus on a one-way and downward communication, minimum sharing of information across divisions and insulation and isolation of employees by those with senior and higher level positions within the organisation. At present, it is the senior management that deals with all the communication and information giving and there is little opportunity for candid discussion or feedback. There are no ways of easy access to information for all employees. For example, some of the employees do not have a reliable means and access to computers and the internet, which make computers a limited tool of communication. This shows that Msunduzi Local Authority understand the role of intraorganisational communication to a certain extent. Its communication process relates to the positional tradition of communication and critical perspective which respectively state that, the organisation is concerned with issues relating to power, dominance and control.

The main criticism is that the organisation is working in separate silos with little horizontal communication. Hence, the overall score for the co-ordination of communication efforts and action in the organisation is low, which means that co-ordination happens sometimes, not always. This is a reflection of inadequate cross-functional planning and monitoring within the organisation. It has become clearer that the organisation needs to prioritise its communication strategies. At all levels of communication is evidence of failure and less integration of communication as revealed by the data extracted in the study. This shows that the communication strategies are ineffective. Improvement in interaction and collaboration between departments or business units can result in an improved organisational culture and employee satisfaction. The

organisation needs to look at its intra-organisational communication from a holistic perspective with issues such as the organisational culture and the nature of business that impact on the effectiveness of communication which then impact on the organisation's service delivery initiatives.

The study provided a realisation that organisational communication is broad in conceptual content and impact. This is because the concept is a complex, multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon that requires interaction and collaboration that is critical to integrated communication with an emphasis on creating mutual understanding, shared purpose and instilling mutual respect and teamwork within the organisation. The significance of communication becomes particularly vital when recognition is given that communication does not take place in isolation and has an impact on other parts of the organisation. Organisational communication is in essence the bridge between the organisation's strategy and its successful implementation. Quantifying its effectiveness is as important as any other business performance measurement.

### ***6.3.5 Sharing of information and free flow of information***

Based on the findings regarding the free flow and sharing of information presented in Chapter 5, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions.

Communication at Msunduzi Local Authority is still primarily one-way with little consideration of lower level feedback. However, some information is shared with employees. The measurement on the level of communication integration indicates that the free flow and the sharing of information in the organisation are established but not fully functional. It became clear that communication is done only when giving instructions and when passing information about new decisions and any other information that needs to be conveyed to employees. There is no form of easy access to information for all employees. There has been an overwhelming focus on one-way, downward communication, with the minimum sharing of information across divisions and the insulation and isolation of employees at senior levels. At present, communication focuses on giving information from a management point of view, with little opportunity for candid discussion or feedback.



### ***6.3.6 Infrastructural integration***

Based on the results of the study regarding the infrastructure for integration, this section presents the following conclusions.

There is no efficient infrastructure for an integration mechanism. Despite utilising a variety of internal communication channels of which computer technology is the primary means, the infrastructure for communication integration has been established, but is not functional. Some employees do not have access to either a personal computer or the internal electronic network, especially on distant sites of the organisation and therefore this tool is limited as a means of communication. The main tools used as means of communication are limited. Internal publication is viewed as a second important source of information. However, the newsletter is neither user-friendly for most of the employees nor it is accessible as it is also circulated electronically. The newsletter also does not seem to consider the fact that there is a high level of illiteracy within the organisation. The internal newsletter should therefore be produced regularly and distributed both in hard copy and electronically. The newsletter should have a feedback column and a page letter if it is to make a positive impact. The newsletter should serve not only as a conduit for corporate information, news and views but also as a forum for constructive debate. The contents of the internal publications should also be shaped by employee feedback. In this regard, appropriate methods of communication for different employee groups are taken into consideration. There is need for interpretations and translation services whereby information is written and produced in different formats and languages.

The organisation cannot depend on new technology alone to deliver key messages to its audience. A variety of communication vehicles should be put in place that connect with key audiences at all levels. The organisation should communicate fully with all employees in a timely and appropriate way, using the full range of communication vehicles available, such as team briefing, newsletters, the intranet and meetings to facilitate this. Site workers should be provided with communication tools which would provide a two-way communication and collaboration with multiple team members. In this regard, the Msunduzi Local Authority should create a communication strategy that would combine the use of technology with face- to-face meetings. The sub-hypothesis that the infrastructure for communication is functional prove to be correct, although the researcher

feel that the organisation needs to explore more channels of communication as it should not depend on new technology alone to deliver key messages to its constituency.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

#### ***6.4.1 Stakeholder orientation and differentiation***

The Msunduzi Local Authority should be concerned with managing the communication process related to keeping its internal stakeholders, namely the employees, well-informed. In that regard, employees should be the starting point of the organisation's integration process. Employees should be informed, empowered and motivated to assist in this quest. Since employees are the organisation's first "ambassador" in presenting and defending the organisation's image, it is extremely important to keep them informed about the organisation's orientation, priorities and vision. This is supported by Wilkins (2010) who asserts that the way communication messages are distributed and the way target audiences receive and respond to these messages is critical to the success of any organization. This is because organisational communication is highly relevant to the overall performance and strategic outcomes of the organisation.

The key principles emanating from what the participants shared are as follows:

- An open and honest culture builds a foundation in which changes can be developed and recognition of employees established.
- Employees need to be clear about what the organisation expects of them.
- Achievements of employees need to be recognised.
- Each employee should be valued, well-motivated and well equipped.
- All employees need to be given the tools of trade they need to do their work.
- Leaders need to encourage creativity and mutual relationships

Furthermore, the Msunduzi Local Authority should develop a strategy which has both an external and internal focus since effective internal and external communication does not occur unless efforts are strategically planned. One issue which should be addressed is the engagement of employees based in geographically remote or technologically poor locations. The organisation should communicate with all employees equally, irrespective of their location, working hours or status in the organisation. Revising or drafting policies would promote a more consistent

approach. In reality, internal and external communication are inextricably intertwined, feeding into each other in a complex interaction which, if managed properly, offers the prospect of a total communications programme capable of playing a key part in the promotion of a quality-centred culture in the organisation (Maenetja 2009).

#### ***6.4.2 Communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation***

The alignment between communication and an organisation's strategic initiatives has become increasingly important over the years. The literature reviewed showed that communication objectives should be aligned with the organisational goal and more importantly, the strategic intent of the organisation. All communication functions in the organisation should be integrated and should function as an overall, centralised communication department and not as a separate department as this can promote turf battles between various communication functions. Thus, a centralised internal communication team should be formed with a mandate to radically transform the communication environment and engage employees more fully in the organisation.

In addition, the organisation should also ensure proper consistent preparation and organisation of communication messages. "Then, and only then, can communication management be regarded as being a strategic contribution to the business management of the organisation" (Niemann, 2005:30). Effective communication is required to ensure healthy relations, trust, and loyalty and to avoid propaganda and anxiety. Improvement of communication can be enhanced by obtaining a two-way communication and opening more communication channels thus adopting a transactional model of communication where engagement and dialogue with employees is a normal practice.

#### ***6.4.3 Consistency of messages and media within the organisation***

The Msunduzi Local Authority should at all times ensure that the look and feel of messages is consistent. There should be people responsible for ensuring that guidelines are developed, disseminated and monitored accordingly to ensure that they are implemented. The better the strategic integration of the brand's position into all the brand messages, the more consistent and well defined the organisation's identity and reputation. Thus, through the presentation of a

reassuring sense of order and direction, integrated communications help define and nurture long-term relationships with potential as well as existing employees (Maenetja 2009).

#### ***6.4.4 Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions***

In view of the above conclusion on the co-ordination of communication efforts and actions within the Msunduzi Local Authority, it is recommended that all communication functions in the should rather be integrated and functions as an overall, centralised communication department, as opposed to separate communication functions in various departments, as the latter could promote turf battles between various communication functions. Thus, a centralised internal communication team should be formed with a mandate to radically transform the communication environment and engage employees more fully in the organisation. According to the handbook government communications (2010:75), GCIS provides guidance and helps municipalities to establish fully fledged communication components and develop communication strategies and policies that will ensure fruitful communication for the benefit of all. The municipality should make an initiative to create and maintain a positive relationship with the GCIS. An effective communication system would mean that the municipality:

- Educates it employees about the culture and values of the organisation
- Aligns employee's actions with customer needs
- Provide employees with financial information and objectives of the organisation
- Provides information on the values of their total reward programs
- Explains and promote new programs and policies
- Integrates new employees into the organization
- Exhibits strong leadership by management during organisational change (Yates, 2006).

Furthermore, Msunduzi Local Authority needs to consider establishing good relations with the Government Communications and Information System which plays a crucial role in providing guidelines and assistance in overall government communications and which ensures that the citizens and employees are fully informed about the government programmes that are meant to make their lives easier. The outcomes of a mutual relationship with the Government Communications and Information System would be:

- Promotion of understanding of the programmes thereby helping ensure that the employees play their role to the fullest in accelerating progress towards achieving all the set objectives of the organisation.
- To create a deeper understanding and appreciation of the programmes; activities and decisions on specific matters of policy amongst the employees.
- Mobilisation of the employees to take part in the implementation of the programmes of the organisation as partners for the improvement of services.
- Sharing of best practices and information on intraorganisational communication, including distribution platforms, products, coordination of annual programmes and so forth. (The handbook of government communication, 2010:6)

To this end, a comprehensive communications strategy should be developed and it should include innovative ways of encouraging some forms of interdivisional/departmental co-operation. One option for integration is to create a position designed solely to oversee the integration of communication messages across the organisation.

#### ***6.4.5 Sharing of information and free flow of information***

The communication process is incomplete if it is solely one-way. The communication system should be two-way and a number of interactive mechanisms should be put in place which would enable managers and employees to become involved in the decision-making process, to be consulted and to give feedback and express their concerns. The handbook of government communication (2010:34) indicates that the first step towards a successful communication system is research, followed by the implementation of a communication strategy and policy. Msunduzi Local Authority should develop a comprehensive communication strategy that includes innovative ways of encouraging some forms of interdivisional/departmental co-operation. A strategic plan is required to improve co-ordination of communication and co-operation between the management and employees. This will help in disseminating information internally so that all members of staff are informed of the decisions, activities and achievements of employers. This will also ensure prompt and effective communication and help in identifying employees who need training, whose work involve aspects of communication with the public.

In addition this training will empower employees as they will learn the principles of Batho Pele. The handbook of government communication (2010:74) assert that municipalities establish internal communicators' forum to ensure sharing of information, free flow of messages and that concerns regarding access to information are addressed and decisions communicated. The executive managers should ensure that departmental meetings take place frequently to deal with issues that require their attention. Meetings should also be scheduled, where all staff members and managers meet to deliver reports on the municipality's financial status, operational status, and other plans and to ensure that staff members are appreciated for the work they do.

Maenetja (2009) emphasises that the management should not merely post news on the intranet and assume that communication has been achieved. Instead, there should be a mechanism for employees to respond to, or initiate, a dialogue upwards. The internal newsletter should be produced and distributed both in hard copy and electronically and in both English and Isizulu. The newsletter should have a feedback column and letter page if it is to make a positive impact. The newsletter should serve not only as a conduit for corporate information, news and views but also as a forum for constructive debate. The contents of the internal publication should also be shaped by employee feedback. Channels of communication such as notice boards, the intranet, newsletters and e-mail are efficient modes of communication for certain messages, the power of face-to-face communication should not be underestimated. Face-to-face communication should be preferred over e-mail and internal publications to create organisational identification. Therefore, all employees should have periodical face-to-face communication opportunities with their managers. A significant level of communications occurs at a face-to-face level, either through existing large events or through mechanisms such as away-days.

#### ***6.4.6 Infrastructural integration***

The handbook of government communications (2010:68) warns that careful thought should be given to media products and platforms that will effectively reach the employees in a manner that mobilizes them for implementation. In order for communications to be successful research should be conducted to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of communication; to identify and assess information needs of the employees; to identify appropriate messages and strategies to

effectively communicate with the employees; to identify the appropriate media platforms to communicate messages and to ensure that the communication needs of the employees are communicated to the management in order for them to be addressed.

Integrated organisational communication does not refer only to the few official channels of communication within the municipality such as emails, circulars and notice boards. It is also not a process that goes from the management at the top to the cleaners at the bottom. Strategic organisational communication refers to the constant interactions that convey messages and meaning; it encompasses both the mentioned communication such as emails, circulars, notice boards and also meetings, internal newsletters and casual interactions within the municipality. The aim of intra-organisational communication is, firstly to improve and increase staff knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives of the municipality and promote ways of improving communication between Business Units or Departments. Secondly to develop and maintain a two-way flow of information within the municipality and ensure that all staff members are informed about all the decisions, policies, programmes, events and issues in a timely, effective, accurate and consistent manner (The handbook of government communication, 2010:74).

Furthermore, the management should allow for unplanned and unsolicited feedback from employees and create platforms where employees can engage in dialogue about specific topics or concerns. Planned meetings, unplanned meetings, and constant communications are important ways of maintaining solid relationships with staff members. Integrated communication is crucial and involves the creation of links between all departments and employees in an organisation. It requires organisations to co-ordinate their various strategies and messages so that they can engage coherently and meaningfully with employees.

## **6.6 Limitations of the study**

The inherent limitation of this study is that the findings were obtained from the first application of the measurement instrument, and also that the study was conducted in one organisation. The findings discussed in this study therefore, may be taken as indicative but would require further testing and a wider sample before a final conclusion can be drawn. As for the sampling procedure

although the researcher ensured a representative sample some biases might have occurred. The sample was restricted by time constraints on the researcher's part and the sample size was not enough to satisfy the research objectives as data collection was limited to senior officials within Msunduzi Local Authority.



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## **Annexure A: INFORMATION NOTE FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

### **Introduction:**

This research is an evaluation of organisational communication and measurement of the level of communication integration within the Msunduzi Local Authority. The researcher intends to evaluate the current state of organisational communication and measure the level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority. The proposed methods of data collection are individual semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis.

Individual semi-structured interviews are conducted with employees of the organisation. The researcher will make use of a tape recorder and note taking in order to capture the responses for interpretation and data analysis basis. The researcher would sincerely appreciate each respondent honest views and feelings about all issues and any information relevant in order to make a success of this exercise. The interview will last for not more than an hour and the interviewee is requested to sign at the bottom giving consent that the responses provided can be used to present findings. Should participant wish to remain anonymous; they have a right to do so. Participation is completely voluntary; participants have a right to withdraw at any time during the interview. The time and effort of each participant is highly appreciated. The interview questions will cover the themes indicated in the table below:

NO:	THEMES:
1.	Internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation
2.	Alignment of communication to the strategic focus of the organisation
3.	Consistency of messages and media within the organisation
4.	Co-ordination of communication efforts and actions
5.	Sharing of information
6.	Free flow of communication messages
7.	Infrastructure for communication
8.	Strategies that can be implemented to improving integrated communication
9.	General

Signature of interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annexure B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Participant			
demographic information of participant	1	Age	
	2	Level of study	
	3	Race	
	4	Gender	
	5	Level of education	
	6	Number of work experience	
	7	Designation	
Date of in-depth interview			
Time allocation			

### Introductions

**Establish Rapport:** My name is Ntobeko Ngcobo, I am a student doing my Masters in Communication Science with UNISA - under the supervision of Dr Blessing Mbatha. Thank you for making time to be part of this interview. As per my email, I have been granted permission to conduct my research at Msunduzi Local Authority via the Marketing and Communication Manager.

**Purpose:** I would like to ask you some questions about the current state of organisational communication and level of communication integration within Msunduzi Local Authority. The intention is to get information to answer the following research questions which will ultimately address the sub-problems of the study:

- Does Msunduzi Local Authority communication have internal stakeholder orientation?
- Is communication aligned with the strategic focus of the organisation?
- How consistent are messages and media used within Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What are the mechanisms put in place to coordinate communication efforts and action within the Msunduzi Local Authority?
- What is the status of free flow of information within the Msunduzi Local Authority?



- Is there infrastructure for the integration of communication messages?

Motivation: I hope to use this information to complete my dissertation as well as make the findings available to the organisation to provide guidance on the current state of integrated organisational communication and recommendations for improvement.

**Duration:** The interview comprises of 10 questions and will take between 30-45 minutes of your time. Is there anything you would like to clarify before we begin?

### **1. Internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation**

The intention is to get participants reactions to the existence of the internal stakeholder orientation and differentiation in the organisation.

- a) What is the quality of the relationship between the management and employees?
- b) Who are the most important stakeholders for Msunduzi Local Authority?

### **2. Communication alignment with the strategic focus**

The aim was to get reactions from participants, to the organisation's communication alignment with its strategic focus. A clear explanation on what is meant by 'communication alignment with the strategic focus of the organisation' was provided using practical examples.

- a) How is communication factored into the strategic focus of the organisation?
- b) How is the strategic focus (vision) being shared with internal stakeholders?
- c) What is your understanding of the organisation's strategic focus (vision)?

### **3. Coordination of communication efforts and actions**

An explanation of the coordination of communication efforts and actions was given, thereafter the following questions were asked to determine the plans in place for coordinating communication efforts and actions within the organisation.

- a) What mechanisms are put in place to enable feedback from employees?

- b) What are the plans put in place to put together and disseminate information within the organisation?

**4. Existence of the consistency of messages/media within Msunduzi Local Authority (*the existence of consistency of messages and media within the Msunduzi Local Authority was measured through qualitative content analysis*)**

**5. Sharing of information and free flow of messages**

A clear and brief explanation on what was meant by ‘free flow and sharing of information’ was given, thereafter, the following questions were asked.

- a) What are the plans put in place to ensure that the same information is shared to all the departments?
- b) Who is responsible for sharing of information within the organisation?

**6. Infrastructure for integration**

The focus was on getting the reactions of participants to the ‘infrastructure for integration within the organisation. The meaning of ‘infrastructure for integration in the programme’ was provided with practical examples.

- a) Who is responsible for sharing of information within the organisation?
- b) What channels of communication are utilised to ensure that messages are reaching the intended recipients?

**CLOSING REMARKS**

An opportunity was offered for any short final comments participants would like to make. Thank you very much for your input today. I will be following up this research with an email to request additional background/reference materials. The information you provided will help me write my dissertation and inform the Msunduzi Local Authority to improve their integrated communication efforts.

## **Annexure C: TRANSCRIPT OF SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

1. Who are the most important stakeholders for Msunduzi Local Authority?

*The stakeholders were taken into consideration; however, the Msunduzi Local Authority cares more about the public than the staff members because the public are main shareholder.*

2. What is the quality of the relationship between the management and employees?

*Employees do not have enough information and are not included in a more interactive communication process. The media is always first to be aware of the company's direction and employees get the information through the media.*

3. How is communication factored into the strategic focus of the organisation?

*The IDP unit coordinates the framework, timetable and measurement criteria across the organisation, and it is this framework that helps us to align the rest of the department.*

4. What is your understanding of the organisation's strategic focus (vision)?

*The vision is to ensure service delivery to communication within the jurisdiction of the organisation.*

5. How is the strategic focus (vision) being shared with internal stakeholders?

*The vision statement of the organisation functions as a preamble in many of the publications. There is an orientation programme for all the new employees. It ensures that even new employees know the vision of the organisation the role they can play within our organisation.*

6. What mechanisms are put in place to enable feedback from employees?

*The mechanism for employee feedback regarding communication is mostly staff meetings. Feedback channels such as staff meetings are the main channel to provide and receive feedback to a certain extent.*

7. What are the plans put in place to put together and disseminate information within the organisation?

*The sharing of information normally occurred at senior level, but this was not cascaded down to the lower level.*

8. What are the plans put in place to ensure that the same information is shared to all the departments?

*The sharing of information occurred within departments, but again on a need-to-know basis. However, notices of meetings were not timely, sometimes reaching them on the day of or the day before a meeting.*

9. Who is responsible for sharing of information within the organisation?

*There is a Communications and Marketing Component which currently has not employees therefore communication efforts are coordinated in silos.*

10. What channels of communication are utilised to ensure that messages are reaching the intended recipients?

*The main channel of communication that the organisation uses to contact employees is e-mail/intranets; even the internal newsletter is also circulated via intranet.*