

**STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN
INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS**

by

JESSICA HUME

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Supervisor: MS A LEONARD

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Master's script, which I hereby submit for the degree MPhil (Communication Management) at the University of Pretoria is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Jessica Hume

April 2010



“As we journey along our strategic route we remain ever alert to the need to change our pace and our direction as new events and unexpected futures cause us to reconsider, re-evaluate and re-strategize our future destination and take a new route on our eternal journey.”

P. Franklin (1998)



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Abstract

The role and importance of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) has increased with globalisation and the growth of global institutions. Not only do INGOs play a major role in aid delivery in developing countries, they also serve as the voice of the people in the growing global governance system. Thus they have an increasing impact on the social and economic welfare of people around the world.

For this reason, the performance and management of INGOs is vital. However, research on their management is lacking. INGOs possess unique characteristics including complex environments, value-based missions and no financial bottom line. Therefore, management practices, like internal communication, that are generally developed for for-profit organisations need to be evaluated for suitability within the INGO context.

Strategic internal communication has been identified as driving organisational performance. Internal communication can be defined as strategic when its purpose is to align internal stakeholders with the organisation's strategic intent. By facilitating strategic alignment, internal communication can play a critical role in organisational performance.

Research on strategic internal communication is limited and virtually non-existent when considered within the INGO context. However, by considering communication management theory, strategic management theory and NGO management theory, it is possible to develop theoretical propositions on the strategic functioning of internal communication in INGOs. In particular, the theory suggests that a postmodern approach to strategic management and strategic internal communication can assist INGOs in addressing many of the challenges they face.

This study explores the strategic functioning of internal communication in INGOs through exploratory, qualitative case studies. The evidence shows that internal communication in INGOs does not generally function strategically. However, the function is recognised as having potential to improve the performance of these organisations. In particular, there is support for the suitability of a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication in INGOs.



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Chapter 1

Orientation and background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a growing impact on the social and economic welfare of people in modern society making their performance and management ever more important. Over the last two decades, NGOs have grown in number, size and power. Today NGOs are responsible for \$1.1 trillion in capital and 19 million employees (Zadek, 2003 quoted in Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:16). They account for an average of five percent of jobs worldwide and provide many services that government and corporations will not and/or can not (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:274).

In South Africa, the official government registry of non-profit organisations contains over 58,000 NGOs (Department of Social Development, 2008). Meanwhile, a 1998 survey indicated there were over 98,920 NGOs in the country, accounting for 8.7 percent of the formal non-agricultural workforce and 1.3 percent of the gross domestic product (Swilling, Russell, Sokolowski & Salamon, 2004:111). The result proves that this is a sector with a vital role in the functioning and overall health of society.

One unique type of NGO is the international NGO (INGO). Globalisation has led to the rise of INGOs over the last decade (Katsus, 2004:387-389). In 1981, there were 13,000 known INGOs worldwide. In 2001, this number had increased to over 47,000 and formal links between INGOs and international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank, had increased by 46 percent (Anheier, 2005:11). As such, the influence of INGOs is large and growing.

The critical and growing role played by NGOs and INGOs in society means that the performance of these organisations is vital. Academic research into the management of NGOs has increased over the last decade, but it has not kept pace with the growth of the sector (Anheier, 2005:12; Salamon, Sokolowski & List, 2004:4). Fundamentally, while a NGO does not make a profit, it does need to have a positive cash flow in order to complete its activities and provide its services (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:275). Therefore, NGOs must

adhere to effective management practices similar to all other forms of organisations (Chung & Lo, 2007:83). While this is the case, NGOs and INGOs possess unique characteristics that require management practices, generally developed for for-profit organisations, to be evaluated in their particular context. Internal communication is one domain in corporate management that needs to be evaluated within the NGO context.

Strategic internal communication has been called both the “promised land” (Oliver, 2000:179) and the “secret weapon” of successful organisations (Yates, 2006:71). It has been identified as a function that can have a major effect on an organisation’s performance. Yet, academic research on the process of internal communication in NGOs is not readily available.

Internal communication can be defined as strategic when this communication function is managed for the purpose of aligning internal stakeholders with the organisation’s strategic intent. Literature indicates that this type of internal communication improves an organisation’s chances of success and its bottom line (Robson & Tourish, 2005:213; Theaker, 2004:164; Yates, 2006:72). It does so by bringing the actions of an organisation’s employees in line with its mission and objectives (Dolphin, 2005:173; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74) through ongoing negotiations between an organisation and its employees to build healthy relationships (Ströh, 2007:216). Strategic internal communication must ensure that the organisation’s strategic intent is sufficiently known and understood for strategic alignment to occur (Puth, 2002:198). If it does, the result is improvement in organisational performance as identified through the following indicators: increased employee engagement, commitment to and enhancement of the corporate reputation and organisational prestige (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:19). As such, **strategic internal communication plays a critical role in the performance of an organisation.**

NGOs have several distinguishing characteristics that influence the application of strategic internal communication in this context. First, mission and values are central to NGOs because they guide decision making. Unlike profit-driven corporations there is no financial bottom-line to provide the basis for strategic decisions (Sawhill & Williamson quoted in Brown & Yoshioka, 2003:6) whether on its own or in combination with the mission statement. Instead, NGOs make decisions on the basis of their mission and in accordance

with their values in order to achieve their goals and maintain their legitimacy. Second, a NGO is dependent on funders for revenue while providing its services to a different client, unlike in a corporation where there is a direct exchange of funds and services/product between the client/customer and the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:278). Third, NGOs are limited by both the amount of funds available and by restrictions from donors on how they can use them. Finally, employees of NGOs are not necessarily motivated by financial reward but “by an intrinsic need for self worth” that is obtained by working towards a worthwhile mission (Maneerat, Hale & Singhal, 2005:189). These characteristics of NGOs do not excuse them from having sound and effective management practices. This however, means that **these practices need to be evaluated within the unique context of NGOs in order to optimise their impact on organisational performance.**

Strategic internal communication can have a major impact on the performance of NGOs and INGOs. With the growing role these organisations are playing in society, it is necessary to ensure management practices are effective in this unique context. This study takes a first step in this direction by considering the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The above introduction identified a need to investigate and ensure that management practices are relevant and effective for INGOs. With the influential role played by INGOs in society, it is of ever greater importance for these organisations to follow effective management practices. Strategic internal communication has been identified as a critical management process that has an impact on organisational performance. However, academic literature on strategic internal communication generally, and within NGOs in particular, is lacking. In addition, no literature has been found that outlines the current state of internal communication in INGOs. As such, this study is centred on the following research question: “*Does internal communication in INGOs function strategically?*”

1.3 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research question is best understood within a contextual framework. In particular, it is necessary to understand the context in which INGOs operate, the current perspectives on NGO management and the role of strategic internal communication in the performance of all organisations, including INGOs.

1.3.1 Placing INGOs in context

NGOs and INGOs are part of a broader component of society, generally referred to as civil society. Civil society is that part of society separate from the state and market and formed by people coming together in the pursuit of shared interests. As such, “civil society is created, changed, and maintained through various types of communication” (Botan & Taylor, 2005:685). It is considered one of three spheres of society, alongside the state and market. How these three spheres function and interact comprises the functioning of society as a whole and each sphere plays a key role (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:8).

The role of civil society can be seen as one of filling in the gaps, providing those products and services that the market and state either cannot or will not provide. As such, it includes many functions, such as delivering vital human services, empowering the disadvantaged, giving expression to artistic, religious and culture impulses, building communities and mobilizing individual efforts in the pursuit of a common good (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:3-4). Civil society organisations (CSOs) can range from small, informal clubs and social groups, to large social movements and international organisations, all of which are formed on the basis of shared values. The most important representatives of civil society are NGOs and they are primarily responsible for the growing influence of civil society on the local and international scene (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:61).

The term NGO, while it could apply to almost all CSOs, is generally associated with development organisations (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:3-4). These organisations fulfil functions in developing countries ranging from service provision and empowering the poor to advocating individual and group rights. In developed countries, these organisations raise funds, raise awareness and advocate on development issues. As noted above, international NGOs (INGOs) have increased substantially worldwide over the last three

decades; however, the rate of expansion has been even greater in low and middle income countries, such as South Africa. It is within this context of a growing INGOs presence in South Africa and worldwide that this study is undertaken. The INGO context is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.3.2 INGO management

With the growth in the number and influence of INGOs, increasing attention has been paid to the accountability and legitimacy of these organisations. INGOs have multiple stakeholders to whom they are accountable, including members, donors and the publics they seek to assist (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:277). Meanwhile, their legitimacy is constantly called into question by the lack of representation of this last group in their decision-making bodies (Long, 2008:51). In this complex operating environment, NGOs require solid management practices to perform effectively.

Since the modern foundations for the study of CSOs and NGOs were laid only two decades ago, there has been huge growth in the field (Anheier, 2005:12). However, research into the management of CSOs generally (Anheier, 2005:115), and NGOs in particular (Lewis, 2007:9), has been lacking. Some authors have grouped the management of CSOs in with the management of public institutions (McNabb, 2002; Pynes, 2004; Steiss, 2003). Other authors, such as Rania (quoted in Katz, 2006:335), have argued that INGOs are being pressured by funders to adopt the management practices of trans-national corporations which do not necessarily apply because of their unique characteristics. Their critique of this pressure is supported by CSO and NGO management scholars, such as Anheier (2005) and Lewis (2007). These scholars argue that CSOs and NGOs are a distinct type of organisation with specific management needs.

The argument is not that management in CSOs should be approached in a less rigorous way than in corporations or the public sector. Indeed, as elucidated by Udoh James (quoted in Lewis, 2007:9), “management capacity is the lifeblood of all organizations, irrespective of whether they are private entities, public agencies, not-for-profit concerns or non-governmental varieties.” The argument is rather that CSOs have unique characteristics that require special consideration. One of the distinguishing characteristics

of CSOs is that they tend to be more complex than businesses of comparable size (Anheier, 2005:229). Known as the “law of nonprofit complexity,” this characteristic is a result of the multiple stakeholders, missing profit motive and prominence of value-based missions. As a result of this and other characteristics of CSOs, a unique field of CSO and NGO management is emerging (Lewis, 2007:9).

In order to illustrate this unique management field, Lewis (2007:219) developed a composite framework for NGO management. This framework argues that NGOs should draw upon a variety of management traditions – generic management, third-sector management, development management and public sector management – in order to develop unique management practices that fit their context and organisational characteristics. This study is conducted from the perspective of this composite framework and draws upon different fields of management study in order to understand how strategic internal communication should be managed in INGOs. This perspective is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.3.3 Strategic internal communication in INGOs

As noted in the introduction, internal communication has garnered considerable attention in the business world in recent years for its ability to improve organisational performance when implemented strategically. It does so through a specific function: aligning employees with the organisation’s strategic goals so that they are committed to those goals and actively engaged in achieving them (Dolphin 2005:173; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74).

Strategic internal communication facilitates the relationship between an organisation and its employees in order to align them towards achieving the same goals and objectives. Therefore, the relationship between an organisation’s management and its employees is at the centre of strategic internal communication (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:311). As noted in the introduction, employees in NGOs are often motivated partly by a genuine desire and commitment to the organisation’s mission. However, as shown in a study by Brown & Yoshioka (2003:14), while a CSO’s mission does attract employees, it is not enough to maintain them, particularly in the face of unsatisfactory pay and perceived poor management. In this context, strategic internal communication has the potential to

increase motivation, improve management practices and generally maintain a positive relationship between management and employees.

Strategic internal communication has the potential to help INGOs handle an additional issue as well. INGOs generally have a staff drawn from a large number of countries (Anheier, 2005:349). The result is a highly diverse workforce with different cultures, languages and values. This is particularly the case in South Africa, where even the local population is incredibly diverse. In this context, strategic internal communication plays the role of facilitating negotiations between employees and the organisation to develop consensus on the key values and goals of the organisation and encourage diversity and creativity to keep the organisation both focused and adaptable in its dynamic environment.

It is in recognition of the potential of strategic internal communication to improve the performance of INGOs that this research question is posed. The concept of strategic internal communication is further explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.4 GENERAL AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 General Aim

To explore the current state of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.4.2 Objectives

Objective 1

To identify key components of strategic internal communication in INGOs through a review and synthesis of relevant literature.

Objective 2

To identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically.

Objective 3

To compare the empirical findings about current strategic internal communication practices in INGOs with the synthesis from the relevant literature.

1.5 META-THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The meta-theoretical and conceptual framework for this study includes seven layers, moving from the abstract (meta-theoretical assumptions and worldview) to the specific (concepts and constructs) of this study. Table 1.1 outlines the complete framework.

Table 1.1: Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework

General Aim	To explore the current state of strategic internal communication in INGOs			
Meta-theoretical assumptions	Epistemological Ontological Axiological			
Worldview	Integration of postmodernism and social constructivism			
Paradigms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder theory Three sector view of society Neo-institutional view of organisations 			
Grand Theory	Postmodern strategic management of communication			
Theoretical disciplines	Communication Management	Management Science		Human Resource Management
		<i>For-profit sector</i>	<i>Non-profit sector</i>	
Sub-fields within theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate communication Organisational communication Internal communication Public relations Development communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic management Postmodern strategic management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit (CSO) management NGO management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee communication Employee relations
Individual theories from specific theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Interpretations of the excellence theory of public relations (PR) Symmetrical communication Theory of strategic communication Contingency theory Development communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling management Learning organisation Complexity theory Strategic thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil society Law of Non-profit complexity Differences between CSOs and corporations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational culture Organisational structure Theories of control
Individual models from specific theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-information, persuasion, asymmetrical and symmetrical models of PR 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composite framework of NGO management Analytical-normative model of NPOs Three sector society model 	
Concepts	INGO, Strategic internal communication			
Constructs	Strategic intent Strategic position and role		Strategic alignment Strategic knowledge	

1.5.1 Meta-theoretical assumptions

Meta-theoretical assumptions are the most abstract component of the conceptual framework. In Greek, meta means “over” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20), therefore meta-theory can be understood to mean the theory of theory (Baldwin, 2004:23). As such, meta-theoretical assumptions guide and constrain the understanding of theory and research.

Within the academic community, there has been considerable debate about meta-theory (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20). The reason is partly because meta-theoretical assumptions are basic beliefs with no way to establish the truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:107). All researchers have meta-theoretical assumptions underlying their work, although many do not explicitly acknowledge these (Baldwin, 2004:23). The following discussion explicitly states those epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions that form the meta-theoretical position adopted in this study.

1.5.1.1 Epistemological position

Epistemology is the study of knowledge: what is known, how it is known (Baldwin, 2004:23; Wood, 2004:56) and “who is the knower” (Anderson, 1996:49). One’s answers to these questions places them on a continuum that ranges from there being a single unchanging Truth, to a single truth with multiple interpretations, to multiple truths with multiple interpretations, to finally multiple truths that can only be partially interpreted (Anderson, 1996:49). The position a researcher takes can determine what she considers constitutes acceptable knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:102). This study is positioned on the second rung of the continuum, recognising that there may be an absolute reality but that it is impossible to know because of the subjective role of human perception. Thus knowledge is considered to be constituted, not just by objective facts, but also by the subjective perceptions of people.

Similar to the positions regarding what knowledge is, there are various positions on how knowledge is obtained. A common question is whether an individual or society determines the truth (Baldwin, 2004:23). For example, rationalists believe that knowledge is the product of human reasoning to uncover the truth (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:19). This study

takes the position that reality is socially constructed, that people create knowledge in order to function in the world with meaning negotiated as part of a larger group.

The epistemological position taken in this study underpins certain assumptions about the research phenomenon. It is thus assumed that a single reality within an organisation cannot be identified. Rather, members of the organisation create an understanding of the organisation in negotiation with each other, but each views the organisation from a subjective standpoint. Therefore, it is understood in this study that an objective view of an INGO is not possible and that in order to gain a comprehensive view of strategic internal communication, multiple sources of data are necessary.

1.5.1.2 Ontological position

Ontology is concerned with basic assumptions about human nature and reality (Baldwin, 2004:23; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:108). Determinists argue that humans are constrained by social, biological and environmental factors and are therefore reactive and passive in their behaviour. On the opposite side, pragmatists argue that people choose their behaviour in order to meet their needs, in other words, they exert free will (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:20). This study occupies an ontological middle ground. It takes the position that humans make choices within the confines of social and cultural constraints.

Ontology is also concerned with the duality between objectivism and its view that social entities exist in an external reality versus subjectivism and its view that social phenomenon are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:108). This study adopts the subjectivist view that it is the perceptions and actions of social actors that create social phenomenon and that these are not independently part of an external reality.

This ontological position results in certain assumptions about the research question: does internal communication in INGOs function strategically. For example, it is assumed that decisions and actions taken by people within INGOs are guided both by personal goals and by social constraints. It is also assumed that internal communication as a phenomenon is firmly embedded within the social and cultural environment of the organisation. Finally, the position underpins the assumption that change is possible within

an organisation, although constrained by environmental factors. In terms of methodology, this position supports the need to consider the social and cultural context in which the research phenomenon occurs.

1.5.1.3 Axiological position

Axiology refers to the study of values. In particular, it is concerned with the question of whether theory and research can be separated from the values and interest of those creating or conducting it (Baldwin, 2004:24; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:110). In classical science it is fully separated from epistemology in that science was concerned with what is and not with what ought to be (Anderson, 1996:188). From this perspective, science took the view that theory and research can (or more recently, should aim to be) value free – that the role of the scholar is to produce knowledge and the use of that knowledge is not their concern (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:20-21). This study, however, rejects this value-free position in favour of a value-conscious position. This position argues that value-free inquiry is not possible: the very choice of what to study is influenced by the values of the researcher (Baldwin, 2004:24). Similarly, the position acknowledges that the process of studying a phenomenon can change that phenomenon. Therefore, rather than aiming to be value-free, the value conscious position recognizes that knowledge is used by the powerful to dominate the weak and therefore researchers must take responsibility for the ways that their research will be used in society.

In addition to a recognition of the effects of the researcher's values on the study, this axiological position results in certain assumptions about the research phenomenon. Primarily, it necessitates an approach to strategic internal communication which does not view it as solely a tool to be used by management to manipulate and control its employees. Rather, strategic internal communication is assumed to be a tool to enhance the performance of an organisation, while also empowering the workforce. In terms of methodology, this position requires that the evidence be analysed from a critical perspective. It also guides the researcher in understanding the ethical implications of her work and the activities needed to address this.

1.5.2 Worldview

The second level of the conceptual framework is the worldview. A worldview is a way of seeing the world and understanding reality. As Risse (2007:126) describes it, it is a lens through which a researcher looks at the world and thus influences any interpretations made. The worldview adopted for this study rests firmly on the meta-theoretical assumptions outlined above and draws upon two inter-related philosophical traditions: postmodernism and social constructivism. As noted by Ströh (2007:204), “postmodernism underwrites a worldview that relies on constructivism.” Therefore, instead of resulting in two different lenses through which the study is undertaken, these two traditions combine in a complementary way to provide an integrated perspective on the research phenomenon.

Both postmodernism and social constructivism have multiple interpretations and definitions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:109; Prawat, 1996:215; Risse, 2007:126; Ströh, 2007:204). Postmodernism can be seen as a general rejection of the main tenets of modernism (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:40; McKie & Munshi, 2007:77; Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:161). In particular, postmodernism rejects universality in favour of context-specific historically-situated narratives (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:45). Meanwhile, at its core, constructivism is the belief that reality is a relative concept and there are multiple constructions of ‘reality’ dependent on the individuals and groups that create them (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:111). As such, social constructivism is the view that social reality is constructed and reproduced through the daily actions of people (Berger & Luckmann, 2002; Risse, 2007:128). These two positions complement each other in unique ways, making them an appropriate worldview for this study.

As noted above, postmodernism rejects the idea of a universal explanation for a phenomenon and instead emphasises the importance of context. Social constructivism complements this position in that it is an ontological middle ground between individualism and structuralism. It views humans as inseparable from their social environment because it defines who they are, but, at the same time, believes humans create, reproduce and change culture through their actions (Risse, 2007:128). Gergen (1985:267) describes it as follows “the terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people,” thus emphasising the importance of the historical context. As such, social constructivism also emphasises the role of context and

identifies how those contexts can be influenced and changed. For this study, this combined approach emphasises that strategic internal communication is deeply dependent on the context in which it is undertaken and that changes to this context occur via human interaction.

Since change occurs through human interaction, social constructivism emphasises communication and discourse practices because it is through these that people make sense of the world and give meaning to their activities (Risse, 2007:131). Even the basic language used maintains the social constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 2002:48). Therefore, communication is central to the construction of reality (Littlejohn in Ströh, 2007:204) and thus at the centre of any organisation. The postmodern approach also places discourse at the centre of an organisation with interaction and relationships as the means for organic organising (Ströh, 2007:205). In addition, postmodernism focuses on the fragmentation and differences between people (Blaney & Wolfe, 2004:269). Thus it recognises the complex relationships and diversity inherent in an organisation. Within the context of this study, these two perspectives combine in the recognition of the central role of communication in the negotiations of complex relationships between diverse players which in turn construct the reality within the organisation.

Within social constructivism, the socially constructed world is generally seen by its' inhabitants as being an objective reality (Berger & Luckman, 2002:47). Thus humans are deeply embedded in and affected by their social environment and therefore are guided by a desire to do the right thing within their social context and not just to realise their own advantage. Postmodernism also emphasises the role of values. As Cilliers (quoted in Ströh 2007:207) notes, values are not just nice to have but necessary for the growth and survival of an organisation. Values allow for the decentralisation of control and the self-organisation of the organisation making it more flexible and adaptable in its environment (Ströh 2007:207). Alternatively, compromising those values can threaten the survival of the organisation when the environment (for example, the public) can turn on it. The combination of the social constructivist and postmodern approach to values is particularly apt when considering NGOs. Values generally play an important role in NGOs which are guided by the intentions (if not the reality) of doing good. The social constructivist perspective helps explain why this is the case while the postmodernist perspective

identifies the importance of these values to the organisation. Within this context, internal communication plays the role of building healthy relationships within the organisation based on its values (Ströh 2007:207).

Social constructivism is generally descriptive in its aim (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:46), however it can also have a critical element (Grunig & White, 1992:53; Risse, 2007:128). This is because reality is not only constructed but can be deconstructed and reconstructed (Grunig & White, 1992:54). This is a key point for strategic internal communication because it underpins the idea that through communication, the organisation can be changed. Through its rejection of meta-narratives, postmodernism also adopts a critical perspective and argues that organisations need to challenge what they traditionally hold sacred, such as culture and strategic intent (Ströh 2007:207). In addition, it means that a researcher studying an organisation should similarly question traditionally held views of organising and organisations. By integrating the social constructivist position with the postmodern position, there is a view that strategic internal communication need not embody traditional forms of management, but can serve as a tool for challenging the old way of doing things. For the researcher, the perspective also indicates a need to look beyond the traditional linear process of management.

The integration of postmodernism and social constructivism provides a particular worldview for this study. It emphasises the role of context, communication, relationships and values within the organisation, all key components of strategic internal communication. In addition, it notes the need to consider the research question from a critical perspective. It is with these factors in mind that this study is undertaken.

1.5.3 Paradigms

Paradigms form the third level of the conceptual framework. Paradigms are a means of clustering theories together (Baldwin, 2004:25). They are more specific than a worldview in that a paradigm is generally applicable to a specific area of research. However, each paradigm can encompass multiple theories and grand theories.

Three paradigms outline the conceptual perspective taken to this study's research context. They are stakeholder theory, neo-institutionalist view of organisations and three-sector view of society. These are each discussed separately below.

1.5.3.1 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory outlines a specific way of looking at an organisation. Its central concept, the stakeholder, is classically defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984 quoted in Friedman & Miles, 2006:1). In stakeholder theory, the organisation is no longer viewed as an isolated unit, guided and managed solely by its directors under the influence of its shareholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006:25). Instead, the organisation is seen as interdependent, with multiple stakeholder groups whom it both affects and is affected by. As a result, an organisation must become more responsive to its external environment and the changes within it in order to survive (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183).

This study's research question is considered through the paradigm of normative stakeholder theory. The normative perspectives require stakeholder relations to be based on morals and ethics and require broader consideration of all stakeholder interests with the aim of developing win-win situations (Deetz, 2003:608) and ultimately a more 'just' society. Deetz (2003) refers to this normative perspective as a 'reformed stakeholder' conception arguing that consideration of the values and interests of any one stakeholder over all the others is to privilege the one group, at the expense of the organisation as a whole (Deetz, 2000:273). This normative stakeholder perspective complements the neo-institutionalist view of organisations, adopted by this study and discussed in the following section. Under both these perspectives, an organisation, such as an INGO, cannot be simply guided by its own rational decision-making but must also adhere to social pressures, as pushed forth by its stakeholders, in order to maintain its legitimacy and thus its long-term survival.

Postmodernism has influenced certain conceptions of normative stakeholder theory. From a postmodern worldview, normative stakeholder theory calls for the recognition and consideration of interests and relationships that may not be part of traditional management practices (Friedman & Miles, 2006:68). It argues for the adoption of multiple stakeholder dialogue to replace traditional manager-centred forms of decision making (Friedman &

Miles, 2006:69). As such, normative stakeholder theory serves as a basis for postmodern strategic management that is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Stakeholder theory fundamentally validates the importance of strategic internal communication because it identifies the intrinsic value of all stakeholders, employees and other internal stakeholders included, not just as instruments to further the organisation's goals but as important groups who need to be considered in their own right (Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). In addition, Deetz (2003:609) notes the importance of communication practices to the 'reformed stakeholder' conception in order to ensure constructive dialogue without costing productivity. As such stakeholder theory both justifies internal communication as a necessary and beneficial management function and highlights the role of communication therein. It is thus a cornerstone of this study.

1.5.3.2 Neo-institutionalist view of organisations

This study adopts the neo-institutionalist view of organisations. From this perspective, organisational actions are not solely guided by rational decision-making, but also by institutions (Anheier, 2005:147). Institutions are understood to be norms, rules and values taken for granted in the social context (Risse, 2007:130) in which the organisation is located. Derived directly from the social constructivist worldview, the neo-institutionalist view of organisations strives to address the tension between rational decision-making and the complex social pressure on organisational decision-makers (Anheier, 2005:148). Institutions are viewed as placing constraints on the number and type of legitimate decisions available to an organisation. As such legitimacy (the conformance with institutional expectations) is "the central resource that organisations require for long-term survival" (Anheier, 2005:147). In other words, organisations must conform to the social expectations placed upon them in order to be successful over the long term. It is against the backdrop of this paradigm of organisations that this study addresses the question of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.5.3.3 Three sector view of society

Up until the 1980s, a two-sector view of society was dominant (Anheier, 2005:13). In this view, society was made up of the state sector and the market sector. However, with the decline of the welfare state, the end of the Cold War and all the changes these brought to

society, a new view emerged. In this view, society contains three mutually dependant and inter-related sectors: state, market and civil society. Civil society and its many components including CSOs are given equal weighting in terms of the importance of their role in society *vis-a-vis* the state and the market. It is within this paradigm that a majority of studies on CSOs, including this research study, occur. A more in-depth discussion of what this view of society means for the importance and characteristics of CSOs is provided in Chapter 2.

1.5.4 Grand Theory

Theory can be defined as “a description of concepts and specifications of the relationships between or among concepts” (Metts, 2004:9). Steyn (quoted in Steyn & Butschi 2003) describes a grand theory as a comprehensive theory that applies to an entire phenomenon. As such, grand theory forms the fourth level of the conceptual framework in that it incorporates the multiple concepts implicated in a phenomenon and their many relationships. There is no grand theory of internal communication specifically, however, there is a theory that can explain the role, purpose and process of communication in and by organisations: the strategic management of communication.

Strategic management is a proactive, mission-driven form of management which includes a heightened awareness of the organisation’s external and internal environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). This means that the organisation proactively engages in strategic planning on an ongoing basis to align its actions and goals with its environment in order to improve the organisation’s performance. Within this framework, communication management serves the role of monitoring the organisation’s environment and ensuring that it is taken into consideration during the strategic planning process as well as managing the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:452). Within this framework, strategic internal communication can be seen as the process of monitoring the internal environment, managing the relationship between the organisation and its employees and ensuring that the organisation’s strategy and employees are aligned.

Traditional strategic management of communication is a linear hierarchical process whereby top-management develops a strategy which is implemented by the organisation

to obtain pre-determined results. Postmodernism rejects the structure and linearity of this approach as impossible due to the unpredictability of the environment and calls for a more flexible and participative strategic management, where management is thought of more as facilitation than management (Ströh, 2007:205/215). Stacey (quoted in Ströh, 2007) defines postmodern strategic management as “the process of actively participating in the conversations around important emerging issues.” In taking this perspective, the role of communication management still remains focused on environmental scanning and relationship management, but rather than conforming to management principles, its role is to embrace diversity and creativity by ensuring constant negotiations with its many stakeholders in its ever-changing environment (Ströh, 2007:211). As such, the role of strategic internal communication centres on the negotiations and relationships between an organisation and its internal stakeholders, its employees.

Strategic management is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Strategic communication and strategic internal communication are addressed in Chapter 4.

1.5.5 Disciplines

While there is debate as to whether internal communication is a human resources or a communication management phenomenon, this study firmly places it within the communication management discipline based on its strategic role as part of the communication management function as discussed in the previous section. That said, as was noted in section 1.3.2 and the discussion around the Lewis’ (2007) composite framework for NGO management, this study does draw upon several different theoretical disciplines to explain the phenomenon within the INGO context. These disciplines include communication management, management sciences for both the corporate and non-profit sector, and human resources management.

1.5.6 Theories

Theories form the fifth level of the framework. Theories generally deal with fewer concepts and relationships than grand theories because they look at more specific elements of the research phenomenon. Each of the disciplines drawn upon for this study provides specific theories that help to clarify the research question. For example, management science

provides a variety of theories that give insight into the broader functioning of management in organisations. From the corporate sector, theories such as the interactive management and the learning organisation provide an understanding of the role and process of management in INGOs. Following on this, complexity theory outlines the manner in which an INGO needs to balance the chaos and instability with order and stability in order to avoid stagnation and lack of progress in the modern world. In addition, the emerging subfield of non-profit and NGO management considers the unique management needs of NGOs. For example, its view on the differences between INGOs and corporations which culminates in the law of non-profit complexity helps explain how standard management theory and techniques can and cannot be directly applied to INGOs. Finally, human resources management, concerned with the management of employees, provides theories that help explain management of strategic internal communication.

However, as the home discipline for this study, communication management is home to many theories that help in understanding strategic internal communication. For example, the theory of strategic communication highlights the role, function and objectives of strategic internal communication while symmetrical communication theory highlights how it should be conducted. In particular, the Excellence Study of Public Relations developed many theories that directly relate to this study's research phenomenon. More specifically, new interpretations of the Excellence Study, influenced by postmodern thinking, are heavily drawn while exploring the theoretical process of strategic internal communication in INGOs. These theories are discussed next.

The excellence theory of PR was the result of the IABC Excellence Study conducted during the early 1990s. Public relations (PR) and communication management can be considered one and the same. For example, Grunig and Hunt (quoted in Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35) define PR as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics." As such, the theories within the study, which started by looking at the value of public relations to organisations and society incorporates multiple other theories to explain how and why it achieves that value (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35), is equally applicable to communication management as to public relations.

Critics of the theory (for examples, see McKie & Munshi, 2007:36) in its original expression (see Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, 1992) argue that excellence theory is essentially a modernist theory. As such, several researchers have taken a postmodern worldview to further explore and expand this theory (for examples, see Toth, 2007). This study draws upon these new postmodern interpretations of the excellence theory of PR to identify those key components of this theory that form part of its conceptual background.

The excellence theory is based on the premise that the value of PR lies in how it helps reconcile and build the relationships between the organisation and its publics in the internal and external environment (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). It argues that the PR function, when operating 'excellently', helps to ensure that the organisation works in harmony with its publics, behaves in ways acceptable to these groups and thus avoids many of the negative consequences of not addressing the concerns of these publics. This component is in line with a postmodern perspective which emphasises the importance of interaction and relationships (Stroh, 2007:204). Within this framework, the value of strategic internal communication rests on how it maintains and develops the relationships between the organisation and its internal publics.

The excellence theory argues that these relationships need to be based on symmetrical communication. Symmetrical communication in PR occurs when the organisation engages in dialogue with its publics where it is not only trying to persuade those publics to the organisation's point of view but is also open to being persuaded as well (Grunig & White, 1992:39). Excellence theory posits that internal communication in particular should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). The reason is because symmetrical internal communication helps build a participative organisational culture that increases employee satisfaction which, in turn, improves organisational performance.

The postmodern interpretation of the excellence theory accepts symmetrical PR as the normative ideal (McKie & Munshi, 2007:37). This approach argues that a focus on building democratic process and healthy two-way relationships will lead to the overall success of an organisation (Ströh, 2007:213). However, as critics note (McKie & Munshi, 2007:37), there are many practical issues in implementing symmetrical PR, including accusations that it is misleading in its promise of equality amid uneven power distribution. Therefore,

even in organisations claiming to practice symmetrical internal communication, there is still a need to be aware of and consider the real power dynamics of the organisation and not accept outward trappings of equal relationships as necessarily reflective of the inner reality. As such, this study is conducted from the viewpoint that symmetrical internal communication is the ideal but requires careful evaluation.

For communication management to function optimally and enhance organisational performance, the excellence theory states that all PR functions must be integrated within the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:39). Excellence theory posits that internal communication in particular should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). All programmes need to be aligned with the overall strategy of the organisation. Within a postmodern interpretation, the strategic concept adopts a more flexible, adaptive and participative connotation (Ströh, 2007:37). Postmodern strategic management and its relation to strategic internal communication is discussed further in Chapter 3 and 4.

Finally, the excellence theory of PR not only recognizes 'excellent' internal communication as a component of excellent PR, but also as a prerequisite (Grunig, 1992:532). As such, strategic internal communication is a central component of an organisation's overall communication function. Excellence theory and its conceptualisation of internal communication is discussed further in Chapter 4.

1.5.7 Models

In addition to theories, this study draws upon several models from the identified disciplines. For example, in communication management, the publicity, public information, asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations provide insight into the functional and normative processes of communication management. Meanwhile, several models from the non-profit sector of management sciences are useful in understanding how INGOs need to be managed. For example, its model of a three-sector society positions INGOs within broader society. In addition, its analytical-normative model of non-profit organisations (NPOs) helps characterise how these organisations need to be managed.

1.5.8 Concepts

The final two levels of the conceptual framework, concepts and constructs are very specific to the research phenomenon being studied. Concepts are objects or ideas that have something in common (Comadena, 2004:38). They are “not tangible objects but definitions that allow scholars to investigate a particular phenomenon” (Metts, 2004:10). As such, they refer to an abstract notion that has particular characteristics. This study focuses on two key concepts: INGOs and strategic internal communication. These terms are further explored in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

1.5.8.1 INGOs

INGOs are a specific type of NGO which in turn is a specific type of CSO. Therefore, to define INGO, it is necessary to first define CSO and NGO. CSOs form the organisational infrastructure of civil society. Salamon *et al.* (2004:10) identified five characteristics required of an organisation for it to be considered a CSO. It must be organized, private, not profit-distributing, self-governing and voluntary. The United Nation’s *Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions* (quoted in Anheier, 2005:54) provides a similar but modified list arguing that CSOs must be: self-governing, not-for-profit and non-profit-distributing, institutionally separate from government and non-compulsory. As clarification, it should be noted that in both these lists, the terms voluntary and non-compulsory refer to the requirement to participate or contribute to the organisation as opposed to any reference to a complete or partially voluntary workforce. What these two lists make clear is that CSOs are private self-governing organisations who invest any resources they make back into the organisation and with whom people choose to participate voluntarily.

As noted previously, the term NGO is generally applied to a specific type of CSO that is involved in some way in development work. Development is understood to be improving the social, cultural and/or economic well-being of society. Thus NGOs encompass a wide range of organisations engaged in a multitude of activities. Considered From various perspectives they are considered to be more efficient, more flexible, more innovative, more democratic, more equal and more capable of promoting social change than government and international development agencies, NGOs have grown into powerful players in the development field (Anheier, 2005:340).

INGOs are at their most basic simply NGOs operating in two or more countries. They too fulfil the characteristics of CSOs, but with the added component of being engaged in some manner in development. This engagement can range from very political advocacy work, to entirely operational service provision (Van Tulder & van der Zwart, 2006:66). While the term INGOs often conjures up visions of huge multinational organisations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam, INGOs exist in multiple organisational forms. These range from large centralised organisations to small decentralised organisations. The only common characteristics that can be used to define this group is that they are all CSOs engaged in development and operating in two or more countries. For further discussion of CSOs, NGOs and INGOs see Chapter 2.

1.5.8.2 Strategic internal communication

Strategic internal communication forms the central concept of this study. Although there is a growing body of knowledge on internal communication, there is no general agreement in the literature as to its definition. One common definition is that provided by Frank and Bothwell (quoted in Dolphin, 2005:172; Welch & Jackson, 2007:179) which sees internal communication as “the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities.” Yet, Welch and Jackson (2007:179) note that their definition, in fact, refers to organisational communication as a field of study and practice and not to internal communication as a component of communication management.

This critique hints at a common difference between definitions of internal communication: whether it includes managed and unmanaged communication or just managed communication. Many authors (for examples see Scholes, 1997:xviii; Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007:184; and Chen, 2008:167) include only managed communication, while others (for example see Kalla, 2005:304 and Maubane, 2006:11) include both. In this study, the term strategic internal communication will refer to only the managed use of communication in the organisation.

A second area of divergence among definitions of internal communication is its goals. For example, in their definition of internal communication Stauss and Hoffman (quoted in

Yeomans, 2006) declare this management function to have the aim of “systematically influenc[ing] the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees.” Meanwhile, in his definition, Chen (2008:167) describes the purpose of internal communication as helping to “identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organisation’s management and its employees.” These examples reflect only some of the diversity among definitions. This study, however, views the purpose of managed internal communication through the framework of its role in the strategic management of the organisation.

A strategy is “an effort or deliberate action that an organisation implements to out-perform its rivals” (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). It can refer to the “logic behind the actions” and the organisation’s “pro-active response to an ever-changing environment” (Steyn & Puth, 2000:29). The essence of an organisation’s strategy is exhibited in its strategic intent. Strategic intent refers to the vision and direction the strategy provides and the new areas the organisation is set to explore, as well as to the goal and purpose this exploration is designed to achieve (Puth 2002:188). This latter is encapsulated in the organisation’s mission. A strategy’s purpose is to provide direction to an organisation’s activities by focusing them on its strategic goals and mission while ensuring that the methods used are in line with the environment and context in which the organisation operates (Steyn & Puth, 2000:29). Following on this, Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic and Sriramesh (2007:20) define strategic communication as “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.” Steyn and Puth (2000:452) state that the key role of strategic communication is to scan the organisation’s internal and external environment and manage the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders bringing all in line to improve organisational performance and achieve the organisation’s mission.

As noted in section 1.5.4, from a postmodern perspective this purpose remains the same, but focuses on maintaining ongoing negotiations between the organisation and its stakeholders through which the organisational strategy emerges rather than being completely predetermined. Based on this understanding of ‘strategic’, this study views strategic internal communication as aligning an organisation with its internal environment and stakeholders through ongoing dialogue around its strategic intent. Therefore strategic internal communication is defined as:

“The strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent”.

1.5.9 Constructs

Constructs, the final and most specific level of the framework, are the elements that make up concepts. As such, they are easier to measure within a research study. Four constructs have been identified as composing strategic internal communication and will be measured as part of the empirical phase of this study.

Strategic internal communication’s first construct is its purpose: strategic alignment. As defined above, strategic alignment refers to bringing all elements within an organisation in line with its strategic intent so that they act together towards the same goals.

The second construct of strategic internal communication is its position and role: part of strategic management. In order to achieve strategic alignment, internal communication function must play a role in both strategy development and strategy implementation. In order to do so effectively, internal communication must be represented at the senior management level, either in its own right or as part of the remit of the most senior communicator.

The third construct is the knowledge of the senior communicator. The senior communicator requires the knowledge and experience to implement communication and internal communication strategically.

The final construct of strategic internal communication is its content focus: strategic intent. As noted above, the organisation’s strategic intent is the essence of an organisation’s strategy and as such is the central content focus of strategic internal communication. In other words, it can be considered ‘the message’ of strategic internal communication.

The strategic purpose, position, knowledge and content are the constructs of strategic internal communication and will be measured in this study. In addition, the process of

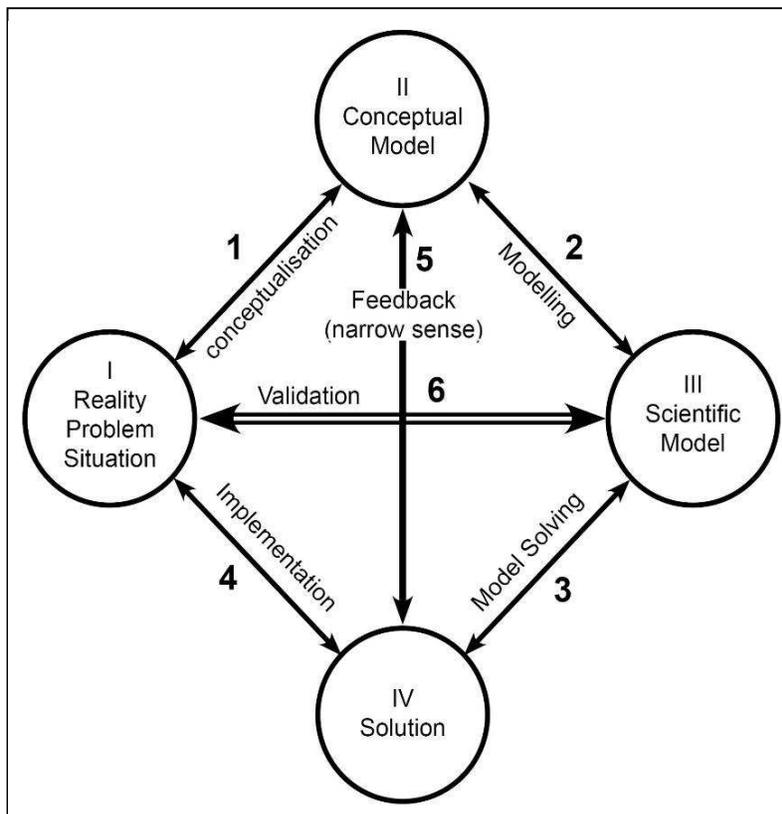
internal communication will also be considered. The INGO, the second concept discussed in the previous section, forms the context in which this measurement will occur and thus its construct will not be measured specifically.

The above discussion lays out the meta-theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this study. Its various components are discussed further in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

1.6 APPROACH TO SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM SOLVING

This study approaches scientific problem solving using the model developed by Mitroff, Betz, Pondy and Sagasti (1974). This model is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: A systems view of problem-solving



Source: Mitroff *et al.* (1974:48)

Mitroff *et al.* (1974:46) developed their model based on the principle that a holistic view of a phenomenon is necessary in order to understand all its essential characteristics. As

such, their model takes a systems' view of problem-solving, examining the process as a whole and the many interactions between the different elements. In its simplest form, their model of problem-solving contains four key circles – the problem, the conceptual model, the scientific model and the solution – and four key processes – conceptualisation, modelling, model solving and implementation. However, Mitroff *et al.* (1974) emphasise that each of these components and processes are dependent on and influence each other. As well, the overall problem-solving process can start and finish at any place in the model using almost any combination of circles and processes, each with particular consequences for the study being undertaken.

This study is located between Circle I, the problem, and Circle II, the conceptual model, and is primarily engaged in the first process: conceptualisation. The process of conceptualisation is concerned with defining the research problem and determining the nature and number of variables that will need to be considered in finding a solution (Mitroff *et al.*, 1974:47). This study engages in conceptualisation to define the current process of and problems with managing strategic internal communication in INGOs and identify what variables and factors must be considered in finding a solution to this problem.

The study does not present these variables in a conceptual model, Circle II. Rather, this study is an exploratory first step to lay the foundation for future research to develop a conceptual model and move into the later stages of Mitroff *et al.*'s problem-solving model. As is discussed in Chapter 5, there is a wide variety of models and frameworks related to internal communication already in the literature, but there is very little relationship between them. Therefore this first step is necessary in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

1.7 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

To date there has been relatively little academic interest in the management of internal communication (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:300; Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:312; Welch & Jackson, 2007:178; Yeomans, 2006:237). The primary focus of the academic literature has been the benefits of effective internal communication, particularly when it is strategic. Several positive indicators of corporate performance have been linked to strategic internal

communication including increased employee engagement and commitment, enhancement to the corporate reputation and organisational prestige (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:19), increased employee satisfaction and decreased resistance to change (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299). Studies have also linked other indicators with more direct correlations to costs and effective strategic internal communication, including decreased employee turnover and reduced absenteeism (Yates, 2006:71), improved productivity, higher quality of services and products and increased levels of innovation (Clampitt & Downs in Tourish & Hargie, 2004:2). Overall, strategic internal communication has come to be seen as a means of improving a company's financial performance (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299) and developing a sustainable competitive advantage (Yates, 2006:72).

Various studies have also been conducted to try to define and characterise internal communication (Dolphin, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007), yet there is little consensus on the definition or process of internal communication or what is needed for it to make a strategic contribution to the organisation. In Chapter 5, nine models, frameworks and theories related to strategic internal communication are introduced, such as Asif and Sargeant's (2000) model of internal communication in the financial service sector and Welch and Jackson's (2007) redefinition of the field from the stakeholder's perspective, but the majority of the models and frameworks are considered only within a specific sector and none have been found to have been studied by any academics other than their authors. , There is little agreement on a definition or model of strategic internal communication, leaving a gap in the academic literature.

The literature on NGO management is in a similar state. Despite the role played by NGOs in society, it is only in the last two decades that NGO management has been seen as distinct from the management of businesses and government and it still receives comparatively minor attention (Lewis, 2007:9). In addition, studies on NGO management have tended to focus on the work that NGOs do and not on what goes on inside the organisation - its internal management (Lewis, 2007:111-112). In terms of communication management, the growing civil society sector, of which INGOs are a part, has complex and even unique communication dynamics but very few studies consider these unique dynamics in terms of strategic communication (Lewis, 2005:239) or strategic internal

communication. Thus there is a gap in the NGO management literature around internal management broadly and strategic internal communication in particular.

This study aims to contribute to academic knowledge by starting to fill both those gaps. The conclusions of this research, derived from both the theoretical and empirical portions of this study, help to both synthesise the current literature on strategic internal communication and consider its application in a previously unconsidered setting, the INGO. Since this study is exploratory in nature, its main contribution is as a basis for further study into this area of management and the context of an INGO. In addition, it can provide insight for INGOs and similar organisations as they attempt to implement strategic internal communication in their own organisations. Additional suggestions for further research based on this study are included in Chapter 8.

1.8 SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to develop an understanding of the research problem as highlighted in Circle I of the Mitroff *et al.* model (Figure 1.1), this study is undertaken in two phases. Phase one is a literature review to develop a theoretical understanding of strategic internal communication in the INGO context. Phase two is an empirical study to establish current practices of internal communication in the INGO context and its strategic contribution. The results from the first phase are used to further understand and characterise the evidence from the second phase, and together the two phases identify the overall answer to this study's research question. The following outline provides a brief overview of the empirical research design of this study.

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study research design. Each of the elements of this design is selected based on its fit with the research question and objectives and the conceptual framework adopted for this study (see Table 1.1). For a more detailed discussion of the research design and methodology see Chapter 5.

As noted in section 1.6, this study is exploratory because of the limited research available on strategic internal communication. Exploratory studies are often qualitative (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95) as is the case with this study. Qualitative research generally seeks to

understand the complex nature of phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95) such as strategic internal communication. In addition, it is usually flexible and adaptable as the research project progresses, seeking the viewpoints of research participants, and is undertaken in the natural setting of the research phenomenon. It is cognisant of the researcher's role in research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5-6). For these reasons, interpretive, critical and postmodern scholars often embrace qualitative research (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:163) and therefore it was selected as the appropriate approach to this study.

According to Yin (2003:13), a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". The research phenomenon is a contemporary event where it is difficult to separate the phenomenon, internal communication management, from the broader context of the INGO. As will be further discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, a management function such as strategic internal communication is influenced by the organisation's form, structure and culture. A case study is a suitable research design to investigate the research question while taking into consideration these contextual elements. It is also appropriate given the postmodern and social constructivist worldview of this study.

By adopting a multiple case study design, this study is able to provide a more compelling answer to the research question. Multiple case studies both produce a greater volume of evidence and allows for the use of replication logic to increase support for the study's conclusions (Yin, 2003:47). In addition, a multiple case study design helps to research to distinguish between contextually dependent elements and elements that impact INGOs more generally.

Evidence was collected for this study from two sources: the most senior local communicators in INGOs using semi-structured interviews and organisational documents. The analysis of the evidence occurred through four cognitive phases as identified by Morse and Field (1995:103): comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing and recontextualising. Through the process of thematic analysis and coding, the evidence from the empirical portion of the study was analysed both as single cases and cross-case. The results of this are presenting in Chapter 7. The results of Phase 2 of the study, the

empirical portion, were compared to the results from Phase 1, the literature review, in order to develop a thorough understanding of the research problem and the variables involved. This process and its results are presented in Chapter 7. For more details on the research design and methodology see Chapter 6.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS

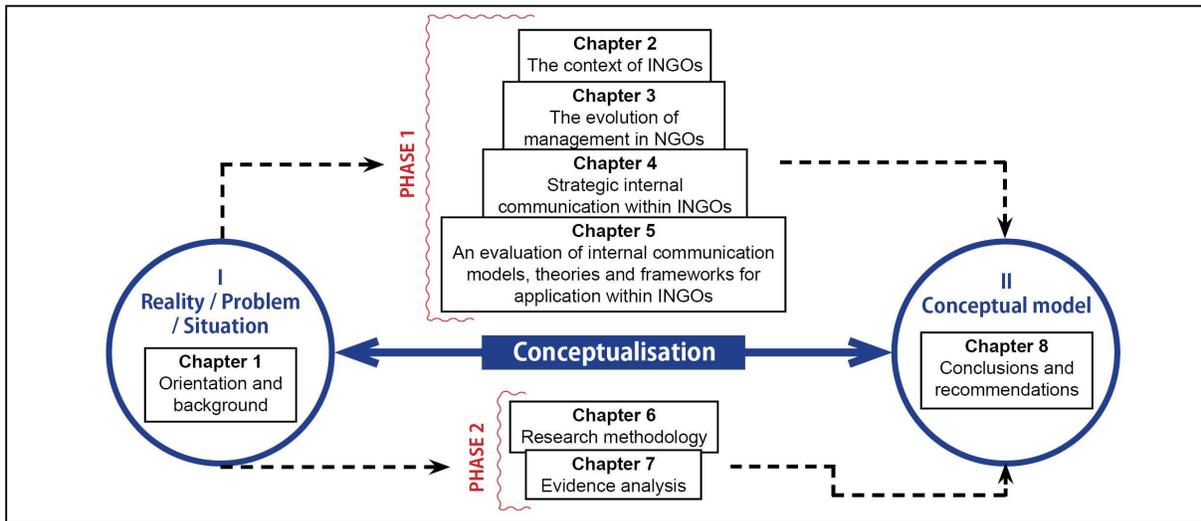
The study has several delimitations related to the context, constructs and domain of the study. Firstly, it is limited to the context of INGOs operating in South Africa. As such, the study results may not be generalised to other types of CSOs or those operating in other countries and regions. Secondly, the study is focused on strategic internal communication which limits it to internal communication that is managed with the goal of fulfilling the organisation's mission. Therefore, interpersonal communication or superior-subordinate communication are not examined in detail.

Finally, due to the exploratory nature of the study and the limits on the researcher's resources, this study only considers the management perspective on strategic internal communication. The focus of the study centres on the management of strategic internal communication and the decisions and actions of management in implementing this concept. Therefore, while it is recognised that the perspective of employees is an important component for understanding the impact, goals and issues of internal communication in an organisation, obtaining this perspective is outside the purview of this study. Validating the conclusions of this study from the employee perspective would form part of the modelling process in Mitroff *et al.*'s (1974) model of problem solving.

1.10 DEMARCATION OF CHAPTERS

Mitroff *et al.*'s (1974) model of problem solving (Figure 1.1) not only provides an understanding of the activities of this study, but also provides a means of demarcating the chapters of this dissertation. Figure 1.2 illustrates how the chapters fit within the problem solving model between the research problem (Circle I in the Mitroff *et al.* model), the process of conceptualisation and the conceptual model (Circle II).

Figure 1.2: Demarcation of chapters



Adapted from: Mitroff *et al.* (1974:48)

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 make up Phase one of this study and provide a theoretical understanding of the research problem. Chapter 7, on the basis of the research method described in Chapter 6, makes up Phase two of this study and provides an empirical understanding of the research problem and compares it to the theoretical understanding. Finally, Chapter 8 provides the final conclusions and recommendations of this study. The following provides a more detailed demarcation of these chapters.

Chapter 2: The context of international non-governmental organisations

This chapter is the first chapter of the theoretical phase of this study and focuses on the context of the study, the INGO. First, it situates civil society within broader society and notes how it is distinguished from both government and the market sectors. The different types and characteristics of CSOs are highlighted and differentiated from government agencies and corporations. Particular attention is paid to the internal aspects of CSOs and their workforce. The chapter then provides an in-depth discussion of INGOs, their unique characteristics and their situation in South Africa. It concludes with a discussion of the challenges INGOs face which effect their management.

Chapter 3: The evolution of management in non-governmental organisations

Since this study is focused on applying a management practice developed for corporations in the context of an INGO, this chapter considers the role of management in CSOs and INGOs more generally. It starts with an overview of the debate around the management of CSOs. Following this is an in-depth discussion of the evolution of strategic management and its application to INGOs. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of internal management and its key elements in INGOs.

Chapter 4: Strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

This chapter discusses the central concept of this study – strategic internal communication – and its place in INGOs. It lays the foundation by considering the different perspectives on internal communication in the literature. It then focuses on the concept of strategic communication and defines strategic internal communication within this framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the application of strategic internal communication in INGOs and the challenges and opportunities it provides.

Chapter 5: An evaluation of internal communication models, theories and frameworks for application within international non-government organisations

This chapter reviews and critiques of frameworks, theories and models for internal communication in the literature. It considers each model individually, highlighting both the contributions of the framework and elements that appear to be overlooked. The chapter concludes with remarks on the overall body of models, theories and frameworks identified.

Chapter 6: Research methodology

This chapter outlines the process for Phase two of this study and the reasoning behind adopting an exploratory, qualitative, multiple case-study design for investigating the research question. The evidence collection process and tools are also presented in this chapter, as well as the method of evidence analysis. Finally, criteria for evaluating the quality and rigour of the study are presented.

Chapter 7: Evidence analysis

This chapter presents the evidence collected for each case within its own unique context, focusing on the constructs of internal communication within each case and the barriers and challenges it faces in implementing effective strategic internal communication. The cases are then compared to identify commonalities and differences along various contextual elements and in relation to the theory developed in Chapters 2 to 5.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter starts by describing the conclusions to each of the three objectives of this study. The results of the case studies illustrate that internal communication does not function strategically in INGOs. INGOs face a variety of challenges that may explain this, including limited resources, poor strategic intents and cultures prioritising action over reflection. However, the theory and evidence support the potential of strategic internal communication to impact positively on the organisational performance of INGOs. This chapter concludes with several recommendations for further study in this area.

Chapter 1

Orientation and background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a growing impact on the social and economic welfare of people in modern society making their performance and management ever more important. Over the last two decades, NGOs have grown in number, size and power. Today NGOs are responsible for \$1.1 trillion in capital and 19 million employees (Zadek, 2003 quoted in Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:16). They account for an average of five percent of jobs worldwide and provide many services that government and corporations will not and/or can not (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:274).

In South Africa, the official government registry of non-profit organisations contains over 58,000 NGOs (Department of Social Development, 2008). Meanwhile, a 1998 survey indicated there were over 98,920 NGOs in the country, accounting for 8.7 percent of the formal non-agricultural workforce and 1.3 percent of the gross domestic product (Swilling, Russell, Sokolowski & Salamon, 2004:111). The result proves that this is a sector with a vital role in the functioning and overall health of society.

One unique type of NGO is the international NGO (INGO). Globalisation has led to the rise of INGOs over the last decade (Katsus, 2004:387-389). In 1981, there were 13,000 known INGOs worldwide. In 2001, this number had increased to over 47,000 and formal links between INGOs and international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank, had increased by 46 percent (Anheier, 2005:11). As such, the influence of INGOs is large and growing.

The critical and growing role played by NGOs and INGOs in society means that the performance of these organisations is vital. Academic research into the management of NGOs has increased over the last decade, but it has not kept pace with the growth of the sector (Anheier, 2005:12; Salamon, Sokolowski & List, 2004:4). Fundamentally, while a NGO does not make a profit, it does need to have a positive cash flow in order to complete its activities and provide its services (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:275). Therefore, NGOs must

adhere to effective management practices similar to all other forms of organisations (Chung & Lo, 2007:83). While this is the case, NGOs and INGOs possess unique characteristics that require management practices, generally developed for for-profit organisations, to be evaluated in their particular context. Internal communication is one domain in corporate management that needs to be evaluated within the NGO context.

Strategic internal communication has been called both the “promised land” (Oliver, 2000:179) and the “secret weapon” of successful organisations (Yates, 2006:71). It has been identified as a function that can have a major effect on an organisation’s performance. Yet, academic research on the process of internal communication in NGOs is not readily available.

Internal communication can be defined as strategic when this communication function is managed for the purpose of aligning internal stakeholders with the organisation’s strategic intent. Literature indicates that this type of internal communication improves an organisation’s chances of success and its bottom line (Robson & Tourish, 2005:213; Theaker, 2004:164; Yates, 2006:72). It does so by bringing the actions of an organisation’s employees in line with its mission and objectives (Dolphin, 2005:173; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74) through ongoing negotiations between an organisation and its employees to build healthy relationships (Ströh, 2007:216). Strategic internal communication must ensure that the organisation’s strategic intent is sufficiently known and understood for strategic alignment to occur (Puth, 2002:198). If it does, the result is improvement in organisational performance as identified through the following indicators: increased employee engagement, commitment to and enhancement of the corporate reputation and organisational prestige (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:19). As such, **strategic internal communication plays a critical role in the performance of an organisation.**

NGOs have several distinguishing characteristics that influence the application of strategic internal communication in this context. First, mission and values are central to NGOs because they guide decision making. Unlike profit-driven corporations there is no financial bottom-line to provide the basis for strategic decisions (Sawhill & Williamson quoted in Brown & Yoshioka, 2003:6) whether on its own or in combination with the mission statement. Instead, NGOs make decisions on the basis of their mission and in accordance

with their values in order to achieve their goals and maintain their legitimacy. Second, a NGO is dependent on funders for revenue while providing its services to a different client, unlike in a corporation where there is a direct exchange of funds and services/product between the client/customer and the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:278). Third, NGOs are limited by both the amount of funds available and by restrictions from donors on how they can use them. Finally, employees of NGOs are not necessarily motivated by financial reward but “by an intrinsic need for self worth” that is obtained by working towards a worthwhile mission (Maneerat, Hale & Singhal, 2005:189). These characteristics of NGOs do not excuse them from having sound and effective management practices. This however, means that **these practices need to be evaluated within the unique context of NGOs in order to optimise their impact on organisational performance.**

Strategic internal communication can have a major impact on the performance of NGOs and INGOs. With the growing role these organisations are playing in society, it is necessary to ensure management practices are effective in this unique context. This study takes a first step in this direction by considering the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The above introduction identified a need to investigate and ensure that management practices are relevant and effective for INGOs. With the influential role played by INGOs in society, it is of ever greater importance for these organisations to follow effective management practices. Strategic internal communication has been identified as a critical management process that has an impact on organisational performance. However, academic literature on strategic internal communication generally, and within NGOs in particular, is lacking. In addition, no literature has been found that outlines the current state of internal communication in INGOs. As such, this study is centred on the following research question: “*Does internal communication in INGOs function strategically?*”

1.3 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research question is best understood within a contextual framework. In particular, it is necessary to understand the context in which INGOs operate, the current perspectives on NGO management and the role of strategic internal communication in the performance of all organisations, including INGOs.

1.3.1 Placing INGOs in context

NGOs and INGOs are part of a broader component of society, generally referred to as civil society. Civil society is that part of society separate from the state and market and formed by people coming together in the pursuit of shared interests. As such, “civil society is created, changed, and maintained through various types of communication” (Botan & Taylor, 2005:685). It is considered one of three spheres of society, alongside the state and market. How these three spheres function and interact comprises the functioning of society as a whole and each sphere plays a key role (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:8).

The role of civil society can be seen as one of filling in the gaps, providing those products and services that the market and state either cannot or will not provide. As such, it includes many functions, such as delivering vital human services, empowering the disadvantaged, giving expression to artistic, religious and culture impulses, building communities and mobilizing individual efforts in the pursuit of a common good (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:3-4). Civil society organisations (CSOs) can range from small, informal clubs and social groups, to large social movements and international organisations, all of which are formed on the basis of shared values. The most important representatives of civil society are NGOs and they are primarily responsible for the growing influence of civil society on the local and international scene (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:61).

The term NGO, while it could apply to almost all CSOs, is generally associated with development organisations (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:3-4). These organisations fulfil functions in developing countries ranging from service provision and empowering the poor to advocating individual and group rights. In developed countries, these organisations raise funds, raise awareness and advocate on development issues. As noted above, international NGOs (INGOs) have increased substantially worldwide over the last three

decades; however, the rate of expansion has been even greater in low and middle income countries, such as South Africa. It is within this context of a growing INGOs presence in South Africa and worldwide that this study is undertaken. The INGO context is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.3.2 INGO management

With the growth in the number and influence of INGOs, increasing attention has been paid to the accountability and legitimacy of these organisations. INGOs have multiple stakeholders to whom they are accountable, including members, donors and the publics they seek to assist (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:277). Meanwhile, their legitimacy is constantly called into question by the lack of representation of this last group in their decision-making bodies (Long, 2008:51). In this complex operating environment, NGOs require solid management practices to perform effectively.

Since the modern foundations for the study of CSOs and NGOs were laid only two decades ago, there has been huge growth in the field (Anheier, 2005:12). However, research into the management of CSOs generally (Anheier, 2005:115), and NGOs in particular (Lewis, 2007:9), has been lacking. Some authors have grouped the management of CSOs in with the management of public institutions (McNabb, 2002; Pynes, 2004; Steiss, 2003). Other authors, such as Rania (quoted in Katz, 2006:335), have argued that INGOs are being pressured by funders to adopt the management practices of trans-national corporations which do not necessarily apply because of their unique characteristics. Their critique of this pressure is supported by CSO and NGO management scholars, such as Anheier (2005) and Lewis (2007). These scholars argue that CSOs and NGOs are a distinct type of organisation with specific management needs.

The argument is not that management in CSOs should be approached in a less rigorous way than in corporations or the public sector. Indeed, as elucidated by Udoh James (quoted in Lewis, 2007:9), “management capacity is the lifeblood of all organizations, irrespective of whether they are private entities, public agencies, not-for-profit concerns or non-governmental varieties.” The argument is rather that CSOs have unique characteristics that require special consideration. One of the distinguishing characteristics

of CSOs is that they tend to be more complex than businesses of comparable size (Anheier, 2005:229). Known as the “law of nonprofit complexity,” this characteristic is a result of the multiple stakeholders, missing profit motive and prominence of value-based missions. As a result of this and other characteristics of CSOs, a unique field of CSO and NGO management is emerging (Lewis, 2007:9).

In order to illustrate this unique management field, Lewis (2007:219) developed a composite framework for NGO management. This framework argues that NGOs should draw upon a variety of management traditions – generic management, third-sector management, development management and public sector management – in order to develop unique management practices that fit their context and organisational characteristics. This study is conducted from the perspective of this composite framework and draws upon different fields of management study in order to understand how strategic internal communication should be managed in INGOs. This perspective is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.3.3 Strategic internal communication in INGOs

As noted in the introduction, internal communication has garnered considerable attention in the business world in recent years for its ability to improve organisational performance when implemented strategically. It does so through a specific function: aligning employees with the organisation’s strategic goals so that they are committed to those goals and actively engaged in achieving them (Dolphin 2005:173; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74).

Strategic internal communication facilitates the relationship between an organisation and its employees in order to align them towards achieving the same goals and objectives. Therefore, the relationship between an organisation’s management and its employees is at the centre of strategic internal communication (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:311). As noted in the introduction, employees in NGOs are often motivated partly by a genuine desire and commitment to the organisation’s mission. However, as shown in a study by Brown & Yoshioka (2003:14), while a CSO’s mission does attract employees, it is not enough to maintain them, particularly in the face of unsatisfactory pay and perceived poor management. In this context, strategic internal communication has the potential to

increase motivation, improve management practices and generally maintain a positive relationship between management and employees.

Strategic internal communication has the potential to help INGOs handle an additional issue as well. INGOs generally have a staff drawn from a large number of countries (Anheier, 2005:349). The result is a highly diverse workforce with different cultures, languages and values. This is particularly the case in South Africa, where even the local population is incredibly diverse. In this context, strategic internal communication plays the role of facilitating negotiations between employees and the organisation to develop consensus on the key values and goals of the organisation and encourage diversity and creativity to keep the organisation both focused and adaptable in its dynamic environment.

It is in recognition of the potential of strategic internal communication to improve the performance of INGOs that this research question is posed. The concept of strategic internal communication is further explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.4 GENERAL AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 General Aim

To explore the current state of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.4.2 Objectives

Objective 1

To identify key components of strategic internal communication in INGOs through a review and synthesis of relevant literature.

Objective 2

To identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically.

Objective 3

To compare the empirical findings about current strategic internal communication practices in INGOs with the synthesis from the relevant literature.

1.5 META-THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The meta-theoretical and conceptual framework for this study includes seven layers, moving from the abstract (meta-theoretical assumptions and worldview) to the specific (concepts and constructs) of this study. Table 1.1 outlines the complete framework.

Table 1.1: Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework

General Aim	To explore the current state of strategic internal communication in INGOs			
Meta-theoretical assumptions	Epistemological Ontological Axiological			
Worldview	Integration of postmodernism and social constructivism			
Paradigms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder theory Three sector view of society Neo-institutional view of organisations 			
Grand Theory	Postmodern strategic management of communication			
Theoretical disciplines	Communication Management	Management Science		Human Resource Management
		<i>For-profit sector</i>	<i>Non-profit sector</i>	
Sub-fields within theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate communication Organisational communication Internal communication Public relations Development communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic management Postmodern strategic management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit (CSO) management NGO management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee communication Employee relations
Individual theories from specific theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Interpretations of the excellence theory of public relations (PR) Symmetrical communication Theory of strategic communication Contingency theory Development communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling management Learning organisation Complexity theory Strategic thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil society Law of Non-profit complexity Differences between CSOs and corporations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational culture Organisational structure Theories of control
Individual models from specific theoretical disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-information, persuasion, asymmetrical and symmetrical models of PR 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composite framework of NGO management Analytical-normative model of NPOs Three sector society model 	
Concepts	INGO, Strategic internal communication			
Constructs	Strategic intent Strategic position and role		Strategic alignment Strategic knowledge	

1.5.1 Meta-theoretical assumptions

Meta-theoretical assumptions are the most abstract component of the conceptual framework. In Greek, meta means “over” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20), therefore meta-theory can be understood to mean the theory of theory (Baldwin, 2004:23). As such, meta-theoretical assumptions guide and constrain the understanding of theory and research.

Within the academic community, there has been considerable debate about meta-theory (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20). The reason is partly because meta-theoretical assumptions are basic beliefs with no way to establish the truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:107). All researchers have meta-theoretical assumptions underlying their work, although many do not explicitly acknowledge these (Baldwin, 2004:23). The following discussion explicitly states those epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions that form the meta-theoretical position adopted in this study.

1.5.1.1 Epistemological position

Epistemology is the study of knowledge: what is known, how it is known (Baldwin, 2004:23; Wood, 2004:56) and “who is the knower” (Anderson, 1996:49). One’s answers to these questions places them on a continuum that ranges from there being a single unchanging Truth, to a single truth with multiple interpretations, to multiple truths with multiple interpretations, to finally multiple truths that can only be partially interpreted (Anderson, 1996:49). The position a researcher takes can determine what she considers constitutes acceptable knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:102). This study is positioned on the second rung of the continuum, recognising that there may be an absolute reality but that it is impossible to know because of the subjective role of human perception. Thus knowledge is considered to be constituted, not just by objective facts, but also by the subjective perceptions of people.

Similar to the positions regarding what knowledge is, there are various positions on how knowledge is obtained. A common question is whether an individual or society determines the truth (Baldwin, 2004:23). For example, rationalists believe that knowledge is the product of human reasoning to uncover the truth (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:19). This study

takes the position that reality is socially constructed, that people create knowledge in order to function in the world with meaning negotiated as part of a larger group.

The epistemological position taken in this study underpins certain assumptions about the research phenomenon. It is thus assumed that a single reality within an organisation cannot be identified. Rather, members of the organisation create an understanding of the organisation in negotiation with each other, but each views the organisation from a subjective standpoint. Therefore, it is understood in this study that an objective view of an INGO is not possible and that in order to gain a comprehensive view of strategic internal communication, multiple sources of data are necessary.

1.5.1.2 Ontological position

Ontology is concerned with basic assumptions about human nature and reality (Baldwin, 2004:23; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:108). Determinists argue that humans are constrained by social, biological and environmental factors and are therefore reactive and passive in their behaviour. On the opposite side, pragmatists argue that people choose their behaviour in order to meet their needs, in other words, they exert free will (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:20). This study occupies an ontological middle ground. It takes the position that humans make choices within the confines of social and cultural constraints.

Ontology is also concerned with the duality between objectivism and its view that social entities exist in an external reality versus subjectivism and its view that social phenomenon are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:108). This study adopts the subjectivist view that it is the perceptions and actions of social actors that create social phenomenon and that these are not independently part of an external reality.

This ontological position results in certain assumptions about the research question: does internal communication in INGOs function strategically. For example, it is assumed that decisions and actions taken by people within INGOs are guided both by personal goals and by social constraints. It is also assumed that internal communication as a phenomenon is firmly embedded within the social and cultural environment of the organisation. Finally, the position underpins the assumption that change is possible within

an organisation, although constrained by environmental factors. In terms of methodology, this position supports the need to consider the social and cultural context in which the research phenomenon occurs.

1.5.1.3 Axiological position

Axiology refers to the study of values. In particular, it is concerned with the question of whether theory and research can be separated from the values and interest of those creating or conducting it (Baldwin, 2004:24; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:110). In classical science it is fully separated from epistemology in that science was concerned with what is and not with what ought to be (Anderson, 1996:188). From this perspective, science took the view that theory and research can (or more recently, should aim to be) value free – that the role of the scholar is to produce knowledge and the use of that knowledge is not their concern (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:20-21). This study, however, rejects this value-free position in favour of a value-conscious position. This position argues that value-free inquiry is not possible: the very choice of what to study is influenced by the values of the researcher (Baldwin, 2004:24). Similarly, the position acknowledges that the process of studying a phenomenon can change that phenomenon. Therefore, rather than aiming to be value-free, the value conscious position recognizes that knowledge is used by the powerful to dominate the weak and therefore researchers must take responsibility for the ways that their research will be used in society.

In addition to a recognition of the effects of the researcher's values on the study, this axiological position results in certain assumptions about the research phenomenon. Primarily, it necessitates an approach to strategic internal communication which does not view it as solely a tool to be used by management to manipulate and control its employees. Rather, strategic internal communication is assumed to be a tool to enhance the performance of an organisation, while also empowering the workforce. In terms of methodology, this position requires that the evidence be analysed from a critical perspective. It also guides the researcher in understanding the ethical implications of her work and the activities needed to address this.

1.5.2 Worldview

The second level of the conceptual framework is the worldview. A worldview is a way of seeing the world and understanding reality. As Risse (2007:126) describes it, it is a lens through which a researcher looks at the world and thus influences any interpretations made. The worldview adopted for this study rests firmly on the meta-theoretical assumptions outlined above and draws upon two inter-related philosophical traditions: postmodernism and social constructivism. As noted by Ströh (2007:204), “postmodernism underwrites a worldview that relies on constructivism.” Therefore, instead of resulting in two different lenses through which the study is undertaken, these two traditions combine in a complementary way to provide an integrated perspective on the research phenomenon.

Both postmodernism and social constructivism have multiple interpretations and definitions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:109; Prawat, 1996:215; Risse, 2007:126; Ströh, 2007:204). Postmodernism can be seen as a general rejection of the main tenets of modernism (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:40; McKie & Munshi, 2007:77; Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:161). In particular, postmodernism rejects universality in favour of context-specific historically-situated narratives (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:45). Meanwhile, at its core, constructivism is the belief that reality is a relative concept and there are multiple constructions of ‘reality’ dependent on the individuals and groups that create them (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:111). As such, social constructivism is the view that social reality is constructed and reproduced through the daily actions of people (Berger & Luckmann, 2002; Risse, 2007:128). These two positions complement each other in unique ways, making them an appropriate worldview for this study.

As noted above, postmodernism rejects the idea of a universal explanation for a phenomenon and instead emphasises the importance of context. Social constructivism complements this position in that it is an ontological middle ground between individualism and structuralism. It views humans as inseparable from their social environment because it defines who they are, but, at the same time, believes humans create, reproduce and change culture through their actions (Risse, 2007:128). Gergen (1985:267) describes it as follows “the terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people,” thus emphasising the importance of the historical context. As such, social constructivism also emphasises the role of context and

identifies how those contexts can be influenced and changed. For this study, this combined approach emphasises that strategic internal communication is deeply dependent on the context in which it is undertaken and that changes to this context occur via human interaction.

Since change occurs through human interaction, social constructivism emphasises communication and discourse practices because it is through these that people make sense of the world and give meaning to their activities (Risse, 2007:131). Even the basic language used maintains the social constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 2002:48). Therefore, communication is central to the construction of reality (Littlejohn in Ströh, 2007:204) and thus at the centre of any organisation. The postmodern approach also places discourse at the centre of an organisation with interaction and relationships as the means for organic organising (Ströh, 2007:205). In addition, postmodernism focuses on the fragmentation and differences between people (Blaney & Wolfe, 2004:269). Thus it recognises the complex relationships and diversity inherent in an organisation. Within the context of this study, these two perspectives combine in the recognition of the central role of communication in the negotiations of complex relationships between diverse players which in turn construct the reality within the organisation.

Within social constructivism, the socially constructed world is generally seen by its' inhabitants as being an objective reality (Berger & Luckman, 2002:47). Thus humans are deeply embedded in and affected by their social environment and therefore are guided by a desire to do the right thing within their social context and not just to realise their own advantage. Postmodernism also emphasises the role of values. As Cilliers (quoted in Ströh 2007:207) notes, values are not just nice to have but necessary for the growth and survival of an organisation. Values allow for the decentralisation of control and the self-organisation of the organisation making it more flexible and adaptable in its environment (Ströh 2007:207). Alternatively, compromising those values can threaten the survival of the organisation when the environment (for example, the public) can turn on it. The combination of the social constructivist and postmodern approach to values is particularly apt when considering NGOs. Values generally play an important role in NGOs which are guided by the intentions (if not the reality) of doing good. The social constructivist perspective helps explain why this is the case while the postmodernist perspective

identifies the importance of these values to the organisation. Within this context, internal communication plays the role of building healthy relationships within the organisation based on its values (Ströh 2007:207).

Social constructivism is generally descriptive in its aim (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:46), however it can also have a critical element (Grunig & White, 1992:53; Risse, 2007:128). This is because reality is not only constructed but can be deconstructed and reconstructed (Grunig & White, 1992:54). This is a key point for strategic internal communication because it underpins the idea that through communication, the organisation can be changed. Through its rejection of meta-narratives, postmodernism also adopts a critical perspective and argues that organisations need to challenge what they traditionally hold sacred, such as culture and strategic intent (Ströh 2007:207). In addition, it means that a researcher studying an organisation should similarly question traditionally held views of organising and organisations. By integrating the social constructivist position with the postmodern position, there is a view that strategic internal communication need not embody traditional forms of management, but can serve as a tool for challenging the old way of doing things. For the researcher, the perspective also indicates a need to look beyond the traditional linear process of management.

The integration of postmodernism and social constructivism provides a particular worldview for this study. It emphasises the role of context, communication, relationships and values within the organisation, all key components of strategic internal communication. In addition, it notes the need to consider the research question from a critical perspective. It is with these factors in mind that this study is undertaken.

1.5.3 Paradigms

Paradigms form the third level of the conceptual framework. Paradigms are a means of clustering theories together (Baldwin, 2004:25). They are more specific than a worldview in that a paradigm is generally applicable to a specific area of research. However, each paradigm can encompass multiple theories and grand theories.

Three paradigms outline the conceptual perspective taken to this study's research context. They are stakeholder theory, neo-institutionalist view of organisations and three-sector view of society. These are each discussed separately below.

1.5.3.1 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory outlines a specific way of looking at an organisation. Its central concept, the stakeholder, is classically defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984 quoted in Friedman & Miles, 2006:1). In stakeholder theory, the organisation is no longer viewed as an isolated unit, guided and managed solely by its directors under the influence of its shareholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006:25). Instead, the organisation is seen as interdependent, with multiple stakeholder groups whom it both affects and is affected by. As a result, an organisation must become more responsive to its external environment and the changes within it in order to survive (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183).

This study's research question is considered through the paradigm of normative stakeholder theory. The normative perspectives require stakeholder relations to be based on morals and ethics and require broader consideration of all stakeholder interests with the aim of developing win-win situations (Deetz, 2003:608) and ultimately a more 'just' society. Deetz (2003) refers to this normative perspective as a 'reformed stakeholder' conception arguing that consideration of the values and interests of any one stakeholder over all the others is to privilege the one group, at the expense of the organisation as a whole (Deetz, 2000:273). This normative stakeholder perspective complements the neo-institutionalist view of organisations, adopted by this study and discussed in the following section. Under both these perspectives, an organisation, such as an INGO, cannot be simply guided by its own rational decision-making but must also adhere to social pressures, as pushed forth by its stakeholders, in order to maintain its legitimacy and thus its long-term survival.

Postmodernism has influenced certain conceptions of normative stakeholder theory. From a postmodern worldview, normative stakeholder theory calls for the recognition and consideration of interests and relationships that may not be part of traditional management practices (Friedman & Miles, 2006:68). It argues for the adoption of multiple stakeholder dialogue to replace traditional manager-centred forms of decision making (Friedman &

Miles, 2006:69). As such, normative stakeholder theory serves as a basis for postmodern strategic management that is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Stakeholder theory fundamentally validates the importance of strategic internal communication because it identifies the intrinsic value of all stakeholders, employees and other internal stakeholders included, not just as instruments to further the organisation's goals but as important groups who need to be considered in their own right (Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). In addition, Deetz (2003:609) notes the importance of communication practices to the 'reformed stakeholder' conception in order to ensure constructive dialogue without costing productivity. As such stakeholder theory both justifies internal communication as a necessary and beneficial management function and highlights the role of communication therein. It is thus a cornerstone of this study.

1.5.3.2 Neo-institutionalist view of organisations

This study adopts the neo-institutionalist view of organisations. From this perspective, organisational actions are not solely guided by rational decision-making, but also by institutions (Anheier, 2005:147). Institutions are understood to be norms, rules and values taken for granted in the social context (Risse, 2007:130) in which the organisation is located. Derived directly from the social constructivist worldview, the neo-institutionalist view of organisations strives to address the tension between rational decision-making and the complex social pressure on organisational decision-makers (Anheier, 2005:148). Institutions are viewed as placing constraints on the number and type of legitimate decisions available to an organisation. As such legitimacy (the conformance with institutional expectations) is "the central resource that organisations require for long-term survival" (Anheier, 2005:147). In other words, organisations must conform to the social expectations placed upon them in order to be successful over the long term. It is against the backdrop of this paradigm of organisations that this study addresses the question of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

1.5.3.3 Three sector view of society

Up until the 1980s, a two-sector view of society was dominant (Anheier, 2005:13). In this view, society was made up of the state sector and the market sector. However, with the decline of the welfare state, the end of the Cold War and all the changes these brought to

society, a new view emerged. In this view, society contains three mutually dependant and inter-related sectors: state, market and civil society. Civil society and its many components including CSOs are given equal weighting in terms of the importance of their role in society *vis-a-vis* the state and the market. It is within this paradigm that a majority of studies on CSOs, including this research study, occur. A more in-depth discussion of what this view of society means for the importance and characteristics of CSOs is provided in Chapter 2.

1.5.4 Grand Theory

Theory can be defined as “a description of concepts and specifications of the relationships between or among concepts” (Metts, 2004:9). Steyn (quoted in Steyn & Butschi 2003) describes a grand theory as a comprehensive theory that applies to an entire phenomenon. As such, grand theory forms the fourth level of the conceptual framework in that it incorporates the multiple concepts implicated in a phenomenon and their many relationships. There is no grand theory of internal communication specifically, however, there is a theory that can explain the role, purpose and process of communication in and by organisations: the strategic management of communication.

Strategic management is a proactive, mission-driven form of management which includes a heightened awareness of the organisation’s external and internal environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). This means that the organisation proactively engages in strategic planning on an ongoing basis to align its actions and goals with its environment in order to improve the organisation’s performance. Within this framework, communication management serves the role of monitoring the organisation’s environment and ensuring that it is taken into consideration during the strategic planning process as well as managing the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:452). Within this framework, strategic internal communication can be seen as the process of monitoring the internal environment, managing the relationship between the organisation and its employees and ensuring that the organisation’s strategy and employees are aligned.

Traditional strategic management of communication is a linear hierarchical process whereby top-management develops a strategy which is implemented by the organisation

to obtain pre-determined results. Postmodernism rejects the structure and linearity of this approach as impossible due to the unpredictability of the environment and calls for a more flexible and participative strategic management, where management is thought of more as facilitation than management (Ströh, 2007:205/215). Stacey (quoted in Ströh, 2007) defines postmodern strategic management as “the process of actively participating in the conversations around important emerging issues.” In taking this perspective, the role of communication management still remains focused on environmental scanning and relationship management, but rather than conforming to management principles, its role is to embrace diversity and creativity by ensuring constant negotiations with its many stakeholders in its ever-changing environment (Ströh, 2007:211). As such, the role of strategic internal communication centres on the negotiations and relationships between an organisation and its internal stakeholders, its employees.

Strategic management is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Strategic communication and strategic internal communication are addressed in Chapter 4.

1.5.5 Disciplines

While there is debate as to whether internal communication is a human resources or a communication management phenomenon, this study firmly places it within the communication management discipline based on its strategic role as part of the communication management function as discussed in the previous section. That said, as was noted in section 1.3.2 and the discussion around the Lewis’ (2007) composite framework for NGO management, this study does draw upon several different theoretical disciplines to explain the phenomenon within the INGO context. These disciplines include communication management, management sciences for both the corporate and non-profit sector, and human resources management.

1.5.6 Theories

Theories form the fifth level of the framework. Theories generally deal with fewer concepts and relationships than grand theories because they look at more specific elements of the research phenomenon. Each of the disciplines drawn upon for this study provides specific theories that help to clarify the research question. For example, management science

provides a variety of theories that give insight into the broader functioning of management in organisations. From the corporate sector, theories such as the interactive management and the learning organisation provide an understanding of the role and process of management in INGOs. Following on this, complexity theory outlines the manner in which an INGO needs to balance the chaos and instability with order and stability in order to avoid stagnation and lack of progress in the modern world. In addition, the emerging subfield of non-profit and NGO management considers the unique management needs of NGOs. For example, its view on the differences between INGOs and corporations which culminates in the law of non-profit complexity helps explain how standard management theory and techniques can and cannot be directly applied to INGOs. Finally, human resources management, concerned with the management of employees, provides theories that help explain management of strategic internal communication.

However, as the home discipline for this study, communication management is home to many theories that help in understanding strategic internal communication. For example, the theory of strategic communication highlights the role, function and objectives of strategic internal communication while symmetrical communication theory highlights how it should be conducted. In particular, the Excellence Study of Public Relations developed many theories that directly relate to this study's research phenomenon. More specifically, new interpretations of the Excellence Study, influenced by postmodern thinking, are heavily drawn while exploring the theoretical process of strategic internal communication in INGOs. These theories are discussed next.

The excellence theory of PR was the result of the IABC Excellence Study conducted during the early 1990s. Public relations (PR) and communication management can be considered one and the same. For example, Grunig and Hunt (quoted in Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35) define PR as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics." As such, the theories within the study, which started by looking at the value of public relations to organisations and society incorporates multiple other theories to explain how and why it achieves that value (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35), is equally applicable to communication management as to public relations.

Critics of the theory (for examples, see McKie & Munshi, 2007:36) in its original expression (see Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, 1992) argue that excellence theory is essentially a modernist theory. As such, several researchers have taken a postmodern worldview to further explore and expand this theory (for examples, see Toth, 2007). This study draws upon these new postmodern interpretations of the excellence theory of PR to identify those key components of this theory that form part of its conceptual background.

The excellence theory is based on the premise that the value of PR lies in how it helps reconcile and build the relationships between the organisation and its publics in the internal and external environment (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). It argues that the PR function, when operating 'excellently', helps to ensure that the organisation works in harmony with its publics, behaves in ways acceptable to these groups and thus avoids many of the negative consequences of not addressing the concerns of these publics. This component is in line with a postmodern perspective which emphasises the importance of interaction and relationships (Stroh, 2007:204). Within this framework, the value of strategic internal communication rests on how it maintains and develops the relationships between the organisation and its internal publics.

The excellence theory argues that these relationships need to be based on symmetrical communication. Symmetrical communication in PR occurs when the organisation engages in dialogue with its publics where it is not only trying to persuade those publics to the organisation's point of view but is also open to being persuaded as well (Grunig & White, 1992:39). Excellence theory posits that internal communication in particular should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). The reason is because symmetrical internal communication helps build a participative organisational culture that increases employee satisfaction which, in turn, improves organisational performance.

The postmodern interpretation of the excellence theory accepts symmetrical PR as the normative ideal (McKie & Munshi, 2007:37). This approach argues that a focus on building democratic process and healthy two-way relationships will lead to the overall success of an organisation (Ströh, 2007:213). However, as critics note (McKie & Munshi, 2007:37), there are many practical issues in implementing symmetrical PR, including accusations that it is misleading in its promise of equality amid uneven power distribution. Therefore,

even in organisations claiming to practice symmetrical internal communication, there is still a need to be aware of and consider the real power dynamics of the organisation and not accept outward trappings of equal relationships as necessarily reflective of the inner reality. As such, this study is conducted from the viewpoint that symmetrical internal communication is the ideal but requires careful evaluation.

For communication management to function optimally and enhance organisational performance, the excellence theory states that all PR functions must be integrated within the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:39). Excellence theory posits that internal communication in particular should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). All programmes need to be aligned with the overall strategy of the organisation. Within a postmodern interpretation, the strategic concept adopts a more flexible, adaptive and participative connotation (Ströh, 2007:37). Postmodern strategic management and its relation to strategic internal communication is discussed further in Chapter 3 and 4.

Finally, the excellence theory of PR not only recognizes 'excellent' internal communication as a component of excellent PR, but also as a prerequisite (Grunig, 1992:532). As such, strategic internal communication is a central component of an organisation's overall communication function. Excellence theory and its conceptualisation of internal communication is discussed further in Chapter 4.

1.5.7 Models

In addition to theories, this study draws upon several models from the identified disciplines. For example, in communication management, the publicity, public information, asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations provide insight into the functional and normative processes of communication management. Meanwhile, several models from the non-profit sector of management sciences are useful in understanding how INGOs need to be managed. For example, its model of a three-sector society positions INGOs within broader society. In addition, its analytical-normative model of non-profit organisations (NPOs) helps characterise how these organisations need to be managed.

1.5.8 Concepts

The final two levels of the conceptual framework, concepts and constructs are very specific to the research phenomenon being studied. Concepts are objects or ideas that have something in common (Comadena, 2004:38). They are “not tangible objects but definitions that allow scholars to investigate a particular phenomenon” (Metts, 2004:10). As such, they refer to an abstract notion that has particular characteristics. This study focuses on two key concepts: INGOs and strategic internal communication. These terms are further explored in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

1.5.8.1 INGOs

INGOs are a specific type of NGO which in turn is a specific type of CSO. Therefore, to define INGO, it is necessary to first define CSO and NGO. CSOs form the organisational infrastructure of civil society. Salamon *et al.* (2004:10) identified five characteristics required of an organisation for it to be considered a CSO. It must be organized, private, not profit-distributing, self-governing and voluntary. The United Nation’s *Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions* (quoted in Anheier, 2005:54) provides a similar but modified list arguing that CSOs must be: self-governing, not-for-profit and non-profit-distributing, institutionally separate from government and non-compulsory. As clarification, it should be noted that in both these lists, the terms voluntary and non-compulsory refer to the requirement to participate or contribute to the organisation as opposed to any reference to a complete or partially voluntary workforce. What these two lists make clear is that CSOs are private self-governing organisations who invest any resources they make back into the organisation and with whom people choose to participate voluntarily.

As noted previously, the term NGO is generally applied to a specific type of CSO that is involved in some way in development work. Development is understood to be improving the social, cultural and/or economic well-being of society. Thus NGOs encompass a wide range of organisations engaged in a multitude of activities. Considered From various perspectives they are considered to be more efficient, more flexible, more innovative, more democratic, more equal and more capable of promoting social change than government and international development agencies, NGOs have grown into powerful players in the development field (Anheier, 2005:340).

INGOs are at their most basic simply NGOs operating in two or more countries. They too fulfil the characteristics of CSOs, but with the added component of being engaged in some manner in development. This engagement can range from very political advocacy work, to entirely operational service provision (Van Tulder & van der Zwart, 2006:66). While the term INGOs often conjures up visions of huge multinational organisations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam, INGOs exist in multiple organisational forms. These range from large centralised organisations to small decentralised organisations. The only common characteristics that can be used to define this group is that they are all CSOs engaged in development and operating in two or more countries. For further discussion of CSOs, NGOs and INGOs see Chapter 2.

1.5.8.2 Strategic internal communication

Strategic internal communication forms the central concept of this study. Although there is a growing body of knowledge on internal communication, there is no general agreement in the literature as to its definition. One common definition is that provided by Frank and Bothwell (quoted in Dolphin, 2005:172; Welch & Jackson, 2007:179) which sees internal communication as “the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities.” Yet, Welch and Jackson (2007:179) note that their definition, in fact, refers to organisational communication as a field of study and practice and not to internal communication as a component of communication management.

This critique hints at a common difference between definitions of internal communication: whether it includes managed and unmanaged communication or just managed communication. Many authors (for examples see Scholes, 1997:xviii; Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007:184; and Chen, 2008:167) include only managed communication, while others (for example see Kalla, 2005:304 and Maubane, 2006:11) include both. In this study, the term strategic internal communication will refer to only the managed use of communication in the organisation.

A second area of divergence among definitions of internal communication is its goals. For example, in their definition of internal communication Stauss and Hoffman (quoted in

Yeomans, 2006) declare this management function to have the aim of “systematically influenc[ing] the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees.” Meanwhile, in his definition, Chen (2008:167) describes the purpose of internal communication as helping to “identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organisation’s management and its employees.” These examples reflect only some of the diversity among definitions. This study, however, views the purpose of managed internal communication through the framework of its role in the strategic management of the organisation.

A strategy is “an effort or deliberate action that an organisation implements to out-perform its rivals” (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). It can refer to the “logic behind the actions” and the organisation’s “pro-active response to an ever-changing environment” (Steyn & Puth, 2000:29). The essence of an organisation’s strategy is exhibited in its strategic intent. Strategic intent refers to the vision and direction the strategy provides and the new areas the organisation is set to explore, as well as to the goal and purpose this exploration is designed to achieve (Puth 2002:188). This latter is encapsulated in the organisation’s mission. A strategy’s purpose is to provide direction to an organisation’s activities by focusing them on its strategic goals and mission while ensuring that the methods used are in line with the environment and context in which the organisation operates (Steyn & Puth, 2000:29). Following on this, Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic and Sriramesh (2007:20) define strategic communication as “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.” Steyn and Puth (2000:452) state that the key role of strategic communication is to scan the organisation’s internal and external environment and manage the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders bringing all in line to improve organisational performance and achieve the organisation’s mission.

As noted in section 1.5.4, from a postmodern perspective this purpose remains the same, but focuses on maintaining ongoing negotiations between the organisation and its stakeholders through which the organisational strategy emerges rather than being completely predetermined. Based on this understanding of ‘strategic’, this study views strategic internal communication as aligning an organisation with its internal environment and stakeholders through ongoing dialogue around its strategic intent. Therefore strategic internal communication is defined as:

“The strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent”.

1.5.9 Constructs

Constructs, the final and most specific level of the framework, are the elements that make up concepts. As such, they are easier to measure within a research study. Four constructs have been identified as composing strategic internal communication and will be measured as part of the empirical phase of this study.

Strategic internal communication’s first construct is its purpose: strategic alignment. As defined above, strategic alignment refers to bringing all elements within an organisation in line with its strategic intent so that they act together towards the same goals.

The second construct of strategic internal communication is its position and role: part of strategic management. In order to achieve strategic alignment, internal communication function must play a role in both strategy development and strategy implementation. In order to do so effectively, internal communication must be represented at the senior management level, either in its own right or as part of the remit of the most senior communicator.

The third construct is the knowledge of the senior communicator. The senior communicator requires the knowledge and experience to implement communication and internal communication strategically.

The final construct of strategic internal communication is its content focus: strategic intent. As noted above, the organisation’s strategic intent is the essence of an organisation’s strategy and as such is the central content focus of strategic internal communication. In other words, it can be considered ‘the message’ of strategic internal communication.

The strategic purpose, position, knowledge and content are the constructs of strategic internal communication and will be measured in this study. In addition, the process of

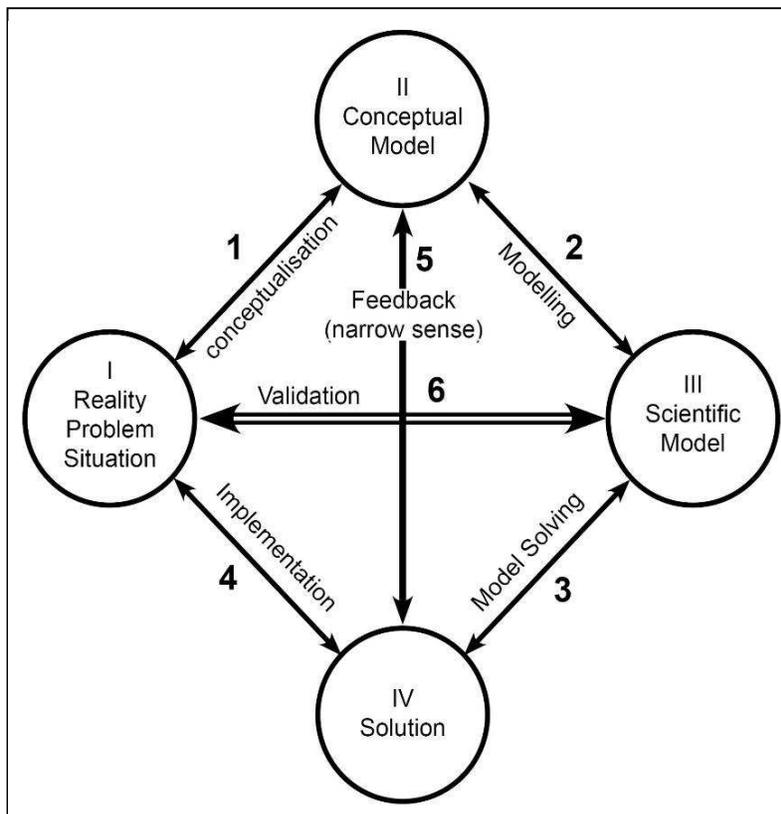
internal communication will also be considered. The INGO, the second concept discussed in the previous section, forms the context in which this measurement will occur and thus its construct will not be measured specifically.

The above discussion lays out the meta-theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this study. Its various components are discussed further in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

1.6 APPROACH TO SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM SOLVING

This study approaches scientific problem solving using the model developed by Mitroff, Betz, Pondy and Sagasti (1974). This model is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: A systems view of problem-solving



Source: Mitroff *et al.* (1974:48)

Mitroff *et al.* (1974:46) developed their model based on the principle that a holistic view of a phenomenon is necessary in order to understand all its essential characteristics. As

such, their model takes a systems' view of problem-solving, examining the process as a whole and the many interactions between the different elements. In its simplest form, their model of problem-solving contains four key circles – the problem, the conceptual model, the scientific model and the solution – and four key processes – conceptualisation, modelling, model solving and implementation. However, Mitroff *et al.* (1974) emphasise that each of these components and processes are dependent on and influence each other. As well, the overall problem-solving process can start and finish at any place in the model using almost any combination of circles and processes, each with particular consequences for the study being undertaken.

This study is located between Circle I, the problem, and Circle II, the conceptual model, and is primarily engaged in the first process: conceptualisation. The process of conceptualisation is concerned with defining the research problem and determining the nature and number of variables that will need to be considered in finding a solution (Mitroff *et al.*, 1974:47). This study engages in conceptualisation to define the current process of and problems with managing strategic internal communication in INGOs and identify what variables and factors must be considered in finding a solution to this problem.

The study does not present these variables in a conceptual model, Circle II. Rather, this study is an exploratory first step to lay the foundation for future research to develop a conceptual model and move into the later stages of Mitroff *et al.*'s problem-solving model. As is discussed in Chapter 5, there is a wide variety of models and frameworks related to internal communication already in the literature, but there is very little relationship between them. Therefore this first step is necessary in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

1.7 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

To date there has been relatively little academic interest in the management of internal communication (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:300; Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:312; Welch & Jackson, 2007:178; Yeomans, 2006:237). The primary focus of the academic literature has been the benefits of effective internal communication, particularly when it is strategic. Several positive indicators of corporate performance have been linked to strategic internal

communication including increased employee engagement and commitment, enhancement to the corporate reputation and organisational prestige (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:19), increased employee satisfaction and decreased resistance to change (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299). Studies have also linked other indicators with more direct correlations to costs and effective strategic internal communication, including decreased employee turnover and reduced absenteeism (Yates, 2006:71), improved productivity, higher quality of services and products and increased levels of innovation (Clampitt & Downs in Tourish & Hargie, 2004:2). Overall, strategic internal communication has come to be seen as a means of improving a company's financial performance (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299) and developing a sustainable competitive advantage (Yates, 2006:72).

Various studies have also been conducted to try to define and characterise internal communication (Dolphin, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007), yet there is little consensus on the definition or process of internal communication or what is needed for it to make a strategic contribution to the organisation. In Chapter 5, nine models, frameworks and theories related to strategic internal communication are introduced, such as Asif and Sargeant's (2000) model of internal communication in the financial service sector and Welch and Jackson's (2007) redefinition of the field from the stakeholder's perspective, but the majority of the models and frameworks are considered only within a specific sector and none have been found to have been studied by any academics other than their authors. , There is little agreement on a definition or model of strategic internal communication, leaving a gap in the academic literature.

The literature on NGO management is in a similar state. Despite the role played by NGOs in society, it is only in the last two decades that NGO management has been seen as distinct from the management of businesses and government and it still receives comparatively minor attention (Lewis, 2007:9). In addition, studies on NGO management have tended to focus on the work that NGOs do and not on what goes on inside the organisation - its internal management (Lewis, 2007:111-112). In terms of communication management, the growing civil society sector, of which INGOs are a part, has complex and even unique communication dynamics but very few studies consider these unique dynamics in terms of strategic communication (Lewis, 2005:239) or strategic internal

communication. Thus there is a gap in the NGO management literature around internal management broadly and strategic internal communication in particular.

This study aims to contribute to academic knowledge by starting to fill both those gaps. The conclusions of this research, derived from both the theoretical and empirical portions of this study, help to both synthesise the current literature on strategic internal communication and consider its application in a previously unconsidered setting, the INGO. Since this study is exploratory in nature, its main contribution is as a basis for further study into this area of management and the context of an INGO. In addition, it can provide insight for INGOs and similar organisations as they attempt to implement strategic internal communication in their own organisations. Additional suggestions for further research based on this study are included in Chapter 8.

1.8 SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to develop an understanding of the research problem as highlighted in Circle I of the Mitroff *et al.* model (Figure 1.1), this study is undertaken in two phases. Phase one is a literature review to develop a theoretical understanding of strategic internal communication in the INGO context. Phase two is an empirical study to establish current practices of internal communication in the INGO context and its strategic contribution. The results from the first phase are used to further understand and characterise the evidence from the second phase, and together the two phases identify the overall answer to this study's research question. The following outline provides a brief overview of the empirical research design of this study.

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study research design. Each of the elements of this design is selected based on its fit with the research question and objectives and the conceptual framework adopted for this study (see Table 1.1). For a more detailed discussion of the research design and methodology see Chapter 5.

As noted in section 1.6, this study is exploratory because of the limited research available on strategic internal communication. Exploratory studies are often qualitative (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95) as is the case with this study. Qualitative research generally seeks to

understand the complex nature of phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95) such as strategic internal communication. In addition, it is usually flexible and adaptable as the research project progresses, seeking the viewpoints of research participants, and is undertaken in the natural setting of the research phenomenon. It is cognisant of the researcher's role in research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5-6). For these reasons, interpretive, critical and postmodern scholars often embrace qualitative research (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:163) and therefore it was selected as the appropriate approach to this study.

According to Yin (2003:13), a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". The research phenomenon is a contemporary event where it is difficult to separate the phenomenon, internal communication management, from the broader context of the INGO. As will be further discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, a management function such as strategic internal communication is influenced by the organisation's form, structure and culture. A case study is a suitable research design to investigate the research question while taking into consideration these contextual elements. It is also appropriate given the postmodern and social constructivist worldview of this study.

By adopting a multiple case study design, this study is able to provide a more compelling answer to the research question. Multiple case studies both produce a greater volume of evidence and allows for the use of replication logic to increase support for the study's conclusions (Yin, 2003:47). In addition, a multiple case study design helps to research to distinguish between contextually dependent elements and elements that impact INGOs more generally.

Evidence was collected for this study from two sources: the most senior local communicators in INGOs using semi-structured interviews and organisational documents. The analysis of the evidence occurred through four cognitive phases as identified by Morse and Field (1995:103): comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing and recontextualising. Through the process of thematic analysis and coding, the evidence from the empirical portion of the study was analysed both as single cases and cross-case. The results of this are presenting in Chapter 7. The results of Phase 2 of the study, the

empirical portion, were compared to the results from Phase 1, the literature review, in order to develop a thorough understanding of the research problem and the variables involved. This process and its results are presented in Chapter 7. For more details on the research design and methodology see Chapter 6.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS

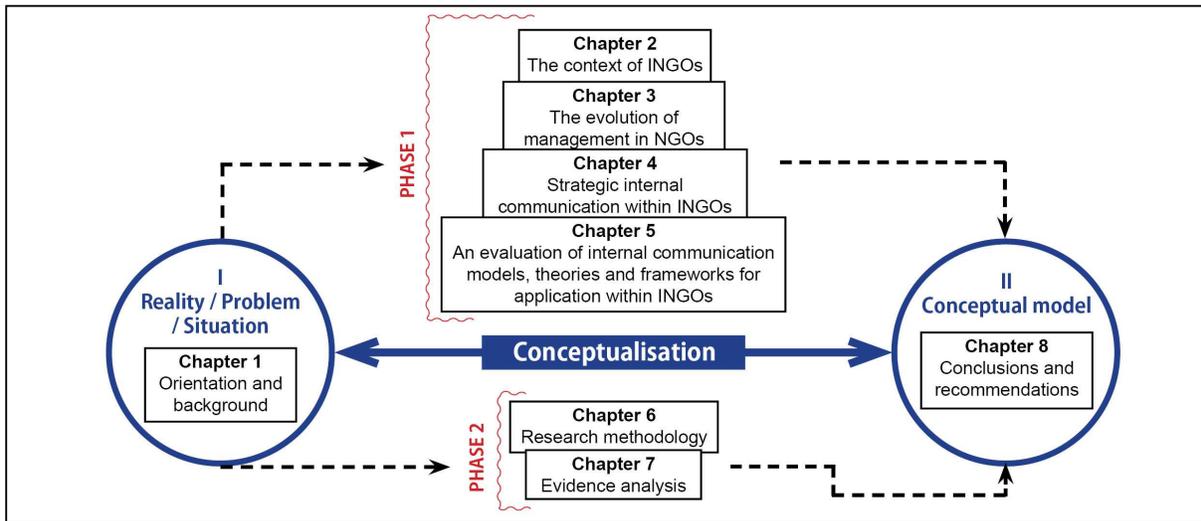
The study has several delimitations related to the context, constructs and domain of the study. Firstly, it is limited to the context of INGOs operating in South Africa. As such, the study results may not be generalised to other types of CSOs or those operating in other countries and regions. Secondly, the study is focused on strategic internal communication which limits it to internal communication that is managed with the goal of fulfilling the organisation's mission. Therefore, interpersonal communication or superior-subordinate communication are not examined in detail.

Finally, due to the exploratory nature of the study and the limits on the researcher's resources, this study only considers the management perspective on strategic internal communication. The focus of the study centres on the management of strategic internal communication and the decisions and actions of management in implementing this concept. Therefore, while it is recognised that the perspective of employees is an important component for understanding the impact, goals and issues of internal communication in an organisation, obtaining this perspective is outside the purview of this study. Validating the conclusions of this study from the employee perspective would form part of the modelling process in Mitroff *et al.*'s (1974) model of problem solving.

1.10 DEMARCATION OF CHAPTERS

Mitroff *et al.*'s (1974) model of problem solving (Figure 1.1) not only provides an understanding of the activities of this study, but also provides a means of demarcating the chapters of this dissertation. Figure 1.2 illustrates how the chapters fit within the problem solving model between the research problem (Circle I in the Mitroff *et al.* model), the process of conceptualisation and the conceptual model (Circle II).

Figure 1.2: Demarcation of chapters



Adapted from: Mitroff *et al.* (1974:48)

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 make up Phase one of this study and provide a theoretical understanding of the research problem. Chapter 7, on the basis of the research method described in Chapter 6, makes up Phase two of this study and provides an empirical understanding of the research problem and compares it to the theoretical understanding. Finally, Chapter 8 provides the final conclusions and recommendations of this study. The following provides a more detailed demarcation of these chapters.

Chapter 2: The context of international non-governmental organisations

This chapter is the first chapter of the theoretical phase of this study and focuses on the context of the study, the INGO. First, it situates civil society within broader society and notes how it is distinguished from both government and the market sectors. The different types and characteristics of CSOs are highlighted and differentiated from government agencies and corporations. Particular attention is paid to the internal aspects of CSOs and their workforce. The chapter then provides an in-depth discussion of INGOs, their unique characteristics and their situation in South Africa. It concludes with a discussion of the challenges INGOs face which effect their management.

Chapter 3: The evolution of management in non-governmental organisations

Since this study is focused on applying a management practice developed for corporations in the context of an INGO, this chapter considers the role of management in CSOs and INGOs more generally. It starts with an overview of the debate around the management of CSOs. Following this is an in-depth discussion of the evolution of strategic management and its application to INGOs. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of internal management and its key elements in INGOs.

Chapter 4: Strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

This chapter discusses the central concept of this study – strategic internal communication – and its place in INGOs. It lays the foundation by considering the different perspectives on internal communication in the literature. It then focuses on the concept of strategic communication and defines strategic internal communication within this framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the application of strategic internal communication in INGOs and the challenges and opportunities it provides.

Chapter 5: An evaluation of internal communication models, theories and frameworks for application within international non-government organisations

This chapter reviews and critiques of frameworks, theories and models for internal communication in the literature. It considers each model individually, highlighting both the contributions of the framework and elements that appear to be overlooked. The chapter concludes with remarks on the overall body of models, theories and frameworks identified.

Chapter 6: Research methodology

This chapter outlines the process for Phase two of this study and the reasoning behind adopting an exploratory, qualitative, multiple case-study design for investigating the research question. The evidence collection process and tools are also presented in this chapter, as well as the method of evidence analysis. Finally, criteria for evaluating the quality and rigour of the study are presented.

Chapter 7: Evidence analysis

This chapter presents the evidence collected for each case within its own unique context, focusing on the constructs of internal communication within each case and the barriers and challenges it faces in implementing effective strategic internal communication. The cases are then compared to identify commonalities and differences along various contextual elements and in relation to the theory developed in Chapters 2 to 5.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter starts by describing the conclusions to each of the three objectives of this study. The results of the case studies illustrate that internal communication does not function strategically in INGOs. INGOs face a variety of challenges that may explain this, including limited resources, poor strategic intents and cultures prioritising action over reflection. However, the theory and evidence support the potential of strategic internal communication to impact positively on the organisational performance of INGOs. This chapter concludes with several recommendations for further study in this area.

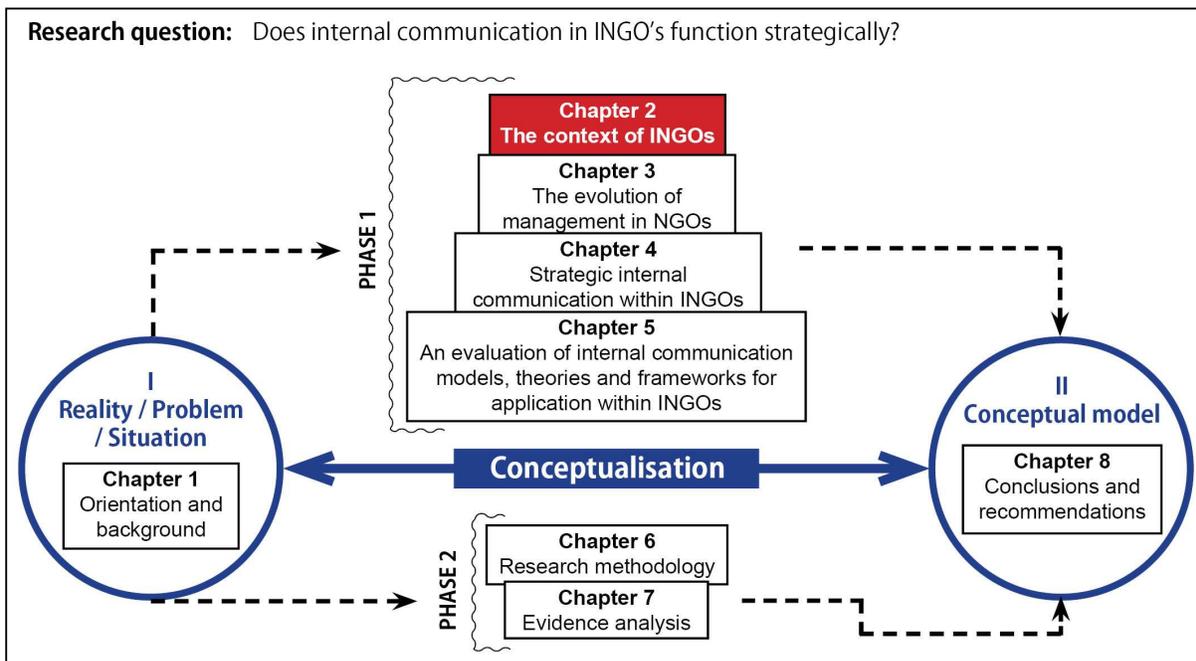
Chapter 2

The context of international non-governmental organisations

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The context and form of an organisation are important factors in its management. This chapter serves the purpose of exploring the INGO form and context in order to develop the background for both the theoretical and empirical portions of this study. Figure 2.1 illustrates the position of Chapter 2 in relation to the other chapters in this dissertation.

Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 in relation to the other chapters



This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines the environment in which INGOs are located: civil society. It defines what this term means and this sector's role in and relationship to broader society. The second section explores the primary organisational form within civil society and of which INGOs form a part, civil society organisations (CSOs). In particular, the section identifies the characteristics of these organisations and the activities they undertake, before starting to explore the central relationship between the CSO and its workforce. The third section turns its attention to the

particular type of CSO that is the focus of this study, the international non-governmental organisation (INGO). The definition, role and importance of INGOs are considered along with the unique characteristics of the INGO workforce. The section ends with a brief description of INGOs in South Africa. Finally, the fourth section considers the management challenges faced by INGOs that arise as a result of their organisational form and their environment.

2.2 SITUATING CIVIL SOCIETY

INGOs form part of civil society and thus to understand the INGO context it is necessary to explore the position and characteristics of this sector of society. This section starts by exploring how civil society relates to and is differentiated from other sectors of society. Then, the growth and current position of civil society are explored. Through this discussion, the context in which INGOs operate is established for consideration in future sections on how it affects the management of strategic internal communication.

2.2.1 Defining civil society through its place in the societal triangle

There is little agreement on a precise definition of civil society (Anheier, 2005:9). However, by considering civil society in comparison with other sectors of society, it is possible to gain an understanding of what this sector is all about.

2.2.1.1 Civil society's position

The use of the term 'civil society' in academic and policy circles is so loose that it has come to mean "all things to all people" (Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2008:xxix). Table 2.1 provides some examples of the definitions found in the literature.

Table 2.1: Definitions of civil society

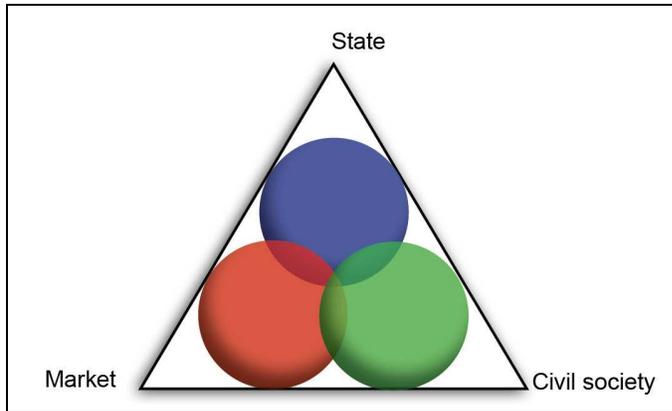
Authors	Definitions
Anheier (2005:9)	<i>"The sum of institutions, organizations, and individuals located between the family, the state, and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests."</i>
Heinrich and Fioramonti (2008:xxx)	<i>"...the arena, outside of the family, the states, and the market where people associate to advance common interests..."</i>
Keane (quoted in Anheier, 2005:57)	<i>"...a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organising, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that "frame," constrict and enable their activities."</i>
Lewis (2007:54)	<i>"...the realm or space in which there exists a set of organizational actors which are not part of the household, the state or the market. These organisations form a wide-ranging group, including associations, people's movements, citizens' groups, consumer associations, small producer associations and cooperatives, women's organizations, indigenous peoples' organisations – and ... NGOs."</i>
Salamon <i>et al.</i> (2004:9-10)	<i>"The sector composed of entities that are: organized, ... private, ... not profit-distributing, ... self-governing, ... [and] voluntary."</i>
Walzer (quoted in Parekh, 2004:19)	<i>"...the sphere of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology that fill this space."</i>
Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:8-9)	<i>"...the sum of social relations among citizens that structures society outside politics and business."</i>

Using terms such as arena (Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2008:xxx), realm (Lewis, 2007:54), or sphere (Walzer in Parekh, 2004:19), several of the definitions in Table 2.1 conceptualise civil society as a space. This is in contrast to Salamon *et al.* (2004:9-10) and Anheier (2005:9) who see civil society as signified by a specific type of organisation. In line with the first group of definitions, this study adopts the position of Kelly (2007:82) in which civil society is the social space and CSOs are the actors within it (CSOs are discussed further in Section 2.3). This distinction between civil society and CSOs allows for greater analysis of the context in which CSOs (and INGOs) operate.

Most of the definitions in Table 2.1 give some attention to the boundaries of civil society in relation to other sectors of society, notably the state and the market, and in some instances the family. Generally, all definitions distinguish civil society from the state. However, while most also separate civil society from the market and the family (*i.e.* Anheier, 2005; Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2008; Lewis, 2007; Salamon *et al.*, 2004), there is disagreement on this issue. For example, Keane's definition (quoted in Anheier, 2005:27-28) does not exclude the market because, he argues, the market and civil society are interdependent as the market is mediated by social rules and relations and civil society is dependent on market principles and resources. Similarly, Walzer (quoted in Parekh, 2004:19) defines civil society as networks formed for "the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology" implying the inclusion of family in his conception. However, this study adopts the more widely accepted position that civil society is separate from both the market and the

family. This position is illustrated in the societal triangle model (Figure 2.2) discussed by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:8).

Figure 2.2: The societal triangle



Source: Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:8)

In their model, Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:8) conceptualise society as three spheres: state, market and civil society. How these three spheres function and interact comprises the functioning of society as a whole and each sphere plays an important role (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:8). Each sphere is seen to play an equally important role in society, even though, in different countries and contexts, different spheres are larger and have more prominence and power.

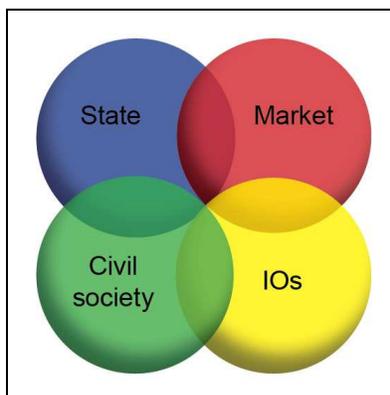
Another aspect of this model is that the different spheres overlap. Van Tulder and Van der Zwart illustrate that these overlaps are to allow for the many hybrid organisations that exist at the boundaries between the spheres (2006:12). However, the overlap between the spheres can also indicate some of the interdependence of the spheres. As Anheier (2005:57) puts it, “civil society is not a singular, monolithic, separate entity, but a sphere constituted in relation to both state and market, and indeed permeating both.”

This study adopts Van Tulder and Van der Zwart’s model as its view of society and civil society’s place within it for several reasons. First, by including civil society as an equal sphere next to the market and state, the model recognises the important role that actors within this sector play, highlighting the importance of studies in this field. Second, Van Tulder and Van der Zwart’s model conceptualises civil society as its own sphere, implying that it has its own distinct characteristics and roles that set it apart. Finally, the inter-locking

spheres contained within the triangle of society highlight the interdependence and interconnectivity between the spheres. This final point is important in understanding the context in which CSO and NGOs work and thus the context of this study.

The societal triangle is focused on national society. Since INGOs operate internationally, it is important to give some thought to the context of civil society on a global scale. In terms of defining global civil society, “no one seems to know exactly what it is, only *that* it is” (Bartelson, 2006:372). One of the difficulties of defining global civil society is that the national definition of civil society cannot simply be transposed to the global arena. The reason is because there is no central global government from which global civil society is distinct (Bartelson, 2006:372). Kelly (2007:91) proposes a four-actor model of global governance which helps to illustrate the different position of global civil society compared to national civil society (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Model of global society



Derived from: Kelly (2007:91)

In this model, there are four actors involved in global governance: multinational corporations (MNCs) acting within the market sphere, INGOs acting within the global civil society sphere and states and international organisations (IOs) dividing the state sphere. There is no hierarchy to the different actors, rather they all engage in relationships focused on problem solving issues of particular importance to their sphere (Kelly, 2007:91). Therefore, rather than being one of three equal spheres with a unique role in society, global civil society is one of four equal spheres which engages with the other spheres on constantly changing issues and in constantly changing ways.

2.2.1.2 Civil society's characteristics

The above establishes how civil society fits into the national and international societal framework, but not the characteristics of this space itself. Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's model conceptualises civil society as its own sphere with unique characteristics that make it distinct from the state and market. Many of these characteristics will be discussed further in section 2.3 because they relate more to the organisations that form part of civil society, CSOs, than to the conception of civil society as a space or sphere as defined in this study. However, several of the characteristics relate directly to the definition of civil society and these are discussed below.

To start, a defining characteristic of civil society is the voluntary nature of the sphere. This is hinted at in Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's (2006:9) identification of volunteers as civil society's primary resource, although the concept is much more profound. Anheier (2005:9) and Salamon *et al.* (2004:9-10) both use the term voluntary in their definitions of civil society, while Walzer (quoted in Parekh, 2004:19) chooses the term "uncoerced". All three are referring to the same concept – that all association within civil society is voluntary. This is civil society's main distinguishing feature from the state in which all citizens must participate (or submit to) and is thus involuntary (Walzer in Parekh, 2004:19).

Another characteristic of civil society is what Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9) refer to as its coordination mechanism: shared norms and values. By coordination mechanism, they mean the way in which social relations and interactions are governed within the sphere. In the state, it is through laws and legislation. In the market, it is through competition and other market mechanisms. In civil society, it is on the basis of shared norms and values which lead to cooperation within communal relations. Several of the definitions in Table 2.1 support this characteristic of civil society. For example, both Anheier (2005:9) and Heinrich and Fioramonti (2008:xxx) put forth that civil society activities aim to "advance common interests," while Walzer (quoted in Parekh, 2004:19) argues that groups are "formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology." Both these positions imply the existence of shared interests or values which is in line with Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's view of civil society as a space coordinated on the basis of shared values, norms and interests. This is civil society's main distinguishing feature from the market which is coordinated based on the quest for profit.

Within global civil society literature, the role of values takes on even more importance. Global civil society is commonly seen as a group of organisations acting based on some sort of common ethical ground (Kelly, 2007:88) with the power “to change the world” (Long, 2008:51). It is associated with the Gramscian concept of civil society as a counter-hegemonic force against neo-liberal policies and institutions (Katz, 2006:334). An associated negative view is that global civil society has been co-opted by those same neo-liberal policies and institutions and has thus become a hegemonic force (Katz, 2006:335). Katz’s (2006:344) conclusions from his study on the operation of INGOs argued for a dialectical view of civil society as being both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. In both cases, global civil society is seen to be acting on behalf of a particular set of values. The conflicting pressures on global civil society actors to conform and to rebel because of the different value sets are a characteristic of this sphere.

Directly related to this discussion of values is a final characteristic of civil society: its mechanisms of accountability. In democratic states, government is responsible to its voters and in the market, companies are responsible to their owners and shareholders (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:9-10). Meanwhile, in civil society the various types of associations are responsible to either their members or society more broadly. In essence, civil society is responsible to society as a whole and its citizens who hold them accountable on the basis of their shared values and interests. However, as there is no structured means of accountability as in the state (elections) and market (profits), civil society is plagued by problems of legitimacy. This is a challenge that will be returned to later in this chapter but it is important to note that a defining characteristic of civil society is its accountability to its members and society more broadly.

In the above discussion a number of characteristics of civil society and its place in society have been established. Based on this discussion, civil society can be defined as one of three interrelated spheres of society within which voluntary associations are formed to provide goods on the basis of shared norms, values and interests. It is within this definition of civil society that this study establishes the context for INGOs.

2.2.2 The rise of civil society and its current place in society

The concept of civil society has a long intellectual history but it has only been since the 1970s, when it was used by democratic opposition in communist states in Eastern Europe and by Latin American activist against military dictatorships, that it entered into modern political and academic use (Lewis, 2007:53). In the last two decades civil society and its accompanying actors have dramatically increased in number, size and influence so that civil society is now considered “a major economic and social force at local, national, and international levels” (Anheier, 2005:12). The reason for this rise, and the position civil society currently occupies, plays a big part in both the context and importance of this study.

Katsus (2004:387-389) identified five factors that led to the rise of civil society:

- i. The restructuring of the welfare state,
- ii. The collapse of the dictatorial communist system in central and eastern Europe,
- iii. Globalisation,
- iv. The diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and
- v. The ‘so-called’ growing gap between citizens and politicians.

Each of these reasons contributed in a different, and in many cases interrelated, manner to the rise of civil society and an increase in the organisations associated with it. The restructuring of the welfare state resulted in governments providing fewer services and contracting out more services to CSOs. The collapse of communist Europe is part of a greater wave of democratization worldwide which increased the space available for citizens to engage and associate (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:62). Globalisation led to an increase in both multinational NGOs and anti-globalisation NGOs (Katsus, 2004:388). The diffusion of ICTs has made it easier for citizens to organise and communicate locally, nationally and globally. Finally, the gap between citizens and politicians refers to how many people are turning away from politics towards single issue causes and organisations. The reason is because, in current society, many people do not feel that they can get the power and influence they need through conventional democratic structures and therefore turn to other forms of organising to do so (Chesters, 2004:324).

Each of these factors has led to the creation of a large and vibrant civil society which is considered to constitute a 'superpower' and the eighth largest economy in the world (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:61). However, despite its current prominence on the local, national and international scene, civil society is facing many challenges. First, due to its lack of clear representative and accountability mechanism, its legitimacy is constantly being called into question (Long, 2008:51). Second, the many and changing relationships civil society has with the state, the market and, in the global arena, international organisations results in a very complex environment (Anheier, 2005:58). Finally, just as various forces in the world shaped the current role and prominence of civil society, other forces are at play that can again grow, shrink or modify the sector. For example, the increase in terrorism and the 'War on terror' has resulted in legislation that curtails the space available for civil society in countries as diverse as the United States and Ethiopia (CIVICUS, 2008). Both the factors that support civil society and those that hold it back form part of the context in which INGOs operate. Many of these challenges are returned to in section 2.5.

2.3 CATEGORISING AND CHARACTERISING CSOs

INGOs are part of a larger group of organisations, CSOs. Therefore, they share many of the same roles and characteristics with other organisations in this group. This section first provides a definition of CSO and explores its unique characteristics. Then it discusses the role of CSOs and establishes the importance of these organisations to society. Finally, the section concludes with a brief discussion of the CSO workforce. As the characteristics of CSOs apply to INGOs as well, it is necessary to identify these in order to be able to explore how they may impact on the management of strategic internal communication in these organisations.

2.3.1 A general definition of CSOs

CSOs are the actors within civil society. CSOs, sometimes referred to as non-profit organisations or NPOs, can range from small, informal clubs and social groups, to large social movements and the international organisations that this study is focused on. From country to country CSOs' structure and purpose vary resulting in a complex and diverse group of organisations (Burnett, 2007:5) which is difficult to define. However, there are

certain necessary conditions which an organisation must meet in order to be considered part of civil society.

Burnett (2007:6), Salamon *et al.* (2004:8) and the UN's *Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions* (2003:13) all provide a list of characteristics they argue are possessed by all civil society organisations worldwide and which distinguish them from state or market-based organisations. In fact, Salamon *et al.* (2004:8) use this list as their definition of civil society itself and have tested it in 40 countries. These lists are contained in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: A comparison of characteristics of CSOs

AUTHORS	Salamon <i>et al.</i> (2004:8)	Burnett (2007:6)	UN's <i>Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions</i> (2003)
CHARACTERISTICS	Organised	Non-profit	Organisations
	Private	Non-profit distributing	Not-for-profit and non-profit-distributing
	Self-governing	Limited sources of revenue	Institutionally separate from government
	Non-profit distributing	Non-tax paying	Self-governing
	Voluntary	Accountability and success determined vis-à-vis the mission statement	Non-compulsory

Across the three lists in Table 2.2 there are many similarities. To start, all three lists refer to the non-profit and/or non-profit distributing characteristic of CSOs. Non-profit and non-profit distributing mean that CSOs' primary aim is not to make a profit and if they do, it is not distributed to the board of directors or any other member of the organisation but rather funnelled back into the organisation's mission. Further commonalities exist between Salamon *et al.* (2004:8) and the UN's *Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions* (2003:13). Where Salamon *et al.* (2004:8) refer to organised, private, self-governing and voluntary, the Handbook refers to self-governing organisations, institutionally separate from government and non-compulsory, but both are identifying the same four characteristics of CSOs.

First, CSOs must have some sort of organisational form and permanence, even if not formally and/or legally constituted. Second, CSOs must be able to govern their own affairs. Third, CSOs must be separate from any state institution even though they can receive funding and other state support. Finally, participation in CSOs must be voluntary and not based on any compulsory requirements.

In addition to these five characteristics, Burnett (2007:6) provides three more that can play a role in the management of CSOs. First, he identifies the limited sources of revenue a CSO can draw upon, notably donations, grants, fund balances and in some cases sales and related revenue. Second, he notes that in many countries, CSOs do not have to pay taxes; however, this requires that they meet specific government guidelines. Third, a CSO's success is determined via the mission statement to which it is also held accountable. While not tested empirically to the same extent as the list by Salamon *et al.* (2004:8), and therefore not necessarily applicable across as broad a range of CSOs, these additional characteristics do shed light on certain aspects of CSOs that can affect their management. Thus, they are important to the purpose of this study, if not necessarily part of the definition of a CSO.

Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9-10) provide an additional list of characteristics of CSOs in relation to both state and market-based organisations (Table 2.3). These include the sphere of their importance, their coordination mechanism, who or what controls them, the types of goods they produce, their primary source of income, their weaknesses, the parameters of their interaction with others both within and outside their sphere, and the main organisational forms.

Table 2.3: Characteristics of state, market and civil society-based organisations

Characteristics	Organisation types		
	State	Market	Civil Society
Primary importance	Political	Economic	Social
Coordination mechanism	Control and codification (legislation)	Competition (market mechanisms)	Shared norms and values
Primary control	Voters, political parties	Owners, supervisory board	Society, members
Informal control	Officials	Managers, Board of Directors	Managers, technocrats
Type of goods produced	Public good	Private goods	Club goods
Primary resources	Legislation/police/armed forces/monopoly of violence	Financial capital, labour, natural resources	Energy of volunteers
Sources of income	Taxes	Profits	Donations and contributions
Primary weaknesses	Rigidity and bureaucratisation	Monopoly and other forms of 'market failures'	Fragmentation
Parameters	Coercion, codification	Competition	Cooperation; co-optation
Dominant organisational form	Departments, ministries, local councils, provinces/federal states	For-profit; Plc, Ltd, AG, SA	Nonprofit; voluntary organisation; foundation; association

Source: Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9-10)

Several of the characteristics in Table 2.3 have already been discussed as part of the characteristics of civil society. For example, similar to civil society more broadly, CSOs act on the basis of shared norms and values (coordination mechanism). This does not mean that all CSOs share the same values but rather that, within each CSO or groups of CSOs, people associate and act on the basis of common values and/or interests. There can be both 'good' and 'bad' CSOs (Kumar, 2008:22).

The lists provided by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9-10) in Table 2.3 serve the primary purpose of illustrating how CSOs differ from market and state-based organisations. This is important for understanding why management theories and practices need to be evaluated within the CSO context. For example, the table shows how the limited source of income available to CSOs identified by Burnett (2007:6) compares to the sources of income in the market and state: profits and taxes. Both market and state-based organisations have some control over the amount of revenue they bring in, either by controlling the amount of product they produce or by raising/lowering taxes. The restrictions on CSOs in this regard can affect how these organisations are managed. The challenges posed by characteristics of the CSO form of organisation identified by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9-10) will be further explored in section 2.5.

Based on the above discussion and the empirical testing of the characteristics provided by Salamon *et al.* (2004:8), this study adopts their definition of CSOs as "entities that are: organized, ... private, ... not profit-distributing, ... self-governing, ... [and] voluntary." These characteristics as well as those provided by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:9-10) and Burnett (2007:6) serve to distinguish CSOs from market and state-based organisations and are key to understanding their management.

2.3.2 Categories of CSOs

The characteristics of CSOs discussed above unite them as a cohesive group. However, within CSOs there is incredible diversity of structure, form and purpose. Various tools have been developed to classify the organisations in civil society, including the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities developed by the European Statistical Office and the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities developed in the United States, but few of the schemes apply across national borders (Burnett, 2007:7). However, two

particular schemes can help to organise the sphere globally; one related to organisational form and one to organisational purpose.

Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:23-24) classify CSOs based on their form and legal personality. They propose three categories of CSO: groups without legal personality, associations and foundation. Groups without legal personality are often termed ‘pressure groups’, are informally organised and often cease to exist after achieving their basic objective. Associations are one of two types of CSO with a legal personality. Their main characteristic is that they have paying members who have a voice in the management of the organisation usually by electing the board of directors. The second type of CSO with a legal personality is the foundation. A foundation self-appoints its own board directors. It receives funds from donors, but unlike an association’s members, there is no formal structure through which these donors can influence the organisation’s policies. Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's (2006:23-24) classification is helpful in identifying some of the major differences in the form of CSOs. However, even within these three categories there is still incredible diversity among CSOs.

Salamon *et al.* (2004:11), as part of their comparative study of CSOs in 36 countries, developed a classification scheme of CSOs based on their purpose and activities. Table 2.4 outlines the twelve broad categories of their scheme.

Table 2.4: International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations

1	Culture and recreation	7	Civic and advocacy
2	Education and research	8	Philanthropic intermediaries
3	Health	9	International
4	Social services	10	Religious congregations
5	Environment	11	Business and professional, unions
6	Development and housing	12	Not elsewhere classified

Source: Salamon *et al.* (2004:12)

The International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations, as this scheme is known, divides CSO activity into twelve broad categories, most of which contain several subcategories (for the complete classification scheme see Salamon *et al.*, 2004:318-326). Salamon *et al.* (2004:12) tested the scheme in all 36 countries that were part of their study and deemed it to be useful internationally. As a tool for classification, it helps to divide the sector into manageable components with enough similarity to allow for insightful and

meaningful study. However, it does not give a complete picture of the diversity of CSOs as within the different groups, the size and structure of CSOs still varies considerably.

This study focuses on a particular type of CSO, the INGO. Based on the two classification schemes discussed above, INGOs are either associations or foundations that participate in the international category of activity. This description does not provide a lot of detail about INGOs. Therefore INGOs are discussed in more detail in section 2.4. First, however, the role and importance of CSOs generally is discussed.

2.3.3 Role and Importance of CSOs

As noted above, CSOs are a complex and diverse group of organisations. Their interests can be either public or private (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:22) and their roles include delivering vital human services, empowering the disadvantaged, giving expression to artistic, religious and culture impulses, building communities and mobilising individual efforts in the pursuit of a common good (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:3-4). Table 2.3 highlights the social sphere as being the primary area of CSOs importance, yet, as discussed below, CSOs play an important economic and political role as well.

Salamon *et al.* (2004:15) divide CSOs' roles into two groups: service functions such as health, education, housing, economic development and other similar activities and expressive functions which include "activities for the expression of cultural, spiritual, professional, or policy values, interests and beliefs". CSOs represent "the most important human change agent bringing education to the unlearned, cures to the unhealthy, and integrity to the shameful" (Burnett, 2007:3) and provide many important social services not provided or inadequately provided by the state and market. This role has increased with the decline of the traditional welfare state. For example, in the US, nonprofits represent over three fifths of acute care hospitals (Anheier, 2005:97). As well, CSOs provide space for people to gather for recreational, cultural and religious purposes. In this regard, the social arena is dominated by CSOs with market and state-based organisations playing relatively minor roles. Thus it is in this sphere that CSOs find their primary role and importance.

In addition to the role CSOs play in economic development, CSOs are also an economic force in their own right. The combined economic impact of CSOs in the 36 countries studied by Salamon *et al.* (2004:15) is equivalent to the seventh largest economy in the world; it is larger than the economies of Italy, Brazil, Russia, Spain and Canada. In total, it is a combined \$1.3 trillion industry when considering only 36 countries (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:15). In South Africa, CSOs account for 1.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product (Swilling, Russell, Sokolowski & Salamon, 2004:111). In addition, CSOs play an important role as an employer. In the 36 countries studied by Salamon *et al.* (2004:15), CSOs employ a paid workforce of 25.3 million with a combined paid and voluntary total of 45.5 million. In the United States, CSOs are now "America's largest employer" (Burnett, 2007:3) and in South Africa, the CSO workforce represented four percent of the economically active population in 1998, a larger percent than the mining sector (Swilling *et al.*, 2004:111). CSOs therefore play an important role in the economic sector as well as the social sector.

CSOs' politically important role primarily comes from their promotion of civic participation and advocacy. CSOs are a forum for civic participation, giving individuals the opportunity to get involved in public affairs (Anheier, 2005:105). In this role, they give "voice to minority or particularistic interests" (Anheier, 2005:105). As Katsus (2004:390) notes, CSOs are usually the first to raise major issues and the source from which these issues move to a broader consciousness in society and government. CSOs thus play an important political role in mobilising the public and holding government accountable for its actions.

Based on the discussion, it is clear that CSOs play a major role in a social sense, but also play important economic and political roles. The study of the CSO management is vital, given the roles they play in society.

2.3.4 The CSO workforce

As noted in section 2.3.3, CSOs are a major employer globally and in South Africa. Strategic internal communication is focused primarily on the relationships between the employer and the employees (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006). Therefore the characteristics of an organisation's workforce are a key component in the context of this management practice. CSO workforces have three readily identifiable characteristics that distinguish

them from the workforces of other types of organisations: their motivation, their remuneration and the presence of volunteers.

As discussed previously, CSOs are formed on the basis of shared norms, interests and values. This applies equally to a CSO's workforce as to any other aspect of the organisation. For example, Steinber and Weisbrod (quoted in Anheier, 2005:176) both discuss a "sorting effect" which channels staff and volunteers to organisations that mirror their own values. As well, many CSO employees are motivated "by an intrinsic need for self-worth" (Maneerat, Hale & Singhal, 2005:189). The result is a workforce whose motivation is not solely based on monetary gain but rather a deeper sense of commitment and identification with the work and the organisation.

A study by Brown & Yoshioka (2003:15) supports the above statement, but notes that commitment to the cause is not enough to necessarily retain employees in the face of uncompetitive wages and poor management practices. There is a significant wage differential between for-profit organisations and CSOs which is likely to persist (Anheier, 2005:216). The reason is because CSOs often do not have the ability to provide remuneration at the market level because of limited resources. As a result CSOs must reward employees in different ways. For example, CSOs often have a democratic work culture that allows for greater participation in organisation management and provides room for individual career growth (Brandel, 2001:13). Management practices are an important aspect of maintaining the commitment of a CSO workforce and will be returned to in Chapters 3 and 4.

A final characteristic of the CSO workforce is that it often contains volunteers working alongside paid employees. This mixture of employees and volunteers can take many forms in CSOs, with, in some cases, paid employees volunteering part-time or volunteers receiving some form of remuneration below standard wage levels (Anheier, 2005:214). As a result of the mixture of employee types, there is often a mixture in terms of motivation and commitment. This can cause tension between different groups within the workforce.

Based on the above discussion, the CSO workforce is characterised by a strong commitment to the CSO mission, lower than market-level remuneration and a mixture of paid and voluntary employees. These characteristics are important components of this

study's context and need to be considered in terms of a CSO's management and strategic internal communications.

2.4 A SPECIFIC TYPE OF CSO: THE INGO

This section starts by defining INGOs and highlights their unique characteristics. Then it explores the role and importance of INGOs in society before turning attention to the characteristics of the INGO workforce. The section concludes with a brief discussion of INGOs in South Africa as the particular context for this study.

2.4.1 A general definition of the INGO

INGOs, as a specific type of CSO, share the characteristics discussed above but also have their own unique attributes. In addition, since an INGO is an international NGO, NGO must first be defined in order to define INGO. Within civil society practice and literature, there is considerable variety in the use of various terms and acronyms (Lewis, 2007:43). In this study, NGO is a category of CSO, but this is not a universally accepted view of the term. Blair (quoted in Lewis, 2007:57), for example, uses NGOs as the term to designate the broader category and CSO as a subset within it. This section will clarify how the terms NGO and INGO are used within the context of this study.

The qualifier 'non-governmental' applies to all CSOs as well as market-based organisations. However, Kelly (2007:94) argues that NGOs are only those CSOs that are principled, value-based actors that actively promote social change. Meanwhile, Lewis (2007:48) defines NGOs as a subset of CSOs "concerned with development, human rights and social change." Generally, within both the literature and in practice, the term NGO is associated with development organisations (Salamon *et al.*, 2004:11). Swilling and Russell (2002:11) define development CSOs as "those engaged directly in improving the social, cultural, and economic well-being of certain sectors of society." Lewis (2007:5) argues that there are other types of NGOs working in other areas, but still uses the term NGO in his textbook on the management of non-governmental development organisation because of the popularity of the term in practice and in the literature. This study takes a similar position, using the term NGO to designate development organisations, where development is understood to be improving the social, cultural and/or economic well-being of society.

Within his definition of NGOs, Lewis (2007:48) notes that there is still considerable diversity of organisations, including northern and southern-based NGOs, those working within global institutional development frameworks and those working firmly outside these, community-based organisations and both service and advocacy-based organisations. This study focuses on one particular subset, INGOs. INGOs are at their most basic simply NGOs operating in two or more countries. However, as noted by Anheier (2005:356) “*being global is different.*” As such, the characteristics of INGOs, their management needs and their internal and external relationships all differ from an NGO. In addition, there are differences among INGOs that are also important when considering the management of these organisations.

In terms of organisational structure, INGOs can vary considerably. Within this framework, a review of the literature allows for the identification of three different types of INGOs: global organisations, federations and networks. Table 2.5 summarises these organisations based on two characteristics, localisation and control.

Table 2.5: Three types of INGOs

Differentiating factors	Organisation types		
	Global	Federation	Network
Localisation	Global	Multi-domestic	Localised
Control	Centralised	Diffused	Decentralised

Adapted from: Van Tulder & Van der Zwart (2006:65-67)

Global organisations are those INGOs that expressly adopt a global presence and position on global issues. They have a centralised organisational form and where they do have national offices, these tend to be tightly controlled by headquarters (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:66-67). Federations are INGOs that adopt a multi-domestic position in which the INGO has a loose structure of associated organisations in various countries (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:66). On issues where there is lots of variation across regions, this structure is best for achieving results locally (Anheier, 2005:353). Generally, in a federation there is a central coordinating body but control is diffused and national associations have a significant amount of discretionary power. This group reflects Kelly’s (2007:85) definition of INGOs as “loose, decentralised structures with national and subnational ‘nodes’ and some manner of international coordinating body.” Finally, the network type of INGO is an organisation primarily embedded within a particular nation, but

networking and collaborating across borders (Anheier, 2005:351). These INGOs tend to have networks that can be activated for particular campaigns and activities when needed. These different structures have an enormous impact on the management of INGOs.

INGOs do not all fall nicely into one of the three types of organisation laid out in Table 2.5. Rather, these three groups represent three archetypes around which INGOs fall. As such they are helpful for classifying and understanding the differences among INGOs. Their common characteristics which arise from their being CSOs, NGOs and INGOs, as well as the differences in their structure, are important considerations for their management.

2.4.2 Role and importance of INGOs

INGOs are the most visible actors in global civil society and the central component of its infrastructure (Katz, 2006:338). The modern INGO first emerged with anti-slavery societies in Britain in the 1830s (Anheier, 2005:329). In 1950, there were 804 INGOs globally (Tew, 1963 in Anheier, 2005:329), which grew to over 30,000 in 2000 (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:63). The increase in INGOs is associated with their increasing role and importance in the development industry. Their roles can be divided broadly into three categories, an operational service-oriented role, a global policy and advocacy role and a counter-hegemonic activist role.

One factor that led to an increased operational role for NGOs and INGOs is the appeal they hold among neo-liberals in advancing the cause of privatisation (Lewis, 2007:40). More and more aid agencies are partnering with NGOs to provide development assistance. For governments of both developed and developing nations, NGOs serve as a means of avoiding the bureaucracy of the state, thus being a more efficient means of service delivery (Lewis, 2007:41). For developed country governments, they also help avoid potential corruption in developing country governments. This has led to an increasing role for INGOs in particular as aid agencies in the developed world partnered with locally head-quartered INGOs who have satellites and partners in the developing world. As a result, INGOs play an increasing role in aid delivery in the developing world.

INGOs fulfil a second role at the policy level of global governance. In this role, INGOs serve as public actors and play “a key role in supporting democratic processes in the

political sphere” (Lewis, 2007:41). In this role, INGOs try to serve as a link between local citizens and communities and the current system of global governance. The increasing importance of this role is shown by the 46 percent increase in the number of formal links between INGOs and international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank between 1981 and 2001 (Anheier, 2005:11). While INGOs face a significant amount of criticism regarding their ability to fulfil this role, as Kelly (2007:89) notes, INGOs are better than nothing in terms of bringing a plurality of voices to global governance institutions. For this reason, INGOs’ role in this regard is likely to continue to increase.

A major criticism of the above roles is that INGOs are being co-opted into the current hegemonic global order. For the ‘left,’ INGOs offer an opportunity to achieve real social transformation by playing a counter-hegemonic activist role (Lewis, 2007:40). Working outside of the established global governance structures and on the principle of social constructivism, INGOs, generally supported by broad social movements, aim to influence and change social values thereby achieving real change in society (Kelly, 2007:87). In this role, INGOs try to hold both the market and the state at arms length while supporting social movements around the world (Kumar, 2008:24). As such, this role is mainly distinguished from the policy and advocacy role, in that it occurs outside global governance institutions. It is an example of INGOs making use of the space provided by global civil society to strive for social change.

Each of the three broad roles discussed above, highlights an important area of INGO work. It should be noted that these roles are not mutually exclusive. Many INGOs engage in two or even three of these roles, often at the same time. Therefore they do not provide a good means of distinguishing between INGOs, but rather highlight the importance of INGOs within global civil society, global governance and development.

2.4.3 The INGO workforce

The INGO workforce shares all the same components as the CSO workforce discussed above, notably, a strong commitment to the INGO mission, lower than market-level remuneration and a mixture of paid and volunteer employees. However, one key

difference can affect the management of the INGO workforce, compared to the CSO workforce: it is international and diverse.

INGO workforces can be international in two ways. First, INGOs with offices in different countries are likely to have the local nationality dominant in each office (Anheier, 2005:349). Second, INGOs are often centres of collaboration between local and foreign academics, professionals, students and activists from both developed and developing countries. Thus they will have multiple nationalities represented within the same office. The result is an organisation with multiple cultures (Lewis, 2007:113). However, the cultural differences can be further compounded by other differences. For example, some INGOs have different pay scales for international and national employees, which may be necessary to attract the talent needed but can breed resentment. Similarly, there can be a divide, which can reflect the national/international divide, between programme staff fully versed and committed to the development field and administrative staff. Therefore, diversity in a variety of forms is a key characteristic of INGO workforces.

2.4.4 INGOs in South Africa

Despite being international in outlook, INGOs are still very much embedded within the states and cultures in which they work (Anheier, 2005). They must adhere to national government regulations and conform, at least to some extent, to the local culture's expectations. Therefore, the country in which an INGO operates can pose unique challenges to INGO management making it an important consideration. Since this study is focused on INGOs operating in South Africa, the following offers a brief overview of this particular context.

Civil society in South Africa arose from two factors (Swilling *et al.*, 2004:110). First, the corporatist tradition of the Dutch settlers led to a prominent role for CSO in public service delivery for an exclusively white population during Apartheid. Second, the self-help spirit of the indigenous people led to the development of many networks and organisations on which the Black population relied both for services and political mobilisation. The cumulative result post-Apartheid is that South Africa has one of the largest civil society sectors among developing and transitional countries (Swilling *et al.*, 2004:112). It plays a dual role of social watch and service delivery (Swilling & Russell, 2002:5). CSOs in South

Africa have the responsibility of monitoring the public good and the interests of the disadvantaged, as well as providing economic and social services.

International charitable organisations first came to South Africa with British occupation in 1795 in the form of Christian missionaries (Swilling *et al.*, 2004:115). However, it was not until after the first democratic elections in 1994, that INGOs started to develop a presence in South Africa. A 1998 survey of all CSOs in South Africa identified 212 international CSOs operating in the country (Swilling & Russell, 2002:23). Currently, the Prodder Database, an online database of NGOs and development organisations in South Africa, lists 256 INGOs with offices in the country. Further details on this group have not been found but a review of the list indicates that these organisations play the same roles as national CSOs including both social watch and service delivery.

By operating in South Africa, INGOs must adhere to its legal framework. This framework includes the Nonprofit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 as well as other acts that affect INGO operations such as the Income Tax Act, No. 58 of 1962, the Labour Relations Act, No. 66 of 1995 and Employment Equity Act, No. 58 of 1998 (Wyngaard, 2002:3). The need to adhere to different regulations in each country in which is they operate is a challenge INGOs must deal with.

South Africa has a unique history. Its population, with 11 official languages, is very diverse. The inheritance from Apartheid is a disparity between White and Black South Africans in terms of education and presence in the higher ranks of the workforce. Acts such as the previously mentioned Employment Equity Act are trying to rectify this situation by promoting equal opportunity as well as implementing affirmative action (Wyngaard, 2002:20). INGOs must not only adhere to this act, but also manage the added diversity among South African staff alongside their international staff. International personnel also introduce a regulatory challenge. The process for obtaining work permits can be taxing on the resources of the INGO and stressful for the employee. These are just some of the challenges faced by INGOs in South Africa. The following section discusses the management challenges INGOs generally face around the world. INGOs in South Africa face these same challenges although it should be noted that they all take on a unique form depending on the country in which the INGO is operating.

2.5 MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FACING INGOs

The previous sections discussed the context in which INGOs operate, their organisational form and the characteristics of their workforce. These characteristics have implications for the management of INGOs including the potential to affect the management of strategic internal communication.

2.5.1 Organisational context

The context in which CSOs and INGOs operate is complex. CSOs must negotiate multiple relationships with members, donors, state regulators and the general public as well as with each other. The complexity is further increased by changing international and local political, economic and technological environments. Finally, the situation for CSOs is further compounded by their lack of direct power to control their environment. Government can assert its power through the creation of laws and when necessary the use of force. Corporations can use capital to influence and adjust to changing environments. The power of CSOs, however, is indirect and lies in their ability to shape public values and thus influence policy (Kelly, 2007:87). As such, they have little control over their environment and must focus on constantly adapting to its changing features (Anheier, 2005:251). Negotiating this complex operating environment is a management challenge for CSOs.

The complex operating environment of INGOs is compounded by the fact that they operate in the global arena. Anheier (2005:349) notes that INGOs do not have just an environment, but multiple, complex environments. They operate within local, national and global contexts and have relationships with donors, governments, international organisations, beneficiaries, partners and the broader public. Many of these institutions have conflicting and diverse demands of INGOs (Chesters, 2004:326). For example, within global civil society, signs point to increasing competition for scarce resources (Anheier, 2005:352). This scarcity not only places financial restraints on INGOs, but may lead them to modify their activities, positions and organisational forms to make themselves more attractive to donors (Anheier, 2005:352). This can cause an INGO to focus more on satisfying donors instead of those to whom it is dedicated to serving (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:278). This can lead to challenges in achieving its objectives in terms of serving its beneficiaries. Managing the multiple environments that form an INGO's context is a major challenge.

2.5.2 Organisational form

As discussed throughout this chapter, the INGO organisational form and its parent form, the CSO, have a number of particular characteristics. These include, among others, a lack of resources, a reliance on volunteers and values as the central coordination mechanism. These characteristics of its form pose a variety of management challenges for INGOs, notably fragmentation and difficulty establishing legitimacy.

2.5.2.1 Fragmentation

Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:10) identify fragmentation as the primary weakness of civil society and CSOs (see Table 2.3). They argue that because of insufficient resources and the lack of professionalism among volunteers, CSOs are becoming more and more fragmented, making it more difficult for them to achieve their goals. Chesters (2004:326) also identifies fragmentation as a key issue for CSOs with the multiple types of CSOs and their activities increasing. The result is competition within civil society for both financial and human resources as well as for public support. Thus fragmentation makes either competition or partnership between CSOs necessary. As Swilling and Russell (2002:92) note, it is the alliances and networks of a CSO which will determine its success in the future. Thus building these alliances is a management concern for CSOs.

2.5.2.2 Establishing legitimacy

Values are the coordination mechanism of civil society and the organisations operating within it. This means that the organisation's mission, which reflects the organisation's values, is central to NGOs because it guides decision making. Unlike in corporations, there is no financial bottom-line to provide the basis for strategic decisions (Sawhill & Williamson in Brown & Yoshioka, 2003:6). The subjective nature of values and the difficulty in ensuring that one is always perceived to be acting in accordance with those values makes establishing legitimacy a constant challenge for CSOs and INGOs. As introduced in Chapter 1, legitimacy refers to an organisation's licence to operate, given to them by society based on their adherence to societal values. Long (2008:53) puts it in a slightly different way, stating that it is the recognition and acceptance of the wielding of power by those over whom the power is wielded.

Lack of legitimacy is a major criticism of CSOs (Long, 2008:51) and three reasons for this can be identified in the literature. The main reason is because CSOs often claim to represent their membership or a broader segment of civil society; yet, this representation is inherently undemocratic (Kelly, 2007:89). Unlike democratic states, CSOs are generally not elected by those they claim to represent, thus they are not explicitly given a license to operate. Secondly, CSOs often claim legitimacy based on a moral rightfulness; however, given the diversity of values within both national and international contexts, this is problematic (Long, 2008:54). Finally, CSOs often operate on the trust of their members and society generally with very little independent oversight. However, in light of recent financial scandals among both corporations and CSOs (see Burnett, 2007:12 for examples) this trust has been broken. The result is increasing scrutiny of CSOs and focus on their legitimacy and adherence to the values they claim to support.

Establishing their legitimacy in the face of these criticisms is of primary concern for CSOs because a lack of an appearance of legitimacy can affect a CSO's survival by losing the support of their internal and external stakeholders and limiting their ability to raise funds and be effective in their work. INGOs face the same legitimacy challenges as CSOs but they are intensified for INGOs because of the increased distance between them and the people they claim to represent.

Several issues can impact on an INGO's ability to establish legitimacy. For example, bowing to donor pressure to secure resources can cause INGOs to lose legitimacy among broader society. Elitism, or perceived elitism, can jeopardise an INGO's legitimacy. A major criticism of INGOs is that they are dominated by middle class, professional men from developed countries (Kelly, 2007:89). These people predominantly share the same world view and it leads to elite politics in global civil society (Long, 2008:51). Therefore INGOs have the management challenge of ensuring that they hear and reflect the voices of those they speak for and aim to help. If not, they could lose their legitimacy.

2.5.3 Workforce characteristics

Diversity characterises the INGO workforce: diversity of commitment, of remuneration among paid employees and volunteers, of field and position, and of nationality and culture. The academic literature identifies both positive and negative effects of diversity in the

workplace. Negative effects of poorly managed diversity in the workplace can include increased employee stress, absenteeism, employee turnover, recruiting and training costs and the potential for litigation and bad public relations (Hargie *et al.*, 2003:290). Meanwhile, when diversity in the workplace is managed properly, positive benefits can include greater innovation and higher levels of creativity, improved problem solving and decision making (Ayoko *et al.*, 2004:158), increased organisational flexibility, improved retention and recruitment of valuable employees and decreased costs (Miller, 1999). The characteristics of the INGO workforce therefore pose a management challenge for INGOs and are of particular concern for the management of strategic internal communication.

The context, organisational form and workforce characteristics of INGOs influence the management of these organisations and of internal communication in particular.

2.6 CONCLUSION

INGOs operate within the sphere of civil society. The characteristics of civil society and CSOs, which are inherent in INGOs as well, influence how they relate to their environment and how they need to be managed. In particular, since strategic internal communication centres on the relationship between and organisation and its workforce, the characteristics of an INGO's workforce are an important consideration for the management of this function and thus for this study. In addition, the management challenges that arise from the context and form of the INGO can also influence the management of strategic internal communication and the role it plays. The influence and role of these characteristics and challenges on general management and the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs are further discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

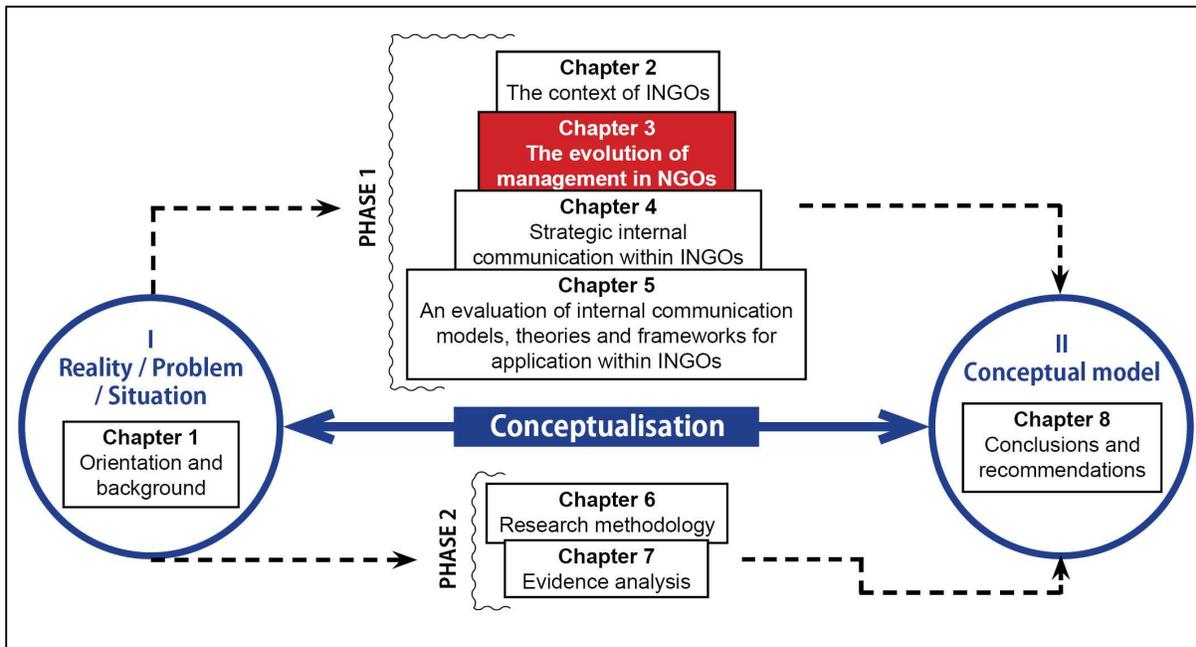
Chapter 3

The evolution of management in non-governmental organisations

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the INGO context, highlighting the challenges that this context poses to the management of these organisations. This chapter's purpose is to explore the management of INGOs in order to uncover the underlying management principles and techniques that are appropriate for the INGO's particular context and which influence all aspects of the management of these organisations, including strategic internal communication. Figure 3.1 illustrates the position of Chapter 3 in relation to the other chapters in this dissertation.

Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 in relation to the other chapters



This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section considers the debate around NGO management and its similarities and differences to business management and public administration. It explores the different position on the issue before consolidating the views of several NGO and CSO management scholars. The second section discusses the strategic management approach of which strategic internal communication is a part. It first

considers the approach from the traditional perspective before exploring its postmodern conceptualisation. The section concludes with a discussion of the appropriateness and implications of the postmodern strategic management approach for the management of INGOs. The final section of this chapter is focused on the internal management of INGOs. It considers the key internal elements for internal management as well as the internal management challenges of INGOs. By reviewing the background of management in INGOs, NGO management, strategic management, and internal management, this chapter lays the foundation for the discussion of strategic internal communication in Chapter 4.

3.2 THE NGO MANAGEMENT DEBATE

When asking the research question “*Does internal communication in INGOs function strategically?*” the implication is that internal communication in INGOs should in fact be strategically managed. However, this is a concept that historically some NGO senior staff have found problematic. Management used to be synonymous with business management and evoked images of control, hierarchy and instrumentality, principles that contradicted many INGO values (Lewis, 2007:103; Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:228; Walsh & Lenihan, 2006:414). Some NGOs resisted the application of any management principles arguing that they are different and cannot be run like other organisations.

Currently, however, INGOs are increasingly criticised for failing to live up to expectations in terms of their effectiveness and ability to achieve results. This lack of success can be attributed, at least in part, to mismanagement and underdeveloped management structures (Ossewaarde & Nijhof, 2008:43; Walsh & Lenihan, 2006:412). The important role that INGOs play in society (as discussed in Chapter 2) has led INGOs to be held more accountable for their operations. Their effectiveness is now a key to their survival and proper management is necessary for success (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:227). Therefore, the debate is no longer about whether or not INGOs require management, but rather about the form that management should take and its similarities to business management and public administration. The following sections first discuss this debate before turning their attention to the form of NGO management itself. In this manner this section lays out how strategic internal communication needs to be considered within the context of NGO management.

3.2.1 Three views of NGO Management

In his review of the literature on CSO management, Beck and Lengnick-Hall (2008:153) identified two contradictory themes. First, some of the literature argued that CSOs would benefit from applying management tools from the private sector. Conversely, some of the literature argued that CSOs are sufficiently unique to make the application of management tools from the private sector either difficult because of limitations around resources and training or inappropriate because of cultural and institutional differences. This paradox is a recurring theme in the literature on NGO management. Lewis (2007:217) identified three different views on the NGO management debate: the generic management view, the adaptive view and the distinctive view. These positions are discussed separately below.

First, the generic management view is based on the principle that “management is management” and “one size fits all” organisations (Lewis, 2007:217). Some NGOs embraced this view to the extreme, adopting the latest management techniques from the private sector in an attempt to find a ‘quick fix’ for organisational problems (Lewis, 2007:217). However, rather than arguing that all business management trends are applicable in NGOs, Dichter (1989:381) defended the generic management view by arguing that even NGOs need to implement basic management principles, for example around budgeting and personnel, and stop being preoccupied with alternative, value-driven management. Similarly, the current economic climate, has led some CSOs to adopt more of the budget and management tools prevalent in the business sector (Lewis, 2005:243). Finally, while Anheier (2005:257-277) does recognise the unique characteristics of CSOs, his textbook on management of nonprofit organisations includes discussion of a variety of basic and generic management principles.

The **second** approach to NGO management, the adaptive view, argues that, while mainstream management principles are useful for NGOs, they cannot be applied in a direct manner (Lewis, 2007:217). The reason why management ideas from business management and public administration cannot be directly applied to NGOs is because of NGOs unique structure, culture and context, as discussed in Chapter 2. While it is acknowledged that NGOs do not function in the same manner as for-profit organisations, this viewpoint argues that NGOs can learn and benefit from other sectors by carefully considering their complementary methods and theories (Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2008:155).

For example, in their study of an NGO's adoption of a Quality Systems Management tool from the business sector, Walsh and Lenihan (2006:413) argue that NGOs benefit from adapting tools from the business sector, rather than re-inventing the wheel, but that there needs to be careful consideration of both the appropriateness of the tool and the context of the NGO before this occurs.

The **third** and final conception of NGO management takes the adaptive view one step further and argues that a distinct form of NGO management may be necessary in order to address the unique challenges of these organisations (Lewis, 2007:217). As Anheier (2005:244) notes, if CSOs perform distinct functions from the government and business sectors and each sector is occupied by organisations with unique structures, then it is logical to suggest that each sector would require its own distinct form of management. Similarly, Mustaghis-ur-Rahman (2007:226) argues that while NGOs require proper management systems, these should be distinct from other sectors because of a NGO's distinctive vision, mission, organisational culture, goals and values.

Lewis (2007) argues that the lack of systematic research in NGO management makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding any of these viewpoints. Rather, he argues that each viewpoint appears valid to some extent. For example, the generic management approach may be valid for the basics such as budgeting and procurement best practices as Dichter suggests. Similarly, NGOs can benefit from adapting techniques from the business sector rather than wasting time on trial and error. Finally, certain principles and approaches are likely to be unique to NGOs because of their fundamental values and structure. As Lewis (2007:217) suggests, NGO managers need to synthesise information and ideas from various sources in order to develop the best mix for their organisation. This is the position adopted by this study.

3.2.2 Emerging conceptions of NGO management

The above section described several positions on the NGO management debate. While this debate may not yet be settled, several authors have proposed conceptions and models for NGO management. For example, Lewis (2007) proposes a composite framework for understanding NGO management; Mustaghis-ur-Rahman (2007) and Lewis (2007) both provide a model for NGO management; and Anheier (2005) outlines an

analytic-normative model of nonprofit organisations. These conceptions serve to both ground the emerging field of NGO management and this study's approach to the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs. They are discussed separately below.

Flowing directly from the NGO management debate discussed in section 3.2.1, Lewis (2007:218-219) proposes a composite framework to NGO management, adapted from the work of Campbell (quoted in Lewis, 2007:219) that outlines how an NGO draws upon four different sources of management thinking. This framework is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: A composite framework for understanding NGO management

	Contextual features	Organisational features
All organisations	<i>Environment</i> (culture, context, institutions)	<i>Generic management</i> (mainly from the 'for-profit' business world)
Development NGOs	<i>Development management</i> (from 'Southern' projects and programmes)	<i>Third sector management</i> (mainly from 'Northern' voluntary/non-profit sectors)
		<i>Public sector management</i> (from government in 'North' and 'South')

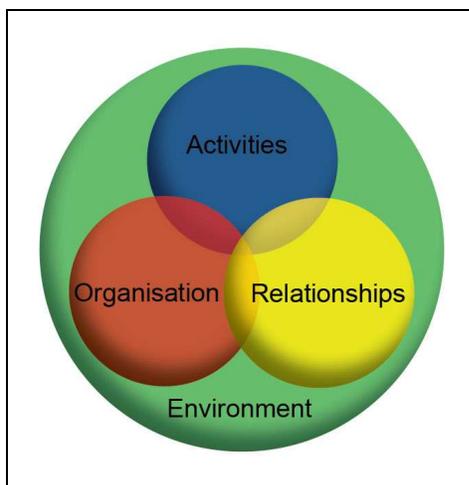
Source: Lewis (2007:219)

Campbell (quoted in Lewis, 2007:218) showed that in order to understand the management of an NGO both their organisational characteristics and their wider context need to be taken into consideration. Based on this premise, the framework put forward by Lewis (2007) illustrates how NGO management draws upon different sources of management thinking based on either its contextual or organisational features. For example, because NGOs share certain common organisational features with all other types of organisations, they need to pay attention to certain generic management principles. Similarly, all CSOs, including NGOs, share several key organisational features in common which means that principles arising from CSO management (referred to as Third sector management by Lewis) are applicable to all. At the same time, however, the context of NGOs and INGOs can be very different from these other organisations, often because they work in 'Southern' and/or global arenas. Therefore, their management also needs to be considered from that particular perspective, which Lewis refers to as development management. By viewing NGO management through the composite

framework, it clarifies how it is a distinct form of management because it is a unique combination of management principles from a variety of sectors.

Mustaghis-ur-Rahman (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:230) proposes a three factor model for NGO management. His model includes the external environment, such as the political-legal, socio-cultural, economic and technological contexts, operations made up of the internal sections of the NGO, and stakeholders on which NGOs depend heavily. Lewis (2007:16) proposes a similar framework, presented in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: A conceptual framework – four interrelated areas of the NGO management challenge



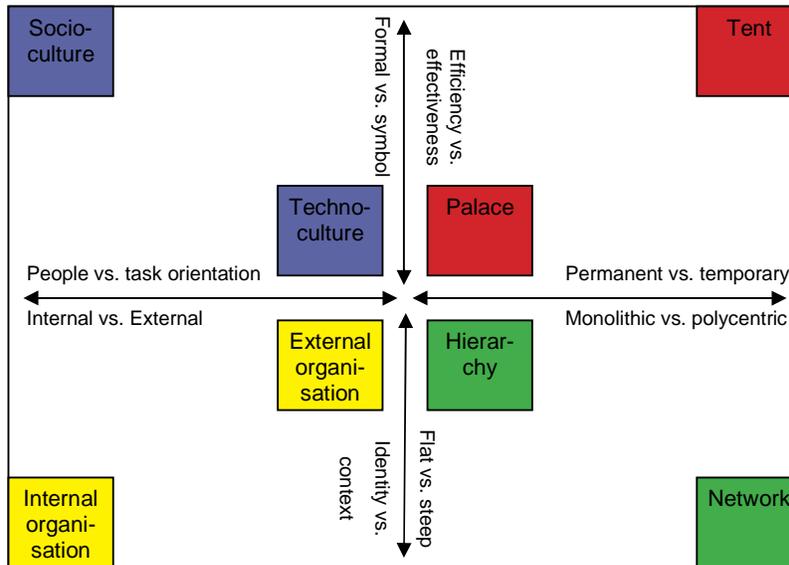
Source: Lewis (2007:16)

Lewis' framework highlights how the environment encompasses all other components of NGO management. It also illustrates how the internal operations of the organisation, as well as the NGOs relationships with its stakeholders, are key factors in NGO management. Finally, it adds a fourth factor to Mustaghis-ur-Rahman's model, the activities that the NGO undertakes, to consider in managing an NGO. Both these models serve to illustrate what factors impact on the management of an NGO.

Anheier (2005:247), focusing more broadly on CSOs, considers them from a different angle, proposing an analytic-normative model of nonprofit organisations based on the dimensions of their organisational structure. He argues that a CSO is more than the sum of its components and that their management needs to be considered holistically. To do

so, the various dimensions, dilemmas and structures involved in nonprofit management need to be considered. His framework is presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Dimension of organisational structure



Source: Anheier (2005:252)

Figure 3.3 illustrates four dimensions of organisational structure. The palace versus tent dimension refers to organisations that value predictability, efficiency and permanence versus improvisation, flexibility, effectiveness and temporality (Anheier, 2005:247). The technocratic culture versus social culture refers to an organisation that can be considered to be like a machine and is focused on functional performance and task achievement versus an organisation that is considered a family, is people orientated and emphasises shared values (Anheier, 2005:248). The third dimension, hierarchy versus network, relates to organisation control, with hierarchy referring to centralised decision making and a top-down approach, while networks are decentralised and emphasise bottom-up approaches. Finally, the internal versus external organisation dimension focuses on the difference between organisations that focus only on their own objectives and world-view versus those that look to the outside environment for solutions and stimuli (Anheier, 2005:251). It should be noted that it is rare for a CSO or NGO to occupy any of the extreme positions on these dimensions, rather they generally fall somewhere in between and different components of their operation can fall at different points on the scale.

Through these four dimensions, Anheier's model can be used both by academics to understand the organisations they study as well as by NGO managers to identify where they currently are at in terms of the dimensions of organisational structure and where they would like to be.

Lewis' (2007:219) composite framework, his and Mustaghis-ur-Rahman's (2007:230) models of NGO management and Anheier's (2005:247) analytical-normative model of CSOs all help to provide a greater understanding of NGO management and also a framework for how this study approaches the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs. Lewis' composite framework highlights how the application of strategic internal communication, which comes from the field of for-profit management, needs to be applied within the framework of the organisational characteristics of CSOs and the contextual realities of INGOs. His and Mustaghis-ur-Rahman's models identify the major factors of NGO management that need to be considered when implementing strategic internal communication in an INGO. Finally, Anheier's model provides a means of characterising an INGO and understanding the dimensions of an INGO's structure that can impact its internal communication. These three conceptions of NGO management inform this study's approach to the application of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

3.3 THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT IN THE NGO SECTOR

Strategic internal communication falls within the strategic management tradition. This section will first consider the traditional approach to strategic management, discussing both what it means to be strategic and the reasons for adopting this approach. It will then consider how this tradition has evolved with the advent of postmodern thinking and what this means for strategic management. Finally, the application of postmodern strategic management to INGOs will be considered with special attention given to how this approach fits with INGO management, given an INGO's context and organisational characteristics.

3.3.1 Traditional thinking: strategic management

Traditionally, strategic management is concerned with creating competitive advantage and improving market performance for for-profit organisations (Styhre, 2003:39). Reframing the concept for non-profit based organisations, it refers to integrating the entire organisation behind an overarching strategy in order to achieve the organisation's long-term objectives (Anheier, 2005:259; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). A strategy is "an effort or deliberate action that an organisation implements to out-perform its rivals" (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). It serves to answer three questions: (i) where is the organisation now, (ii) where does it want to be and (iii) how does it get there (Puth, 2002:206). The tradition of strategic management within this framework is thus based on rational thought and an organisation's ability to create specific plans and use tools to achieve its defined goals (Styhre, 2003:39).

Higgins (quoted in Steyn & Puth, 2000:32) defines strategic management as "co-ordinating the process of managing the accomplishment of the organisational mission co-incident with managing the relationship of the organisation to its environment". His definition is in line with the three components of strategic management put forward by Anheier (2005:259-260). To Anheier, strategic management must (i) encompass the whole organisation, (ii) examine the organisation in the context of its environment and (iii) be forward-looking by trying to identify the major changes the organisation will need to undertake in pursuit of its mission. Strategic management is not necessarily concerned with the day-to-day management of the organisation but rather its long-term sustainability and success.

The process of strategic management has been developed into models by various authors (see Anheier, 2005:261; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:6; Steyn & Puth, 2000:41), but each model generally includes some form of environmental analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and ongoing review. The environment is the primary factor that affects the development of the strategy and the strategic management process (Steyn & Puth, 2000:57), and is crucial to its success (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:5). Therefore, both the internal and external environmental analysis of an organisation is a necessary precondition for developing and implementing a strategy (Anheier, 2005:261). Once the environmental analysis is complete, the organisation can start to formulate strategies in which the organisation identifies its key objectives and an overall plan to achieve them

(Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:5-6). As part of this process, it is necessary to align the strategies to the organisational environment as identified in the previous stage.

The strategy implementation stage is when strategy turns into action. This encompasses the use and allocation of organisational resources, as well as the development of specific short-term goals and plans (Anheier, 2005:261; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:7). Strategy implementation goes from the analysis of the organisational environment to action by management and employees. Finally strategic management is an iterative process in that strategies and their implementation require continuous improvement and revamping in order to keep them aligned to the changing organisational environment.

Steyn & Puth (2000:29) note that an organisation without a strategy “...is like a ship without a rudder going around in circles.” The purpose of strategic management is to integrate organisational functions into a more cohesive and broader strategy so that they all work together towards the same goals (Anheier, 2005:259). Similarly, Puth (2002:201) argues that successful organisations are those that are able to align the organisation with its strategic intent. Strategic intent is the heart of the organisational strategy and refers to the vision and direction the strategy provides, as well as the goal and purpose following this direction is designed to achieve (Puth, 2002:188). Alignment refers to the degree to which all organisational members expend their energy “in the same direction” (Puth, 2002:188). In today’s world, complicated and changing environmental factors, such as political and cultural changes, environmental issues and new technologies, make strategic alignment through strategic management necessary to guide an organisation successfully forward (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:2). By aligning itself with its environment and internally as a unit, an organisation can improve its performance and its ability to achieve its mission.

3.3.2 Postmodern thinking: an alternative approach to strategic management

The traditional form of strategic management described above is the current overarching paradigm in the management literature (Ströh, 2007:201). However, it is not without its critics. The following discussion first looks at the major criticisms of traditional strategic management before considering an alternative, the postmodern approach to strategic management.

3.3.2.1 Critique of traditional strategic management

The structured and planned approach of traditional strategic management has come under considerable criticism from those adopting a postmodern worldview (for examples see Franklin, 1998; Stacey, 2002; Ströh, 2007; Styhre, 2003). These critiques address a variety of aspects of strategic management including its foundation in rationalism, order and predictability, its meta-narratives and its linear process.

Traditional strategic management is based on the idea that “everything, in theory, [can] be understood, predicted and, therefore, managed” (Handy in Franklin, 1998:442). However, from a postmodern worldview the idea that there is a solid predictable reality that can be managed is false (Franklin, 1998:442). Rather, as discussed in Chapter 1, postmodernism sees reality as a social construction created through ongoing discourse. As a result, the conception of reality within an organisation is in a constant state of flux. This view of reality results in two critiques of strategic management. First, chaos and complexity form a better framework for understanding an organisation than do predictability and order (Lewis, 2007:17). Second, because traditional strategic management forces an organisation to deal with a singular image of reality at a single point in time, it prevents the organisation from dealing with actual phenomena and entities as they emerge and evolve (Franklin, 1998:442). While scholars writing from a traditional strategic management perspective do allow for flexibility, it is still within a paradigm of order and firm position (Ströh, 2007:201). The result is that the traditional approach to strategic management does not allow for the complex and changing environment of modern organisations.

A second postmodern critique of strategic management relates to its meta-narratives. Traditional strategic management positions itself and its process as beneficial in any organisation, anywhere. As noted in Chapter 1, however, postmodernism is inherently critical of meta-narratives and argues that theory and knowledge are inextricably linked to the ideology and context from which they arise (Franklin, 1998:444; Styhre, 2003:79). The result is that the traditional static form of strategic management, which was originally conceptualised in the 1960s, is not necessarily valid in all contemporary or social-cultural contexts (Styhre, 2003:77-78). Rather, the postmodern argument is that management needs to be considered within the unique and multiple contexts of each organisation.

A third postmodern critique of strategic management is of its linear process. While it was noted in section 3.3.1 that traditional strategic management can be viewed as an iterative process, it is still linear in that it is a series of discrete steps with each following upon the other and is only iterative in the sense that subsequent steps repeat and are informed by earlier ones. However, postmodernism rejects the idea that management is a unified set of steps and practices (Styhre, 2003:79). Rather, a postmodern worldview sees management as constantly flowing and changing processes built on relationships formed through discourse (Franklin, 1998:443). There is no predetermined format imposed from on-top, but rather it is self-organising as the result of interactions among stakeholders and the environment (Ströh, 2007:207). The result of these critiques is a need for a more flexible participative form of strategic management.

3.3.2.2 A postmodern strategic management

The postmodern worldview does not invalidate the concept of strategic management but rather creates a new understanding of its role and process. This approach to strategic management represents a shift in focus from structures such as organisations and strategies to processes such as organising and strategising (Franklin, 1998:443). Thus postmodern strategic management is based on a view of the organisation as in a constant state of change and formation with the processes of that formation, such as relationships, chaos, complexity and diversity, as the point of focus. The resulting conception of strategic management as a self-organising process is vastly different from its traditional form.

From the postmodern worldview, managers do not set out strategies beforehand; instead they become participants in the self-organising process of strategy development (Ströh, 2007:211). In other words, strategy is not implemented from the top-down, but rather emerges naturally from the ongoing discourse among the multiple stakeholders of an organisation. As Stacey (quoted in Ströh, 2007:212) argues, strategy should be “an emerging process of relationship building.” Puth (2002:182) concurs, noting that what is required is “a lively and widely participative strategic discourse.” In this approach people are not seen as manageable and predictable as in traditional management thinking, but rather as individuals who are thinking, feeling, developing and participating in the organisation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:33). The requirement, therefore, in postmodern strategic management is to develop an organisational-wide strategic consciousness (Puth,

2002:185). Strategic consciousness involves a higher awareness of the organisation's strategic intent throughout the organisation and can be encouraged through ongoing dialogue on the organisation's mission and vision (Puth, 2002:182). It is the relationships that build and emerge through discourses around strategic intent and key strategic issues that develop the strategic direction of the organisation. This self-organising process is key to the conception of a postmodern strategic management.

The postmodern worldview rests on the understanding that uncertainty, plurality and change are constant in organisations and their environment (Baldwin, 2004:321). Arising from this basis, chaos theory addresses the fact that in an ever-changing environment, organisations can no longer be seen as stable, but rather are chaotic, non-linear systems (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:37). Applying this postmodern theory to strategic management, it illustrates how, through the process of self-organising discussed above, organisations must be open and constantly adapting to their environment (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:37).

Complexity theory further argues that organisations are so complex and in such a constant state of change, that it is impossible to understand all the intricate relationships and components from which they are formed (Ströh, 2007:206). Based on this theory, there is a need to maintain an organisation within a 'complexity zone' from which it can learn and adapt without becoming the victim of complete chaos or stagnation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:45). Drawing from both these theories, postmodern strategic management requires the recognition that specific tools and actions used within a single organisation can be very diverse but must be selected as appropriate for the current particular situation (Baldwin, 2004:321). Postmodern strategic management adopts a contingency approach wherein management practice must be chosen based on the fit with every situation's unique characteristics and context (Stacey, 2002:61). As this discussion illustrates, the chaos and complexity of an organisation's environment and the need to adapt to it, contribute, along with discourse and relationships, to the self-organising process of postmodern strategic management.

Drawing these pieces together, strategic management is no longer seen as a tool with definable steps and objectives, but rather a self-organising ever-changing process built through discourse and guided by complex and chaotic relationships and environments.

Using the metaphor of a journey, Franklin (1998:444) describes the postmodern strategic management process:

“As we journey along our strategic route we remain ever alert to the need to change our pace and our direction as new events and unexpected futures cause us to reconsider, re-evaluate and re-strategize our future destination and take a new route on our eternal journey.”

This quotation serves to illustrate several key components of postmodern strategic management as it could be implemented in an organisation. The metaphor of an eternal journey highlights the need to approach strategic management as an ongoing process rather than a distinct, time-limited tool. The need to be adaptable to new events and willing to take a new route towards a potentially new destination are also keys to implementing postmodern strategic management. The postmodern strategic management process is thus not a static top-down management approach, but rather a dynamic underlying process which constantly guides an organisation as it selects methods and tools to use with each new issue and challenge it faces.

While the process may change, the underlying objective of strategic management remains strategic alignment. However, rather than occurring through top-down directives, in postmodern strategic management strategic alignment requires strategic discourse across the organisation and at all levels to raise individual and collective strategic consciousness (Puth, 2002:203). This approach addresses one of the major challenges with the implementation of traditional strategic management: the strategy paradox wherein organisations with well-formulated strategies still cannot seem to achieve success. This is because “the organisation, not the strategy, determines success” (Puth, 2002:196). In other words, it is the execution of the strategy that is the key factor in the organisation’s performance and effective execution requires that all aspects of the organisation are aligned with its strategic intent. As Puth (2002) argues, raising strategic consciousness allows individuals and work groups to interpret and implement the organisation’s strategic intent within their own area of work. As a result, the individual work units and function organically align with the organisation’s overall strategic intent helping to achieve its overall success.

3.3.3 Application of postmodern strategic management to INGOs

The need for clear strategic intent is as great in INGOs as in for-profit organisations (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:276). INGOs need to be managed strategically and with a shared vision in order to be effective (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:229). However, as was noted in section 3.2, traditional management techniques and tools, such as strategic management, have not always been welcome in CSOs and INGOs. Part of the reason was because of the personal opinions of INGO managers that these tools did not 'fit' their organisations; however, strategic management can also have an uncomfortable home in INGOs because of environmental and organisational characteristics. Implementing postmodern strategic management can help address many of these issues.

As discussed in Chapter 1, INGOs operate in a complex environment. At the local, national and international level, they find themselves in a constantly changing environment with increasing levels of globalisation and interdependence (Lewis, 2007:221). This complexity is increased by the need to satisfy multiple stakeholders from donors to governments to society's most vulnerable (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:279). As the neo-institutionalist view of organisations discussed in Chapter 1 makes clear, INGOs need to conform to the expectations of all these groups in order to survive in the long-term. This complexity and constant change makes it difficult for INGOs to develop strategies for the three to five year period usually recommended in the traditional strategic management approach (Wilson-Grau, 2003:533). However, by adopting a postmodern approach to strategic management, INGOs remain open and adaptable to the change in their environment, helping them to deal with paradoxes and ambiguity while learning from the process.

Certain organisational characteristics of INGOs make postmodern strategic management an appropriate approach for them to adopt. Among these are an INGO's values, its lack of a solid bottom line and the vagueness of its mission. INGOs' values generally centre on participation and equality and discourage the concentration of power (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:229). In order to maintain its legitimacy (its licence to operate granted to it by society), an INGO must adhere to its values internally as well as externally and traditional strategic management, with its top-down approach, does not generally fit well in this context. As noted in section 3.2.2, Anheier identified four tensions within INGOs which closely relate to their values. A postmodern approach to management, with its emphasis

on participative discourse and strategising with all stakeholders, can help an INGO remain true to its values and negotiate these tensions while still improving its management processes.

The second two organisational characteristics, a lack of a solid bottom line and the ambiguous nature of many INGO missions are inter-related. As noted in Chapter 1, INGOs have no financial bottom-line to provide the basis for strategic decisions (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001:371). Rather, they have multiple bottom-lines placed upon them by donors and those they 'serve' and they need to satisfy all them in order to remain successful (Anheier, 2005:227-228). The lack of a solid bottom line is further compounded by the vague nature of many INGO missions which can be subject to multiple and diverse interpretations (Glasrud, 2001:37). However, adopting a postmodern approach to strategic management helps INGOs negotiate their bottom lines and, through discourse, establish their strategic intent based on a communally understood interpretation of their mission.

A final reason why postmodern strategic management is an appropriate framework for considering INGO management is related to the diversity among INGOs and approaches to INGO management. INGOs are not a homogenous group of organisations, but rather, take many forms, engage in many activities and work in many different areas (Anheier, 2005:349). The approaches to INGO management are equally diverse. As was presented in section 3.2.2, Lewis (2007:219) argues that INGO management should draw upon four sources of management theory: generic management, third sector (CSO) management, public management and development management. The result of these two factors is that it is unlikely that any particular management technique will apply equally well to all INGOs. Therefore, a contingency approach, where an organisation's unique structure and context are considered in determining the best management technique (Stacey, 2002:61), is appropriate for INGO management. Thus, by adopting a postmodern approach to strategic management, it is possible to consider the management of INGOs as individual organisations with unique contexts and attributes. This approach removes the need to specify a structure for INGO management, but rather highlights the need to understand the underlying processes an INGO must undertake to improve its performance.

The above discussion has established the appropriateness of a postmodern strategic management for INGOs. The resulting model of management recognises INGOs as “adaptive, constantly changing organisations with increasingly uncertain and unpredictable contexts that there is therefore no single ‘blueprint’ for managing [them]” (Lewis, 2007:222). The management of these organisations thus undertakes the process of aligning the INGO behind a single strategic intent, recognising. However, that this is a constantly evolving process with no end-point or defined procedure.

3.4 THE INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF INGOS

Strategic internal communication is part of an organisation’s internal management. Therefore, internal management’s challenges, processes and elements are important for understanding the management of strategic internal communication itself. As Lewis notes repetitively in his textbook on the management of NGOs, little has been written on what goes on inside NGOs (Lewis, 2007:198, 215). Instead, this section draws up theory from other sectors, as is suggested by Lewis’ composite model of NGO management, to discuss the implication of taking a postmodern approach to internal management and several key elements of the internal environment. This discussion is followed by a review of what is in the NGO literature: the challenges that INGOs face in their internal management.

3.4.1 A postmodern approach to internal management

As was discussed, postmodern strategic management is applicable to the management of INGOs. Applying a postmodern approach to their internal management results in several new conceptions for internal management in INGOs; a new understanding of what it means to be based on values, a shift from control management to enabling management and a new view of the organisation as a learning organisation and not just action-based.

Chapter 2 characterised CSOs and INGOs as value-based organisations. In standard conceptions, values are seen as basic convictions held by individuals or groups about what is right, good or desirable (Robbins, 2002:14). However, from a postmodern worldview, this static view of values is deceptive and can lead to management ‘solutions’

that overlook the complexity of the internal NGO environment (Lewis, 2007:193). Rather, a postmodern worldview sees the values of an organisation as an evolving process of negotiation between its various stakeholders. This process is the result of the often conflicting values and interpretations of values held within and among CSOs and their stakeholders (Lewis, 2007:193). Not only may different internal stakeholders hold different interpretations of an INGO's values, but those values themselves may clash. For example, in section 3.4.3, internal democracy was discussed as a value for many INGOs. However, INGOs may at the same time value the efficient use of resources, a value which may at times conflicts with the practice of internal democracy. As Anheier (2005:194) notes, it is therefore important not just to consider one factor in CSO performance, but rather to take a holistic view of a CSO's values. From a postmodern worldview it is more important to focus on value-based action that arises as a result of value discourse and negotiations (Lewis, 2007:193). Therefore, within the internal management of an INGO, it is important to ensure that values underlie the actions of management and the organisation, but to recognise that those values themselves are in a constant state of evolution.

Lewis (2007:18) identifies two concepts of management in the literature to be considered when managing INGOs: scientific management which stresses control, hierarchy and instrumentality and enabling management which draws upon postmodern thinking and stresses process, flexibility and participation. Taking an enabling approach to management is both appealing to INGOs, given their values, and a necessity, given the complexity of their internal and external environments. In order to remain competitive, internal management must foster ongoing dialogue among its workforce and take advantage of the ingenuity and creativity of every employee (Verwey, 2003:5). To do so requires a move away from management towards leadership. This includes the idea of self-leadership among employees wherein responsibility can be delegated to them because they possess the commitment, competence, focus and courage to complete their work in line with the organisation's strategic intent (Puth, 2002:20-21). As Wilson-Grau (2003:535) notes, it has never been so important for NGO management to be able to delegate and trust in the competence of its workforce. The reason is because the rapidly changing and complex environment in which INGOs operate requires flexibility, quick decision making and the participation of lower level employees (Parker in Lewis, 2007:192), neither of which are characteristics of hierarchical organisations. Therefore, by adopting a postmodern

approach, internal management can be seen as a process of engaging with all levels of the organisation to respond flexibly and adapt to the changing environment.

Enabling management and a complex operating environment require greater adjustment and learning capabilities from an organisation's workforce (Vernis *et al.*, 2006:136). Organisational learning is also "the key to survival for NGOs, due to their complex tasks and the turbulent, changing contexts in which they operate" (Lewis, 2007:116). Organisational learning in this context can be seen as enabling not only learning, but also people's capacity to learn, in order to enhance the organisation's ability to transform and create its own future (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:33). While not always conceived of as a postmodern concept, organisational learning can be viewed as postmodern in that it requires the questioning of meta-narratives in order to learn from past mistakes and adapt to a changing future. A learning organisation can be seen as one where people engage in a continuous process of collective learning, where input from all employees is valued, where innovation, creativity and challenges to the status-quo are sought and failure is seen as a valuable opportunity to learn (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:33-34). From a management perspective, this means creating an environment where sharing, thinking and reflecting are standard practice (Lewis, 2007:117).

Section 3.3.2 introduced a conception of postmodern strategic management as an ongoing process of negotiation among the complex and chaotic elements and stakeholders that make up an INGO's environment. Within the internal environment, a postmodern approach is equally useful in understanding the complexity and dynamism of this space and channelling it through concepts such as value-based action, enabling management and organisational learning in order to make it useful for the internal management of INGOs. These concepts will in turn provide a means of understanding the role and process of strategic internal communication, as will be explored in Chapter 4.

3.4.2 Key elements of the internal environment

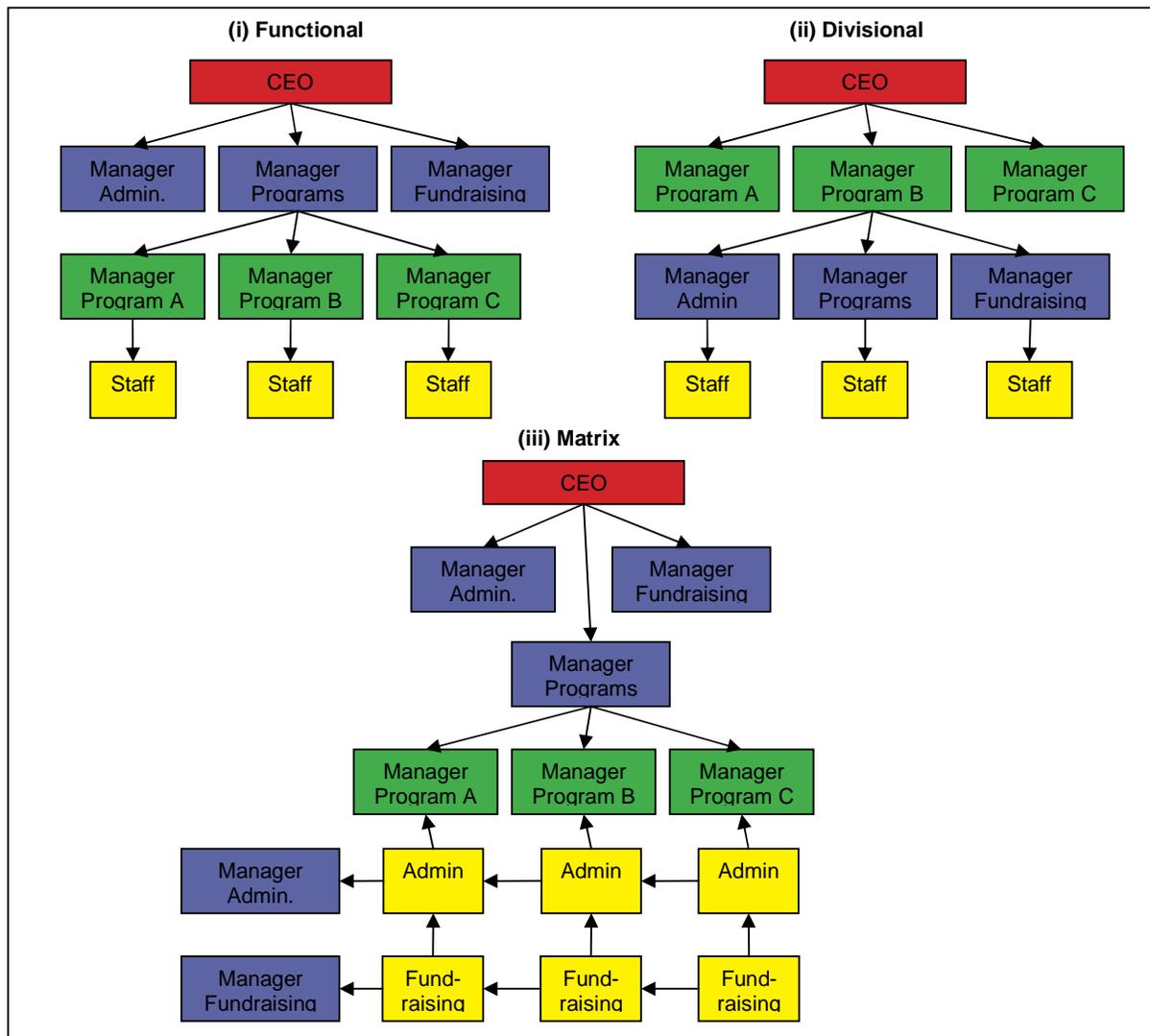
The above discussion highlighted some postmodern conceptions of internal management. As Lewis' model of NGO management, presented in section 3.2.2 illustrates, all management takes place within the organisational environment. Therefore, to understand

the internal management of INGOs, it is necessary to explore two key characteristics of an organisation's internal environment that impact on its internal management generally and on strategic internal communication in particular: structure and culture.

3.4.2.1 Organisational structure

Organisational structure can be defined as “the formal, systematic arrangements of the operations and activities that constitute an organization, and the interrelationships of those operations to one another” (Organ and Bateman in Rollinson, 1993:272). It defines how jobs are divided, grouped and coordinated (Robbins, 2002:178). Organisational structure impacts on all components of the internal management process. The literature identifies three main types of structures: functional, divisional and matrix structures (Anheier, 2005:158-159; Robbins, 2002:185-187; Rollinson, 1993:272-273). Figure 3.4 illustrates these three structures.

Figure 3.4: Common organisational structures



Adapted from: Anheier (2005:158-159)

Both the functional and divisional structures are bureaucratic in that they are characterised by a centralised chain of command with specialised and routine job tasks (Robbins, 2002:186). The divisional structure differs from the functional by first separating tasks by a service, program or, as is frequently the case for INGOs, regions, and then dividing in the different functions. The matrix structure superimposes a horizontal set of divisional reporting relationships onto a functional, hierarchical framework (Anheier, 2005:159). An example of this structure in play would be in an INGO running a campaign on Zimbabwe. A campaign manager would have a team including a media specialist, policy analyst, fundraiser and researcher, each of whom was responsible both to the campaign manager

and to the manager of their function (communication, policy, fundraising and research). This structure is appropriate for environments that are highly uncertain and complex but has the disadvantage of high administrative and transaction costs as well as potential loyalty issues between the division and the function (Anheier, 2005:159). While not as common, other alternative structures do exist. For example, the team structure is an organisation built entirely around the use of teams; the virtual structure is an organisation that contracts out almost all of its functions except for its strategic management; and the boundary-less structure which tries to bring down horizontal and vertical boundaries within the organisation (Robbins, 2002:188-190).

An additional component of the organisational structure of INGOs is how they are organised internationally. As discussed in Chapter 2 and illustrated in table 2.5, three different types of INGO structures are identified in the literature: global organisations, federations and networks. Global organisations have a centralised organisational form, with national offices tightly controlled by headquarters (Van Tulder & van der Zwart, 2006:66-67). Federations are a loose structure of associated organisations in various countries (Van Tulder & van der Zwart, 2006:66). Finally, networks are organisations primarily embedded within a particular nation, but networking and collaborating across borders with partners (Anheier, 2005:351). These three means of organising internationally impact on management within the INGO.

While each of the different types of structures have their benefits and their drawbacks, it is important to note that the structure an organisation chooses can have considerable effects on the abilities of the organisation. The structure of an organisation determines the roles required within the organisation, the types of activities each role must fulfil and the amount of control each role has over its own work and the work of others (Rollinson, 1993:274). It also influences the types of skills required in employees (Vernis *et al.*, 2006:145), the types of employees an organisation will attract, as well as the overall flexibility of the organisation. Therefore, consideration of the organisational structure is necessary for understanding the internal management of an organisation.

Organisational structure is often seen as static. However, changing structure is one means of bringing about organisational change (Rollinson, 1993:275). In this sense, structure

should not be seen as a given, but rather as a strategic tool. Thus structure should follow strategy (Boxall & Purcell, 2008:255; Robbins, 2002:191). In other words, an organisation should first determine its strategy and then develop the most appropriate structure to achieve that strategy. Applying a postmodern worldview to this idea, structure can be seen as evolving from the ongoing negotiations and discourses around an INGO's values and goals. In addition, structure is not necessarily dictated from the top, but rather can evolve organically from interactions with the internal and external environment (Ströh, 2007:206).

3.4.2.2 Organisational culture

Definitions of organisational culture vary, but it is generally conceived of as comprising “the set of key norms, values, beliefs, and understandings shared by members of an organisation” (Beck & Lengenick-Hall, 2008:155). The conceptions of organisational culture can be divided into two groups, those that view culture as something an organisation has similar to other organisational characteristics such as structure and size and thus controllable and changeable, versus something an organisation is and thus is deeply ingrained within the organisation and very difficult to change (Rollinson, 1993:277; Ulrich & LaFasto, 1995:318). As noted by Rollinson (1993:277), most authoritative writers take the second view. This is the conceptualisation adopted in this study and the following discussion will highlight the role of culture within an organisation, the postmodern conception of culture, key consideration for INGO cultures and, finally, the relationship between organisational culture and internal management.

Organisational culture provides a means for employees to identify and understand acceptable decisions and behaviour (Rollinson, 1993:278). It also helps foster a sense of identity and commitment among organisational members (Robbins, 2002:233). This idea is related to the concept of identification. Organisational identification is the process by which people link themselves to others through the discovery of common ground (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:114). Therefore, a shared culture creates a common sense of identity among employees, boosting their commitment to the organisation. As a result, culture impacts on organisational performance. It provides a basis for unified action among employees and helps direct those actions towards the appropriate issues (Ulrich & LaFasto, 1995:322). In this regard, culture serves as the backdrop through which strategy is both formulated and implemented (Puth, 2002:88). It should also be noted that culture can be a liability to an

organisation when it stands in contradiction to those actions that would improve an organisation's performance (Robbins, 2002:234). Similarly, the organisation's culture ultimately determines how successful the organisation will be at executing its strategy and aligning its employees and processes to its strategic intent (Puth, 2002:89).

Organisational culture is often discussed as if it were a unified element of an organisation. However, as the postmodern worldview makes clear, culture should not be seen as a unified element but rather as multiple cultures and sub-cultures existing in tension within an organisation (Lewis, 2007:113). CSOs, for example, can have multiple cultures arising from dual concerns over administrative and mission-related tasks (Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2008:155). INGOs, in particular, can also have multiple sub-cultures clustered around nationality and ethnicity. The result is a need to take what Alvesson (quoted in Lewis, 2007:113) calls a 'multiple cultural configuration view.' This view of organisational culture sees it as a configuration of different cultures and sub-cultures, related to differences among profession, gender, class, ethnicity and others, overlapping within the organisational setting. Simply put, an organisation will contain conflicting subcultures which must be considered when trying to align an organisation around its strategic intent (Puth, 2002:103).

3.4.3 Challenges to the internal management of INGOs

Chapter 2 discusses the management challenges facing many INGOs. These challenges, as well as other organisational characteristics, result in a variety of internal challenges for INGOs. These internal challenges can take different forms but are generally related to the strategic intent, context, form, structure, culture and workforce characteristics of INGOs.

3.4.3.1. Strategic intent

An INGO's mission generally structures its strategic intent, which can pose several internal challenges. While a "well-written mission statement about a well-focused mission can be a non profit's most useful tool" (Glasrud, 2001:36) and lead to clear strategic intent for the organisation, INGOs' missions often are ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. Therefore, it is difficult for INGOs to develop clear strategies and measurable objectives (Lewis 2007:190). This situation can cause several internal problems.

To start with, employees have difficulty integrating the organisation's mission into their work (Glasrud, 2001:37), frustrating those who are generally committed to and desirous of achieving the organisation's mission and causing the organisation's work to be unfocused and lack strategic intent. The lack of clarity can also leave the organisation's mission susceptible to goal displacement, particularly when the need for revenue causes an organisation's mission to shift to be more in line with donors' goals (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:280; Lewis, 2005:250). Finally, a vague mission allows it to be interpreted differently by people holding diverse values (Glasrud, 2001:37; Lewis, 2005:250). This is a particular risk in INGOs where employees often have diverse cultures and backgrounds that may cause them to interpret the mission in different ways. Thus, the ambiguous nature of INGOs' missions can cause multiple internal management challenges particularly when it comes to aligning the organisation with its strategic intent.

3.4.3.2 Organisational context

INGOs operate in complex and chaotic environments which can pose numerous challenges for their management. One challenge relates to its sources of funding and/or the lack thereof. As was discussed in Chapter 2, INGOs are experiencing increasing competition for decreasing amounts of resources. The sources of available funding can also cause difficulties for INGO management. For example, INGOs that depend on public donations often have low and unpredictable levels of funding because Northern publics have a general lack of interest in development issues (Biddle in Lewis, 2007:199) and are easily swayed both towards giving (for example as the result of natural disasters) and towards not giving (for example when there is a financial crisis at home). The lack of stable funding makes it difficult for INGOs to plan strategically for the long-term.

INGOs that depend on funding from government and foundations face their own set of challenges. One challenge of relying on donors means that they often intrude on the internal management of the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:279). A second challenge relates to the type of funding that foundations and governments provide. The grants provided by foundations and international development agencies are often tied to specific projects (Srinivasan, 2007:189). Thus, often specific projects, and not the overall mission and its associated strategic intent, become the focus of the organisation's activities. In this situation, employees may become very committed to a specific project

cause but at the expense of a commitment to the organisation itself (Srinivasan, 2007:189; Vernis, Iglesias, Sanz & Saz-Carranza, 2006:146). As a result, sources and types of funding available within the INGO context can pose a major internal challenge for INGOs and make it difficult to align the organisation around its strategic intent.

3.4.3.3 Organisational form

As was discussed in Chapter 2, a key characteristic of the INGO form is that values are the central coordination mechanism. This can cause issues in terms of establishing an INGO's legitimacy both with its internal and external stakeholders. In order to be effective, INGOs need to have the trust of their stakeholders, including their employees, and are thus held to a higher ethical standard than government and business (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:226). Similarly, Ehlers and Lazenby (2007:276) argue that credible commitment to stated values and perception of legitimacy among stakeholders is a key to a CSO's organisational advantage. A study by Brown and Yoshioka (2003:15) supports this argument, noting that since employees in CSOs often sacrifice pay to work there, they expect that the organisation will live up to its stated values in its internal management practices as well as its external work.

This need to remain true to its values can pose a challenge for INGOs because their values can often lead them to adopt less efficient practices (Lewis, 2005:251). For example, many INGOs are called upon to practice some form of internal democracy; in fact, a perception that CSOs have democratic cultures and shared management practices is a reason why employees choose to work for them (Brandel, 2001:13). However, this means that INGOs face the challenge of remaining true to its participatory governance values while remaining effective and efficient in their work. As Fowler (quoted in Lewis, 2007:200) notes "decision-making must be consultative enough for shared ownership of the outcomes and directive enough to be timely." This challenge is further complicated by donors who can intrude on an INGO's internal management, making it difficult for the organisation to stay completely focused on a mission that is in line with its values (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:279). The result is that all internal management activities, including the development of strategic intent, have to be aligned with the organisation's core values.

3.4.3.4 Organisational structure

Organisational structure can pose a challenge for internal management generally and strategic alignment in particular. Bureaucracy, programme silos and isolated work units can pose barriers to the establishment of cohesive strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:203). In Figure 3.3, Anheier (2005:247-251) identified four sets of tensions within a CSO's structure: predictability versus flexibility, functional performance versus people orientation, centralised top-down control versus decentralised bottom-up decision-making and internal versus external orientation. Within INGOs, Anheier (2005:347) also identifies a tension between the desire to decentralise in order to be more flexible across regions and to formalise in order to ensure greater predictability in the relations between organisational units. These tensions are in constant play within an INGO and establishing a balance between them that allows the organisation to be flexible and adaptable to its changing environment, while remaining focused on its strategic intent, is a challenge.

3.4.3.5 Organisational culture

An organisation's culture can be a challenge for its internal management. Aligning an organisation to its strategic intent almost always involves change, therefore, establishing an adaptive culture is a necessary prerequisite (Puth, 2002:89-90). An organisation with a non-adaptive culture tends to be very bureaucratic with leaders and managers who value themselves and their particular domains over the well-being of the organisation (Puth, 2002:90). While INGO cultures are as diverse as INGOs themselves, if their cultures are non-adaptive, they will experience significant challenges in executing their strategic intent.

An additional challenge for INGOs is that their overall cultural configuration needs to reflect their values and approaches (Lewis, 2007:113). In order to encourage identification among INGO employees, many of whom join the organisation through a commitment to the mission, an INGO's culture must reflect the values of its mission. In addition, as was suggested in the discussion on organisational learning in section 3.4.1, INGOs need to develop a culture of reflection in order to learn from their experiences. This is in contrast to the dominant NGO culture of action, where it is more important to be doing something than necessarily taking the time to make sure it is either effective or efficient (Lewis, 2007:113).

This culture of action is also biased against the time and effort required to develop a coherent strategy and strategic intent, making strategic alignment difficult.

Unfortunately, as was noted in section 3.4.2, the common conception of culture makes it very difficult to change. This difficulty arises from the fact that culture emerges not just from management but from an amalgamation of sources (Theaker, 2004:172). Modifying organisational cultures is a long and difficult task. Therefore it can often be more appropriate to work with or around an existing culture to harness some of its characteristics to enhance organisation performance (Rollinson, 1993:278). However, similar to structure and strategy, an organisation's culture must be adaptable to changing environmental contexts. Thus, one of the greatest challenges for internal management is creating a culture that is flexible and adaptable to complex internal and external environments (Ulrich & LaFasto, 1995:324). This is an important consideration because not aligning an organisation's strategic intent with its culture is often a reason why strategies do not succeed (Puth, 2002:88; Theaker, 2004:172). Therefore, understanding the complex dynamics of an INGO's culture is necessary for establishing strategic alignment and managing strategic internal communication in particular.

3.4.3.6 Workforce characteristics

The composition and characteristics of the INGO workforce poses its own set of internal management challenges. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the INGO workforce is generally very diverse with a mixture of paid and voluntary, local and expatriate staff with varying levels of commitment to the INGO's mission and working in multiple countries. These factors can pose several internal management problems for INGOs.

Firstly, INGOs, like any international organisation with multiple offices, must manage the communication problems that arise from the geographical distance between headquarters and field offices (Biddle in Lewis, 2007:199). This is a particular challenge in terms of aligning all offices and employees around the strategic intent. A second challenge arises from the fact that expatriate employees tend to turnover much quicker than local staff (Walsh & Lenihan, 2006:417). Thus INGOs must both retain institutional knowledge in the face of high turnover and ensure that local employees do not become resentful of a 'revolving door' of expatriate staff whom are often in managerial positions. Finally, because

of the nature of INGO activities, INGO employees need to “have an international outlook, multicultural sensitivities and the ability to remain as neutral or objective as possible in discussions based on cultural, national and political differences” (Lewis, 2007:204). Thus, INGOs must manage a culture in their organisation that rises above the individual employee’s national and cultural background to embrace an outlook within the workforce that reflects the outlook of the organisation as a whole and its strategic intent.

INGOs face a number of internal management challenges. Chapter 4 will discuss how strategic internal communication can help address some of these challenges.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a discussion of INGO internal management which serves as the background for the consideration of strategic internal communication within this study. In considering the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs, it is necessary to draw upon both business management theory where this management process arises, as well as CSO and development management theory which help ground the process in the INGO’s unique organisational characteristics and context. The strategic approach is useful in INGOs because it helps to focus their often ambiguous missions while taking a postmodern conception of the strategic process and helps keep the management of an INGO in line with its values. This postmodern conception is equally important within the internal context of an INGO, ensuring the structure, culture and internal management of an INGO are all considered within each INGO’s unique and dynamic context. The discussion of strategic internal communication which starts in Chapter 4 occurs within this overall framework of INGO management.

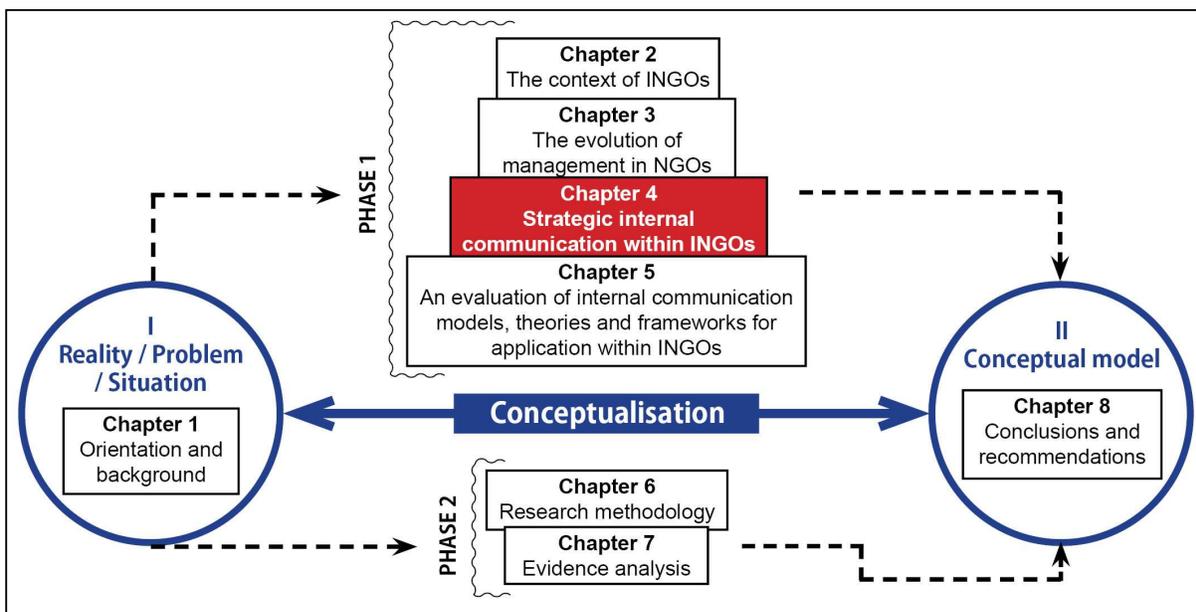
Chapter 4

Strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 provided the contextual background for the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs. Chapter 2 explored the INGOs' position within civil society and relationship with other sectors of society, while Chapter 3 considered the management of INGOs, including the characteristics and challenges that the INGO form poses to traditional management thinking. Against the backdrop provided by these discussions, Chapter 4 defines strategic internal communication and focuses on its application within INGOs. Figure 4.1 illustrates the position of Chapter 4 in relation to all the other chapters of this study.

Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 in relation to the other chapters



The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section considers the communication management approach to internal communication which this study adopts, as well as several alternative approaches. The second section defines strategic internal communication identifying what makes it strategic and how the process should unfold. The final section considers strategic internal communication within INGOs, paying particular

attention to the challenges faced by INGOs, the opportunities offered by strategic internal communication, and the barriers to implementing effective strategic internal communication in this context.

4.2 APPROACHES TO INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The literature contains three separate approaches to communication in organisations and the relationships among an organisation's internal stakeholders: organisational communication, employee relations and communication management. Organisational communication considers all communication that occurs within an organisation and goes so far as to consider organising as communication (Conrad & Poole, 2005:9). It focuses on the importance of communication to every individual within the organisation and how each employee and manager uses communication to achieve their individual and organisational goals. It offers an understanding of how communication works in an organisation. From a human resources perspective, employee relations is concerned with the relationship between the organisation and its employees. Both of these approaches and how they relate to strategic internal communication are discussed below.

First, however, the communication management perspective, as the approach adopted in this study is discussed. The communication management approach views communication within the organisation as a management tool (Welch & Jackson, 2007:181). It focuses on how management can use communication to improve the performance of the organisation. Within this framework, this study adopts a stakeholder perspective and focuses on strategic communication theory. This approach is discussed next.

4.2.1 Communication management approach

Communication management is synonymous with corporate communication and public relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). Within this perspective, internal communication is just one of several communication management specialisations, including media relations, investment relations and crisis communication among others (Yeomans, 2006:333). From the communication management perspective, each of these functions is distinct, but needs to be integrated in order to be effective (Quirke, 2002:25). What unites them is a view of communication as a tool for use by management to achieve

organisational goals. PRISA (2009), the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, defines communication management as “the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.” This definition highlights two key theories that have influenced the communication management discipline, particularly as it applies to this study: stakeholder theory and strategic communication theory. These are discussed in more detail next.

4.2.1.1 Stakeholder theory

The central concept of stakeholder theory is the stakeholder, which is classically defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984 in Friedman & Miles, 2006:1). The application of stakeholder theory results in the organisation no longer being viewed as an isolated unit, guided and managed solely by its directors, and under the influence of its shareholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006:25). Instead, the organisation is seen as interdependent with multiple stakeholder groups whom it both affects and is affected by.

The literature identifies two principal reasons for an organisation to adopt a stakeholder perspective in its strategic management: utilitarian reasons and moral or ethical reasons (Bendell, 2002:55; Crane & Livesey, 2002:39; Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). Adopting a stakeholder approach for utilitarian reasons involves engaging with stakeholders with the sole purpose of protecting and furthering the organisation’s strategic and economic goals. Approaching stakeholder relations from a normative perspective, based on morals and ethics, requires broader consideration of all stakeholder interests with the aim of developing win-win situations and ultimately a more ‘just’ society. This normative stakeholder perspective complements the neo-institutionalist view of organisations adopted by this study and introduced in Chapter 1.

From both these perspectives, an organisation, such as an INGO, cannot simply be guided by its own rational decision-making, but must also adhere to social pressures, as put forth by its stakeholders, in order to maintain its legitimacy and thus its long-term survival. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders among both businesses and NGOs (Crane & Livesey, 2002:39). By adopting a stakeholder perspective, an organisation is forced to become

more responsive to its external environment and the changes within it (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183).

From a postmodern worldview, normative stakeholder theory calls for the recognition and consideration of interests and relationships that may not be part of traditional management practices (Friedman & Miles, 2006:68). It argues for the adoption of multiple stakeholder dialogue to replace traditional manager-centred forms of decision making (Friedman & Miles, 2006:69). Thus normative stakeholder theory serves as a basis for postmodern strategic management as discussed in Chapter 3. By strengthening relationships, stakeholder dialogue builds the bridges necessary for both successful organisations and an improved society.

A key component of stakeholder theory for communication management is stakeholder management. Scholes (1997:xviii) defines stakeholder management as “the professional management of interactions between all those with an interest - or 'a stake' - in a particular organisation.” By comparing this definition to PRISA’s definition of communication management, it is clear that communication management involves the management of stakeholder relationships through the use of communication. With a foundation in stakeholder theory, communication management is able to both advocate for the benefit of improved relations with an organisation’s stakeholders and build and strengthen those relationships.

Stakeholder theory as applied within a communication management approach has several implications for internal communication. First, it fundamentally validates the importance of this management function, because it identifies the intrinsic value of all stakeholders, employees and other internal stakeholders included, not just as instruments to furthering the organisation’s goals, but as important groups who need to be considered in their own right (Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). It therefore provides the theory behind justifying internal communication as a necessary and beneficial management function. Second, as an analysis by Welch and Jackson (2000) argues, a stakeholder perspective of internal communication means that internal stakeholders must not be considered as a homogenous group, but rather as consisting of various inter-related subgroups. Finally, the postmodern worldview of strategic management and internal communication adopted in

this study and identified as appropriate for INGOs, draws upon the stakeholder dialogue theory in order to identify the appropriate means of implementing strategic internal communication effectively. As a result, stakeholder theory underlies the conception of strategic internal communication in this study.

4.2.1.2 Strategic communication theory

Strategic communication is a concept that unites all the communication functions in organisations (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2007:3), including strategic internal communication. Hallahan *et al.* (2007:3) define strategic communication as “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.” They (2007:7) argue that the word ‘purposeful’ is central to the concept of strategic communication because it focuses on the intentional use of communication by an organisation’s leaders and employees. Steyn (2007:139) contends that strategic communication is part of the strategic management of the organisation. Strategic communication must be clearly linked to the organisation’s strategic intent, both in terms of its actions and its goal.

Strategic communication is not only about achieving the organisation’s strategic intent through communication with its stakeholders, but is also about ensuring that the strategic intent is in line with the organisation’s stakeholders. Therefore, the communication function has a role to play before and during the strategic management process and not just during strategy implementation. This view is based on the postmodern view of strategic management as put forward by Knight (quoted in Steyn, 2007:139) that strategic management is “a subjective process in which the participants from different management disciplines ... assert their disciplinary identities.”

At the strategy development stage, strategic communication brings the society or ‘outsider’ perspective to the process (Steyn, 2007:139). It does this through the analysis of the internal and external environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:63; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:10). As identified in the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, strategic communication/public relation’s key role, with regards to the organisation’s strategy, is through the reconciliation of the strategy with the expectations of its strategic constituents (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:34). Strategic communication’s role is to analyse the organisation’s environment and

its stakeholders and ensure that the organisation's strategy reflects this context. From a postmodern perspective, this process involves ongoing negotiations between the communication function, stakeholders and the organisation's management, where the communication function is not just the mouthpiece of management, but rather is an activist on behalf of stakeholder interests and is in pursuit of equitable participation by all (Ströh, 2007:209-210).

In order to play its role during both the strategy development and implementation stages, the lead communicator requires a voice at the executive level of the organisation - where it develops its strategy (Steyn & Puth, 2000). Without this representation at the senior level, it is impossible for the communication function to fulfil its strategic role with regards to achieving the organisation's strategic intent. A second requirement is that the lead communicator has the knowledge and understanding of communication's strategic role in order to be able to fulfil it. Without these two conditions, an organisation's communication function cannot operate at the strategic level.

As conceptualised in this study, strategic internal communication is a specific component of strategic communication. Thus the theory of strategic communication is the backdrop for understanding strategic internal communication. This relationship is discussed further in section 4.3.

4.2.2 Alternative approaches

While this study approaches internal communication through communication management heavily influenced by stakeholder theory and strategic communication theory, there are alternative approaches to this concept. Organisational communication approaches communication in organisations, not from a management perspective, but from the view that it is something undertaken by everyone within the organisation. Human resources does not focus on internal communication but rather on the concept of employee relations to understand the relationships between an organisational and its employees. The following section discusses these two approaches, how they relate to communication management and how they impact on this study's conception of strategic internal communication.

4.2.2.1 Organisational communication approach

Organisational communication is distinguished from communication management in its focus on theory and research, as opposed to the practical function of communication in organisations and in its adoption of “an integrative communication orientation” (Mumby & Stohl, 1996:53). Organisational communication scholars have come to see communication not just as a phenomenon within organisations, but as a means of describing and explaining organisations (Deetz, 2001:5). In other words, an organisation is communication (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:7) and thus communication is the basis for the organisation itself.

While organisational communication may focus on research and theory, it does still have practical implications for communication within organisations. However, unlike communication management, it does not focus on the functions of a communication department, but rather on the overall communication processes at play within the organisation. Therefore, the practical implications for organisational communication apply not to a specific department, but rather speak to how all employees in an organisation can analyse a situation and choose the appropriate communication strategies to achieve their goals (Conrad & Poole, 2005:4). When considered through a postmodern lens, the field demonstrates a concern for diversity, process and a holistic view of the organisation (Mumby and Stohl, 1996:66). Thus organisational communication provides insight into many of the issues that need to be considered within a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication.

Some of these insights relate to two concepts often studied by organisational communication scholars and which relate to strategic internal communication: control and identification. The literature identifies four types of control in organisations (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:262; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:254):

- i. simple: the use of direct power
- ii. technical: through the availability, or lack thereof, of tools and resources
- iii. bureaucratic: the use of organisational rules and procedures
- iv. concertive: The use of interpersonal relationships and teamwork

It is this last type of control that is most relevant to considerations of internal communication in organisations. Concertive control relies on relationships and shared values in order to normalise behaviour (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:255). Organisations who use concertive control most clearly are usually fairly flat and require significant teamwork and a high degree of coordination, as well as organisations where adhering to core values is a requirement for achieving the organisation's goals (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:265). Establishing concertive control is necessary in INGOs who espouse core values that often are contrary to other types of concentrated power.

Concertive control is made possible through identification (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:255). As was introduced in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.2.2), identification is the process by which people link themselves to others through the discovery of common ground. Within organisations, it occurs when employees define themselves (at least in part) in terms of the organisation for which they work and internalise its mission, values and customary ways of doing things (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:114). A primary impact of identification is that it ensures that employees make decisions that are beneficial to the organisation because they see the organisation's interests as their own (Maneerat, Hale & Singhal, 2005:189). In addition, when employees identify with the organisation, their morale, commitment, job satisfaction and quality of performance generally increase (Maneerat *et al.*, 2005:189). However, feelings of identification rarely develop on their own (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:114). Thus a role for strategic internal communication, particularly in an INGO whose values encourage it to rely more on concertive control than other forms, is to encourage employee identification on the basis of the organisation's mission, values and strategic intent through dialogue and communication. Thus, while this study does not occur within the domain of organisational communication, this field of study does make a contribution to its conception and understanding of strategic internal communication.

4.2.2.2 Employee relations approach

Employee relations is the component of human resources management focused on the relationship between employees and the organisation. It has grown in importance with increased recognition that people are one of an organisation's most valuable assets and that the success of the organisation can be linked to the effectiveness of its human resource management (Buford, 2006:517). Unlike communication management and

organisational communication, employee relations does not take a communication-centric view of the management of internal stakeholders. Instead, it adopts a holistic view to the management of human resources which includes recruiting, training, retaining and separation; although in its most basic sense it is about employer and employees working together to achieve success (Hartley, 2007:1).

One of the key insights of the employee relations approach is its characterisation of the nature of the relationship between an employee and the organisation. In the mid twentieth century, there was an implied employee contract whereby employees would remain loyal to the company for life while the employer would 'take care' of them until retirement (Anonymous, 2003:1). However, in the late twentieth century, the implied contract gave way amid economic tensions that resulted in downsizing and an increase in contract work. Now, employee relations calls for the employee-employer relationship to no longer be viewed as paternalistic, but rather as a partnership (Anonymous, 2003:11). This view is aligned with the stakeholder perspective wherein all stakeholders, in this case, employees, have an intrinsic value to the organisation and thus need to be managed for win-win situations.

Employee relations may not be communication-centric but it does still recognise that communication is a key part of employee relation activities, in particular when motivating and engaging employees (Hartley, 2007:2). Employee engagement is an area where internal communication and employee relations overlap. Both areas of research address the need to engage employees in the organisation's decision-making process, as well as linking their particular areas of work to the organisation's overall strategy in order to achieve identification and thus more effective productivity. Employee relations also recognise the need to integrate employee relations consideration into the overall organisational strategy in order to improve organisational performance (Gunigle, Turner & Morley, 1998:115). Thus, the employee relations approach provides support for the importance of internal stakeholders in the strategic management process. Overall, employee relations, while it considers other aspects of human resources management than just communication, provides fundamental support for the strategic internal communication concept that is the focus of this study.

4.3 DEFINING STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Strategic internal communication is not a common term in the literature, but is used here to emphasise the strategic nature of how internal communication is conceived in this study and differentiate it from many of the varied definitions of internal communication in the literature. However, as many elements of internal communication relate to strategic internal communication, this section discusses the definition, purpose and divisions of internal communication before providing further refinement to the concept of strategic internal communication. The final component of this section then highlights several key components of the strategic internal communication process.

4.3.1 Overview of internal communication

As the Excellence Study for Public Relations established, internal communication is both a component of and a prerequisite for excellent public relations (Grunig, 1992:532). Unfortunately, internal communication is a function that is under-researched in comparison to other aspects of communication management (Argenti, 1996:94). Adding further confusion is the fact that the divisions between external and internal communication are becoming increasingly blurred, as employees are often also customers, beneficiaries or other classes of stakeholders. However, a number of authors have delved into this concept in detail focusing on the particular aspects of communication unique to internal stakeholders. The following section discusses the variety of definitions of internal communication, the different dimensions of the function and the identification of its purposes and benefits that these authors have illustrated.

4.3.1.1 Definitions of internal communication

To further add to the problem of limited research in this area, a variety of terms including employee communication, internal public relations, internal corporate communication and internal marketing have all been used somewhat interchangeably to refer to the management of communication within an organisation. Even when the same term is used, it is rarely defined in precisely the same manner. Table 4.1 highlights just some of the definitions of internal communication in the literature.

Table 4.1: Definitions of internal communication

Author(s)	Definitions
Bovee and Thill (in Kalla, 2005:304)	<i>"The exchange of information and ideas within an organization."</i>
Kalla (2005:304)	<i>(integrated internal communications) "All formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organisation."</i>
Maubane (2006:11)	<i>"Communication that occurs in the internal environment of an organization"</i>
Stauss & Hoffmann (quoted in Yeomans, 2006)	<i>"The planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees."</i>
Cutlip, Center & Broom (quoted in Meyer & De Wet, 2007)	<i>(Internal corporate communication) "The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the internal stakeholders on whom its success or failure depends."</i>
Doorley & Garcia (2007:129)	<i>(Employee communication) "The function charged with aligning the 'hearts, minds, and hands' of the employee constituency through dialogue and engagement."</i>
Welch & Jackson (2007:184 & 186)	<i>"The strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of interrelated dimensions including, internal line manager communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication."</i>
	<i>(Internal corporate communication) "Communication between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims."</i>
Chen (2008:167)	<i>"A management tool [that] helps identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organization's management and its employees"</i>

* Where the author uses a different term to refer to a similar concept, this has been indicated in brackets.

The definitions in Table 4.1 approach internal communication from a variety of perspectives. For example, some definitions include only managed communication (Scholes, 1997:xviii; Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007:184; and Chen, 2008:167) or both managed and unmanaged communication (Kalla, 2005:304 and Maubane, 2006:11). As well, the definitions highlight a variety of different purposes for internal communication. These two distinctions are discussed in the following sections; what is important to note here is that, as highlighted by Welch and Jackson (2007), there is no single definition of internal communication that is predominant in the literature.

4.3.1.2 Dimensions of internal communication

The definitions in Table 4.1 can be distinguished by the inclusion of manager or unmanaged, task-related or non-task related and formal versus informal communication. In their definition, Welch and Jackson (2007:184) identified what they see as the main divisions of internal communication:

- internal line management communication,
- internal team peer communication,
- internal project peer communication and
- Internal corporate communication.

Line management communication is the day-to-day discussions between an employee and his/her manager. Team peer communication is the communication amongst all team members. Project peer communication is the communication between all employees working on specific projects. These three dimensions incorporate all the task-related communication an employee engages in on a daily basis. Meanwhile, internal corporate communication is the communication from the top management of the organisation to all employees about the organisational issues, goals and objectives and, as a result, is non-task related.

These different dimensions serve to highlight the different levels and groups that engage in internal communication. However, it is not always simple to distinguish between the different types of communication. For example, line managers have been identified as a key source of communication about organisational issues and objectives and not just specific task-related issues. Similarly, informal communication plays a key role in an employee's commitment to the organisation's goals. Since this study is approaching internal communication from a communication management perspective, internal communication is viewed as the managed use of communication (although this does not preclude the managed use of informal channels of communication). The other distinctions are not so easily made and will be discussed further in section 4.3.2.

4.3.1.3 Purpose of internal communication

The definitions in Table 4.1 also highlight a variety of goals or purposes for internal communication. These include:

- "systematically influence[ing] the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees" (Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006);
- "establish[ing] and maintain[ing] mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the internal stakeholders" (Cutlip, Center & Broom in Meyer &

De Wet, 2007), or in other words helping to “identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organization’s management and its employees” (Chen 2008:167);

- “aligning the ‘hearts, minds, and hands’ of the employee constituency through dialogue and engagement” (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:129); and
- “promot[ing] commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007:186).

Similar to Cutlip, Center and Broom, as well as Chen, within the communication management perspective, internal communication focuses on the relationship between management and employees; each is the other’s most important public and a productive relationship is necessary for them to achieve their goals (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:311-312). The other goals can be seen as the desired products of the effective management of that relationship. Argenti (2003:129) cites a Conference Board study of over 200 companies from a variety of industries which identifies even more goals for internal communication including:

- i. “To improve morale and foster goodwill between employees and management.
- ii. To inform employees about internal changes such as a reorganization or staff promotion.
- iii. To explain compensation and benefit plans, such as a new health care plan or an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- iv. To increase employee understanding of the company and its products, organisation, ethics, culture, and external environment.
- v. To change employee behaviour toward becoming more productive, quality oriented, and entrepreneurial.
- vi. To increase employee understanding of major health and social issues or trends affecting them, such as child care or AIDS.
- vii. To encourage employee participation in community activities.”

This list of objectives reflects a common bias in internal communication of focusing on a one-way relationship between management and employees (Yeomans, 2006:334). However, a symmetrical relationship between employees and management has been

identified as key to effective internal communication (Grunig, 1992:531). Al-Ghamdi, Roy and Ahmed (2007:274) provide a list of the purposes of internal communication more in line with this principle:

- i. establish and disseminate organisational goals
- ii. develop plans to achieve goals
- iii. organise human and other resources to be both effective and efficient
- iv. select, develop and appraise employees
- v. lead, direct, motivate and create a climate where people want to contribute
- vi. control performance

While internal communication can be used to achieve all these goals, these are all derived from the development and maintenance of the relationship between employees and management. As Yeoman (2006:334) identifies the general goal of internal communication to be “building two-way, evolving relationships with internal publics, with the goal of improving organisational effectiveness.” By fulfilling this purpose, internal communication helps to drive organisational performance (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:133).

As a result of fulfilling its overall purpose, effective internal communication has been associated with a wide array of benefits including but not limited to: increased employee engagement and commitment (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:31), increased employee satisfaction and decreased resistance to change (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299), decreased employee turnover and reduced absenteeism (Yates, 2006:71), improved productivity and higher quality of services and products, increased levels of innovation (Clampitt & Downs, 2003 in Tourish & Hargie, 2004) and improvement to a company’s financial performance and a sustainable competitive advantage (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299; Yates, 2006:72). These benefits all contribute to the role internal communication plays in driving organisational performance.

The reason why the effective management of an organisation’s relationship with its employees can lead to these many benefits is because employees are an organisation’s most powerful constituency, one who can influence the reputation of the organisation with all of its other constituencies (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:134). Therefore, while the line may be blurring between internal and external communication, internal stakeholders still require

specific attention. As Simões, Dibb and Fisk (2005:153) argue, an employee's stance towards an organisation is vital to the quality of his performance and the quality of internal communication influences that stance. Similarly, effective internal communication encourages employee identification with the organisation, which leads to a more supportive attitude towards the organisation that in turn leads to improved quality of performance and retention (Dolphin, 2005:173). Internal communication is a means of aligning an organisation's employees with its mission and objectives (Dolphin 2005:173; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74) thus leading to a more effective workforce that contributes to (and not detracts from) an organisation's reputation.

4.3.2 Definition of strategic internal communication

Strategic internal communication is not synonymous with internal communication. While it remains concerned with the relationship between the organisation and its employees, its focus is on the *strategic* functioning of internal communication. Of all the definitions of internal communication in Table 4.1, only Welch and Jackson's (2007:184) makes mention of the need for internal communication to be strategic, noting that it is "the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations." Similarly, Verwey & du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) reflect the strategic focus in their definition of strategic organisational communication as "the strategic planning of communication in order to ensure effective internal communication, thereby enabling the organisations to achieve productivity and effectiveness in the short term and adaptation and survival in the long term." Internal communication needs to be managed strategically in order for it to be as effective as possible in pursuit of the organisation's mission. Since the strategic component of strategic internal communication is so important, the key step in defining this concept is to understand what is meant by strategic.

As discussed in section 4.2, strategic communication forms the backdrop to strategic internal communication. As noted in that section, strategic communication is strategic both in terms of its goals and its functioning and the same applies to strategic internal communication. In order for internal communication to function strategically, it must possess several characteristics which are discussed next.

4.3.2.1 Purpose of strategic internal communication

In Table 4.1, Welch and Jackson's (2007:186) definition of internal corporate communication identifies the goals of internal corporate communication as promoting "commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims." While these goals would all be included in the objectives of strategic internal communication, they are simply steps or components in achieving its overall goal. Doorley and Garcia's (2007:129) definition, by noting the alignment role of employee communication, is similar to this study's understanding of strategic, which, as was discussed in Chapter 3, refers to aligning the entire organisation around its strategic intent. In section 4.2.1.2, strategic communication was identified as having the goal of advancing the organisation's mission. Thus, strategic internal communication, as part of both the strategic management and strategic communication perspectives, has the goal of aligning internal stakeholders with the organisation's strategic intent and thus advancing its mission.

As was noted in the discussion on postmodern strategic management in Chapter 3, strategic alignment requires strategic discourse across the organisation and at all levels to raise individual and collective strategic consciousness (Puth, 2002:203). Strategic consciousness allows individuals and work groups to interpret and implement the organisation's strategic intent within their own area of work. Puth (2002:209) also notes, in order to experience the benefits of strategic alignment employees must not only be able to turn their commitment into action, they must be empowered to do so. This means that employees must be allowed to make autonomous decisions in their own sphere of work and be enabled to put those decisions into action (Puth, 2002:209). Thus, rather than simply using top-down communication and control, strategic internal communication can achieve strategic alignment in the organisation organically through the promotion of strategic dialogue on the organisation's strategic intent and related strategic issues.

4.3.2.2 Position and role of strategic internal communication

In order to achieve its purpose, strategic internal communication needs to be positioned as part of the strategic management of the organisation. This is because strategic internal

communication plays a role in the strategy development process (Verwey, 2003:2) as well as in the strategy implementation process.

Strategic internal communication plays a role in strategy development, by bringing the views and issues of internal stakeholders into the process (Steyn, 2007:139). Thus, it helps the organisation's strategic intent develop in a way that is aligned with the views and values of the organisation's internal stakeholders. In order to ensure that this occurs, the lead of the internal communication function requires relatively unfettered access to the senior management of the organisation (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:145). From a postmodern perspective, this also entails developing the culture and channels of communication among all internal organisational stakeholders where they can engage in the ongoing process of strategic development.

Second, strategic internal communication plays a role in strategy implementation by communicating the organisation's strategic intent to all internal stakeholders and ensures that they understand their role in achieving the organisation's mission and vision as embodied in its strategic intent. As Moynihan and Pandey (2006:131) note, "strategy process does not communicate itself, and to be fully exploited depends on effective channels of internal communication." In order to do this properly, the internal communicator again requires access to the senior management of the organisation.

From a postmodern worldview, these two roles are not easily separated. The reason is because, from this worldview, strategic management is not seen as a linear process whereby the organisation's strategy and strategic intent is first developed and then communicated to the organisation's stakeholder. Rather, as discussed in Chapter 3, postmodern strategic management is an ongoing process of strategy formulation and implementation which is constantly adapting to the complex and changing organisational environment. Thus, strategic internal communication is best seen as an ongoing process as well (Foreman, 1997:19). In this regard, strategic internal communication is concerned with developing a culture of ongoing communication (Foreman, 1997:18). As Ridder (2004:20) argues, a successful organisation requires a "community spirit within [the] organisation [that] falls in line with its strategic direction," and strategic internal communication's role is to foster this spirit. As a result, strategic internal communication

must emphasise dialogue between people instead of simple tools and techniques of communication (Foreman, 1997:18). Through this emphasis on dialogue, a higher level of strategic consciousness is developed within the organisation leading to increased strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:182). However, for this process to be successful, the internal communicator needs to be part of the strategic management of the organisation.

4.3.2.3 Knowledge of the internal communicator

The first necessary element for an effective strategic internal communication process is that the senior internal communicator within the organisation needs to have the knowledge of how to operate strategically. Grimshaw and Mike (2008:28) argue that one of the main reasons why organisations do not have effective strategic internal communication functions is because (i) leaders do not know what such a function would look like and (ii) existing internal communication staff are not strategic enough to establish one. This position is echoed by Steyn and Puth (2000:10) who identify a failure to see the big picture and think strategically about communication and its relation to the organisation's strategic intent as major shortcomings common among communication practitioners. Therefore, for internal communication to fulfil its strategic role, the senior internal communicator must have the knowledge of how to do so.

4.3.2.4 Content focus of strategic internal communication

In order to be strategic, internal communication needs to be focused on the organisation's strategic intent. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1), strategic intent is the heart of an organisation's strategy. It encompasses both the goal of the strategy, the direction that needs to be taken to get there and the purpose behind both (Puth 2002:188). It is the content of strategic internal communication. Puth (2002:196) identifies four key components of strategy that need to be communicated with all internal stakeholders in order to achieve alignment: the context within which the strategy develops, where the strategy is taking them, where they currently are and how they are going to get between the two. Therefore, if an organisation wants to align itself and ensure that all its resources and energies are focused in the same direction, it must have clear strategic intent.

When considering this question, the postmodern approach to strategic management makes it clear that the development of strategic intent is not a static activity but an ongoing process of dialogue and negotiation between an organisation and its stakeholders on strategic issue. As noted by Steyn and Puth (2000:63), part of the role of strategic communication is to monitor both the internal and external environments and identify key strategic issues for internal and external stakeholders from them. For strategic internal communication, this process means identifying key issues in the internal and external environment and engaging in dialogue on them on an ongoing basis (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:150). The nature of these issues, the speed at which they change and the potential effect they can have on the organisation make monitoring stakeholders and issues and inserting them into the strategic dialogue an important part of managing strategic internal communication. Thus, postmodern strategic internal communication is as much about aligning the strategic intent with the internal context of the organisation through strategic development as it is about aligning the organisation with the strategic intent through strategy implementation.

4.3.2.5 Definition

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the concept of strategic internal communication is not adequately reflected in the definitions in Table 4.1. None of these definitions emphasise the strategic functioning of internal communication. Therefore, this study develops its own definition of strategic internal communication as follows:

“the strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent.”

This definition incorporates the strategic intent as the content of the communication, and strategic alignment as its purpose. The position of the internal communication is implied in the term strategic management. This definition is equally valid from both a traditional and postmodern strategic management perspective. The difference between these two perspectives becomes evident in the process of strategic internal communication with the former being guided by linear top-down strategic management and the latter centred on promotion of dialogue and negotiation. This process, through which communication is managed in order to achieve strategic alignment, is discussed next.

4.3.3 Process of strategic internal communication

The literature, concerned with internal communication broadly and strategic internal communication specifically, identified a number of normative ideals for how this concept should be implemented in organisations based on communication and strategic management theories. The following discusses the main elements of these in more detail. In addition, given the postmodern worldview adopted for this study and the argument regarding the appropriateness of postmodern strategic management in INGOs, the implications of this on the various processes are also discussed.

4.3.3.1 Strategic orientation

To be effective, the process of strategic internal communication requires a strategic orientation. This strategic orientation is more than its strategic content, purpose, position and role and includes several components. First, as part of strategic communication, strategic internal communication must be integrated with the organisation's overall communication strategy. Second, as noted by Watson Wyatt (2004), strategic internal communication must be a formal process with its own strategy to ensure that it receives the attention and commitment necessary to be effective. Finally, the goals of the internal communication strategy must be informed by the overall strategic intent of the organisation (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). From a postmodern perspective, incorporating these three elements into the strategic internal communication process may not mean developing a static strategy, but rather involves regular and ongoing dialogue around the goals of internal communication and its relationship to the broader communication function and the strategic intent. It is by adopting this strategic orientation in the management of internal communication, that strategic internal communication is able to achieve its ultimate goal of aligning the organisation's employees with the organisation's strategic intent.

4.3.3.2 Leadership

Strategic internal communication requires leadership in order to be managed and implemented successfully. Oliver (2000:179) puts forth that any internal communication platform requires support from the top to be successful. Argenti and Forman (2002:154) identify the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the most valuable asset in employee relations, while Meyer and De Wet (2007:30) identify him/her as the most important factor

in fostering employee commitment. Similarly, Yeomans (2006:345) notes that the communication approach of the organisation's leader is important for both the credibility and effectiveness of internal communication.

If the organisation desires employee participation and symmetrical communication, top management must show leadership in adopting this approach. For example, if the organisation wants to move from control management to enabling management, as discussed in Chapter 3, senior management needs to be committed to this process in both words and deeds. Puth (2002:210) argues that in order to be successful, an organisation's leader must live out certain values and principles including: integrity, adaptability, motivational capacity, visionary thinking, diversity learning, people developing and empowerment. Puth (2002:210) argues that a leader must be guided by these principles in order to provide the organisation with the integrity and consistency to make employees secure and develop the commitment necessary for full strategic alignment. The organisation's leadership must embrace value-based action, as discussed in Chapter 3, where the values of the organisation are not only stated, but are imbued in the actions of leaders. This means not only reflecting these values, and the values of the organisation, in their words, but also in their actions.

However, while managers and executives recognise the importance of effective internal communication, they often do little to bring it about (Tourish & Hargie, 2004:2). A study by Robson and Tourish (2005:220) found that the reason for many internal communication problems was "reluctance on the part of managers to, in practice, devote the time clearly required to build effective communication systems." In addition, the study found that the workload of senior managers decreased their ability to communicate effectively with employees, which in turn led to inefficiencies and more work. The conclusion is that effective internal communication requires the commitment of senior management in principle and in practice. In addition, internal communicators must consider the messages sent by leadership's actions and ensure that they reflect what is in their communication (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:152).

While the commitment of top management is important, it is not the only source of internal communication leadership. Line management and supervisors are an important source of

communication for employees. Thus, internal communication leadership at this level is important to establish two-way dialogues with employees, particularly in larger organisations. If line management does not reflect the values and goals of senior management, for example enabling management and value-based action, these messages will be lost. As Puth (2002:185) points out, strategic internal communication requires committed and inspiring leadership at all levels of the organisation. As a result, encouraging and facilitating communication leadership among senior and line management is an important component of managing strategic internal communication. It helps establish employee identification and concertive control.

4.3.3.3 Symmetrical communication and dialogue

The Excellence theory of Public Relations argues that public relations generally, and internal communication in particular, should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). Symmetrical communication involves the organisation engaging in dialogue with its publics with the goal not only of persuading those publics to its point of view but also being open to persuasion as well (Grunig & White, 1992:39). The reason symmetrical communication is important internally is because it helps build a participative organisational culture that increases employee satisfaction which in turn improves organisational performance (Grunig, 1992:532).

Despite the benefits of symmetrical communication, internal communication in organisations around the world has, for the most part, been one-way (Chen, 2008:172). As critics note (see McKie & Munshi, 2007), there are many practical issues in implementing symmetrical PR, including accusations that it is misleading in its promise of equality amid uneven power distribution. Therefore, symmetrical communication is seen as the normative ideal, if not the practical reality.

Despite the difficulties, there are means of developing channels that encourage communication across horizontal and vertical boundaries of the organisation. For example, Yeomans (2006:341) notes that internal communication practitioners can create and facilitate informal communication networks. It is these informal channels through which employees are most likely to obtain and communicate the most useful information (Jo & Shim, 2005:278). Similarly, line managers are employees' most trusted source of

information (Yeomans, 2006:341), thus, developing communication competence among managers (Verwey, 2003:2) is a key tool to developing open two-way flows of dialogue. Thus by working to develop open formal and informal communication at all levels of the organisation, strategic internal communication can foster the necessary culture and consciousness for the strategic process and strategic alignment to occur.

The postmodern worldview of strategic internal communication defines its role as encouraging ongoing dialogue on the organisation's strategic intent. As Puth (2002:209) notes, there is a need for "ongoing strategic discussion" to ensure all employees understand the organisation's strategic intent within their own context. Dialogue is also important for the development and adaptation of the strategic intent to changing contexts. Therefore it can be concluded that dialogue is an important component of strategic internal communication. As noted above, this dialogue needs to be symmetrical in order to engage with employees, increase their commitment to the organisation and ensure their identification with the organisation and alignment to its strategic intent.

4.3.3.4 Internal communication infrastructure

Internal communication infrastructure encompasses the channels and media of communication that are used internally within the organisation. These media need to be chosen, based on the goals and needs of the organisation, and not based simply on what tools are available (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:149). As noted by Asif and Sargeant (2000:306), this infrastructure includes both formal and informal channels of communication. Thus, strategic internal communication requires a holistic infrastructure, encompassing all the avenues of communication available in an organisation that serve the purpose of aligning an organisation's employees with its strategic intent. The channels of communication used impact on the ability of internal communication to achieve its goals (Quirke, 2002:169). Developing both formal and informal, local and international internal communication infrastructure is necessary to ensure effective communication with all internal stakeholders, no matter their position or location.

Each of the above elements of strategic internal communication requires consideration when determining how to manage this function within an INGO.

4.4 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN INGOs

No field of research has directly considered the application of strategic internal communication within INGOs. As Lewis (2007) identified, there is a lack of academic research on NGO management generally and internal management in particular. In addition, the nonprofit management literature generally ignores communication management (Kelly, 2000:88). Similarly, both organisational communication and public relations research rarely consider CSOs (Kelly, 2000:88; Lewis, 2005:340; for exceptions see Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006; Jenkinson *et al.*, 2005; Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009; Janse van Rensburg, 2003; Steyn & Nunes, 2001; Hewitt, 2006; Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007).

Meanwhile, development communication, defined as “all forms of communication that are used for the improvement of an individual, community or country’s material, cultural, social and other conditions” (Malan in Steyn & Nunes, 2001:30), is not concerned specifically with NGOs, but rather with the broader process of development in which multiple stakeholders are engaged - including local communities, local and national governments, international organisations as well as NGOs. As a result, no field of research has considered the role of communication within NGOs or INGOs.

While no field provides a complete theoretical background for strategic internal communication in INGOs, studies by Steyn and Nunes (2001) and Janse van Rensburg (2003) both determined that strategic communication was applicable and beneficial in the CSO context. It can thus be extrapolated that strategic internal communication can play an important role in addressing challenges and improving performance of INGOs. This is in line with the composite approach to NGO management, suggested by Lewis (2007:219), where principles from business management, like strategic internal communication, can be incorporated into NGO management given proper consideration to their unique context and needs.

In this respect, the unique characteristics of INGOs do pose certain considerations, barriers and challenges for strategic internal communication. This section discusses these, particularly as they relate to the context, form, structure, culture and workforce of INGOs.

In addition, several communication challenges for INGOs are also considered. Attention is also given to how strategic internal communication can help overcome some of these barriers. Finally, as noted by Peruzzo (2009:665), for civil society organisation, strategic communication is not just about meeting the organisation's need but about engaging with citizens and encouraging their participation in meeting their own needs and thus the goals of the organisation. Therefore, the use of a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication with its incorporation of dialogue and negotiation is appropriate and is given particular consideration in this section.

4.4.1 Context-related barriers and challenges

As was discussed in Chapter 2, INGOs operate within the development field, often in the South, and also in the international arena. The result is that, as Anheier (2005:349) notes, INGOs do not have just one environment, but multiple, complex environments over which they have very little direct control. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, an INGO's context can pose various challenges to its management. For example, the INGO context is filled with multiple stakeholders who have conflicting expectations of the organisation (Chesters, 2004:326). Similarly, a changing global context, such as a financial crisis, as well as increased competition with global civil society, can have an effect on the amount, stability and diversity of funding available to INGOs.

Strategic communication is tasked with identifying stakeholders in the external environment and ensuring that their issues are taken into consideration during the strategy development and implementation process. As a result, an effective strategic communication function assists an organisation to both understand and adapt to its external context. From an internal perspective, Puth (2002:196) highlights the necessity of communicating with all internal stakeholders not only the strategic intent, but also the context within which the strategy develops in order to achieve alignment. By ensuring that internal stakeholders are aware of the external environment and how it impacts on the organisation, strategic internal communication ensures that the workforce is able to adapt to changing contexts, understands the reasons behind decisions and remains aligned behind the organisation's strategic intent.

While strategic internal communication can help address some of the challenges posed by the INGO's external context, its application is also affected by that context. For example, the INGO's funding environment can be a barrier for strategic internal communication in INGOs because it limits the available means for implementing the internal communication process. In addition, shifts in the external environment may require shifts in the organisation's strategic intent. As the strategic intent adapts to the changing environment, strategic internal communication is needed to keep the organisation strategically aligned. Being aware of and negotiating the complex context is necessary when developing an INGO's strategic intent. Similarly, aligning an organisation with its strategic intent requires awareness of the external environment in order to adapt and understand the reasoning behind strategic decisions. As a result, organisational context is an important challenge and consideration for the management of strategic internal communication.

4.4.2 Form-related barriers and challenges

Organisational form, as well as organisational context, is part of Lewis' (2007:219) conceptual framework for NGO management discussed in Chapter 3. Organisational form refers to the type of organisation, such as a business, a government agency or a CSO. As the composite model suggests, different organisational forms can require different management principles.

Chapter 2 identified several characteristics that distinguish CSOs from other organisational forms including: non-profit distributing, voluntary in nature, limited sources of revenue and operating on the basis of shared norms and values. These characteristics can lead to particular challenges. For example, one characteristic of INGOs is the scarcity of resources available to them. This leads to fragmentation within the sector and thus the challenges of increased competition. Another characteristic leads to difficulties establishing legitimacy because of the subjectivity of the values on which INGO missions are based and thus difficulty in ensuring that one is always perceived to be acting in accordance with them. As discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs often have ambiguous missions open to multiple interpretations which can lead to ambiguity, goal displacement, a lack of cohesion and even contradiction in their strategic intent as well as frustration among employees who cannot integrate the organisation's strategic intent into their work. This is a challenge that is at the centre of strategic internal communication's purpose.

Considering the theory of strategic internal communication discussed in section 4.3, it is clear that while this function is not the solution to all these challenges, it does have a role to play, particularly in addressing the last challenge with regard to ambiguous missions. Creating strategic alignment around a cohesive strategic intent is the main purpose of strategic internal communication. However, very few authors provide much guidance on the creation of the strategic intent. The reason is because internal communication is more commonly seen as playing a role in strategy implementation and not strategy development. However, as argued by Steyn and Puth (2000), as well as illustrated in Grimshaw and Mike's strategic communication maturity model (2008:30), strategic communication and strategic internal communication have a role to play at the strategy development level.

This role is to ensure that the views, values, issues and knowledge of external and internal stakeholders are taken into consideration during the development of the strategic intent. From the postmodern perspective, this means the use of stakeholder dialogue to ensure that internal and external views are taken into account. In this manner, the organisation will more likely end up with a strategic intent that has a common understanding and acceptance across a broader group of stakeholders. By viewing internal communication as a process, INGOs can negotiate the different interpretations of their mission and their values within the organisation. This helps to improve internal legitimacy and contributes to the establishment of external legitimacy.

By helping to build a more cohesive strategic intent around the INGOs mission and strategic alignment within the organisation, strategic internal communication can lead to improved organisational performance, thus creating a more competitive organisation in the hunt for resources. Similarly, an organisation that is internally coherent will be better placed to form partnerships and alliances without losing sight of its strategic intent. Thus while strategic internal communication is not the solution to the challenges posed by organisational form, it is a component thereof.

While strategic internal communication can help address the challenges posed by the INGO's form, INGO characteristics can also impact on how strategic internal communication is managed. For example, common INGO values, such as participatory

decision-making, equality and reciprocity, influence what management styles and practices are acceptable in these organisations and thus serve not so much as a barrier but as an influencer of strategic internal communication. Therefore, it is necessary not only for the organisation's strategic intent to reflect its values, but the management of strategic internal communication must reflect them as well.

4.4.3 Structural barriers and challenges

Organisational structure was introduced in Chapter 3 where it was defined as “the formal, systematic arrangements of the operations and activities that constitute an organisation, and the interrelationships of those operations to one another” (Organ and Bateman in Rollinson, 1993:272). As was illustrated in Table 2.5, Van Tulder & Van der Zwart (2006:65-67) identified three different organisational structures common to INGOs: global organisation - federation and network. Organisations adhering to these different structures also have different management structures with control either centralised, diffused or decentralised.

As discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs face the challenge of balancing the need to be flexible and adaptable with the need to remain focused on pursuing a cohesive strategic intent. In addition, strategic internal communication requires both horizontal and vertical communication. INGO structures can make this challenge difficult. Often, structures are organised along vertical lines making cross-functional communication difficult (Niemann, 2005:166). Programme silos and isolated work units can pose barriers to establishing strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:203). This problem is further compounded by INGO funding structures which, as discussed in Chapter 3, often are tied to specific programmes. This encourages the silo mentality where each programme looks out for itself at the expense of the organisation as a whole. This type of structure can lead to bureaucracy and silos that prevent the development of a cohesive strategic intent; however, care must be taken because an overly flexible structure can lead to mission displacement.

In addition to providing a challenge for strategic internal communication to overcome, already established management structures can also dictate how strategic internal communication is managed in the first place and thus pose a barrier to its effective

implementation. For example, in Figure 4.3, Quirke (2002:211) identifies nine different options for managing strategic internal communication given structural characteristics.

Figure 4.2: Different options for managing internal communication

	Centralisation	Central coordination	Decentralisation
Monolithic	1. Dictate	2. Integrate	3. Cooperate
High-profile portfolio owner	5. Lead	5. Network	6. Negotiate
Low-profile portfolio owner	7. Frame	8. Coordinate	9. Influence

Source: Quirke (2002:211)

Quirke (2002:211) identifies how each of the nine options for managing internal communication is appropriate for organisations with a particular structure and profile. Some of these options, particularly ‘dictate’, would not be appropriate in a postmodern approach to strategic management and thus poses a barrier in INGOs with those structural features for the implementation of strategic internal communication.

Structure both guides and is guided by strategic internal communication. While strategic internal communication cannot solve problems of structure on its own, it can, as part of a broader strategic communication function, help mould an organisation so that it is focused on its strategic intent with increased awareness of its environment. As discussed in Chapter 3, structure in INGOs can be seen as flexible and arising from the interplay of various tensions inherent to this organisational form. Negotiating these tensions is thus necessary in order to align the organisational structure with the organisation’s strategic intent. For example, Mounter (2003:268) suggests the establishment of ‘non-negotiables’ within the internal communication strategy that must be adopted by all components of an organisation. Outside of these non-negotiables, local branches of the organisation can be flexible in adapting to their particular circumstances and environment. By encouraging a central focus on strategic intent, strategic internal communication provides a centre point around which an organisation can achieve flexibility without loss of focus.

A second consideration for the application of strategic internal communication is the structure of the communication function. Within an INGO, whether the function is centralised at headquarters or diffused among local offices, it can impact on the abilities of

this function to engage in effective strategic internal communications. For example, if the communication function is only established at international headquarters, aligning country offices may be difficult if they do not feel they have a vested interest in the function.

Appelbaum and Belmuth (2007:244-245) identify two models for implementing public relations (and within that internal communication) in international organisations: the global model and the multinational model. In the global model, an overall communication strategy is superimposed on all national markets with allowances for local adaptations, while in the multinational model distinctive strategies are implemented in each market. The global model is more in line with strategic internal communication because, as Anderson (quoted in Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:245) argues, it ensures that all the communication functions in all the different markets are interrelated.

Mounter (2003:268) provides a suggestion for creating a structure for the internal communication function in international organisations that overcomes the top down approach of the global model. The key point that he proposes is the creation of communication networks to support local management in taking ownership of the internal communication function. This helps to ensure commitment at the local level and prevents the appearance that it is simply being imposed from headquarters. In this manner, it ensures that all communication in the organisation, no matter where it is located in the world, is still centred on the organisation's strategic intent and core values, thus maintaining the organisation's reputation, while at the same time ensuring adaptation to local contexts. Consideration of these structural barriers is required in order to manage strategic internal communication in INGOs

4.4.4 Cultural barriers and challenges

Chapter 3 introduced the concept of organisational culture which comprises “the set of key norms, values, beliefs, and understandings shared by members of an organisation” (Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2008:155). A shared culture that reflects the organisation's values encourages employee identification and boosts commitment to the organisation resulting in improved organisational performance. However, as Lewis (2007:113) notes, NGOs generally do not have a single culture but rather multiple cultures centred on different job tasks and nationalities. Managing these different cultures is a challenge for strategic internal communication.

As noted in Chapter 3, an organisation's culture can be a liability when it stands in contradiction to those actions that would improve an organisation's performance (Robbins, 2002:234), such as the consideration of strategic internal communication. A bureaucratic culture, with leaders and managers who tend to value themselves and their particular domains over the well-being of the organisation as a whole, is not conducive to strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:90). Cultural attitudes that reflect the 'this is the way we do it and we see no reason to change' sentiment lead to resistance to change (Niemann, 2005:172-174) and the implementation of new ways of looking at processes such as strategic internal communication.

In addition to the possibility of these static cultural attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs also often have cultures focused on action, where it is more important to be doing something than necessarily taking the time to make sure it is either effective or efficient (Lewis, 2007:113). This can be detrimental to the development of an organisation-wide learning, strategic consciousness and thus strategic alignment as well as to strategic internal communication itself. Strategic internal communication, like many other communication and marketing functions, is focused on long-term results (Burnett, 2007:16). This means that investment in strategic internal communication may not see a return, in terms of organisational performance, for a significant period of time. This lag between investment and results makes strategic internal communication less appealing in a culture focused on action. As a result, an INGO's culture can be a barrier to the establishment of effective strategic internal communication.

In order to succeed, an organisation must align its culture with its strategic intent. However, culture is difficult to change and very little insight is provided into how it can be modified through strategic internal communication. One common element among authors (Mounter, 2003:268; Watson Wyatt, 2004; Grimshaw & Mike, 2008) is the need to ensure managers act in accordance with the organisation's strategic intent. It can be hypothesised that this tactic, along with adopting internal stakeholders within the strategy development process and aligning stakeholders behind a single strategic intent, would contribute to creating an adaptive culture that reflects the organisation's strategic intent. Hewitt (2006:81) identifies a communication climate based on openness, mutual respect and trust and in which employees have a voice as well as effective line manager communication as

key to effective internal communication. By shaping these elements, strategic internal communication can play a role in building an open and adaptive culture. Culture is complex and changing and it requires involvement from all sides of an organisation, and strategic internal communication is an important component of the process.

Unfortunately, as already discussed, changing culture can be a difficult process. Therefore, the management of strategic internal communication must not only consider its role in shaping an adaptive culture through which strategic alignment can occur, but the fact that strategic intent and strategic internal communication also need to fit the existing culture. Melcrum (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008) identifies culture as playing a key role in the success of internal communication. Similarly, Mounter (2003:268) recognises the need to adjust internal communication to nuances of different national and organisational cultures. As a result, organisational culture is a necessary consideration when determining how to manage strategic internal communication.

4.4.5 Workforce-related barriers and challenges

In Chapter 2, several characteristics of the CSO workforce and INGO workforce were identified. These characteristics include a strong commitment to the INGO mission, lower than market-level remuneration, a mixture of paid and voluntary employees and diversity in terms of nationality, culture and work tasks. The composition and characteristics of this workforce can cause a variety of management challenges. For example, there is the need to manage communication across geographical distances between headquarters and field offices, as well as across cultural differences. There are also the challenges of having both an expatriate and local staff, often with different commitment levels, salaries and lengths of service. Finally, there is the challenge of developing a workforce that has continuity as well as the necessary international outlook to carry out the organisation's strategic intent. Overall, the diversity of the INGO workforce can have negative effects on workforce productivity and overall performance of the organisation, but it can also have positive effects in terms of creativity and innovation.

The internal communication literature from the communication management perspective has largely considered employees as a single, homogenous public both within and across organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007:181). However, as advocated by a stakeholder

perspective and Steyn and Puth's (2000:63) model for developing a communication strategy, there is a need to conduct research to understand the internal audience when managing and planning internal communication. In addition, the postmodern worldview makes clear that the diversity between and within organisations is an important consideration. For example, a study by Chen (2008) illustrated how the organisational culture within Chinese firms makes it difficult for them to implement symmetrical internal communication systems advocated by scholars in the United States. Therefore cultural considerations need to be taken into account when implementing internal communication in offices in different countries.

Mounter (2003:268) similarly advocates for research of both local and global issues to understand cultural nuances within international organisations. Internal communication is particularly important in international organisations where organisations need to take advantage of the diverse backgrounds of their employees in order to be able to effectively coordinate locally and globally (Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:244). Through strategic alignment and dialogue, strategic internal communication can help improve understanding and cohesion among different staff as well as continuity of vision when staff come and go. In this manner, strategic internal communication has the ability to help address the challenges posed by the characteristics of the INGO workforce. The postmodern approach to strategic internal communication further assists in addressing these challenges because it calls for ongoing dialogue among all stakeholders. This dialogue helps to ensure that the diverse voices within the organisation are heard, while at the same time helping to develop a common understanding, no matter the cultural or work related differences, of the organisation's strategic intent. Through this process, the organisation is able to benefit from increased innovation while still maintaining a cohesive workforce.

A final workforce related barrier is the lack of strategic knowledge among internal communicators in CSOs and INGOs. This shortcoming among personnel is compounded by two factors. First, the limited financial resources of an INGO can make it a challenge for them to hire and retain sufficiently trained and experienced senior communication staff to guide strategic internal communication. Second, and also related to limited resources, INGO communication personnel often have to fulfil several roles (Burnett, 2007:17), often both internal and external communication or other less-related roles. The result is that

communication personnel, through a lack of training, predetermined mindsets or simply over-taxation, can themselves pose a barrier to the implementation of strategic internal communication. Overcoming personnel barriers requires real commitment from management as well as internal communication staff in order to develop the necessary resources to pursue strategic alignment through strategic internal communication.

4.4.6 Communication challenges

Strategic internal communication has the ability to assist an INGO deal with many of the organisational and internal management challenges associated with the INGO context, form, structure, culture and workforce, but it cannot solve them alone. When it comes to communication challenges, however, strategic internal communication can take the lead in finding solutions and changing those challenges into opportunities. This is particularly the case when integrated with external communication as part of a strategic communication programme. The following section discusses how strategic internal communication helps to address a variety of communication challenges.

4.4.6.1 Organisational reputation

In one survey, 80% of nonprofit organisations placed enhancing visibility and reputation as a major challenge (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:255). CSOs, including INGOs, face a broad range of demands from different stakeholders particularly the government, donors, beneficiaries and the general public (Anheier, 2005:370). The result is that it is difficult for CSOs to communicate a single consistent image or brand that satisfies the diverse groups of stakeholders who have varying degrees of contact with the organisation (Lewis, 2005:253). As Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2007:253) put it, “the multiple roles and stakeholders that global nonprofit brands must address make nonprofit brand building complex and challenging.” This challenge is further compounded by a lack of literature that considers the unique characteristics of international CSOs in relation to branding (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009:59) or reputation management.

A lack of a consistent brand or image can have negative consequences for INGOs and their reputation. Jenkinson, Sain and Bishop (2005:81) highlight the fact that a lack of a consistent brand can result in contradictory or fragmented stakeholder experiences with

the organisation. A consistent image is equally important within an organisation. As Hankinson (quoted in Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009:59) notes, a brand “unifies the workforce around a common purpose; acts as a catalyst for change; and contributes to the professionalism of the sector.” When employees are familiar with and share the values of the organisation, as evident in its brand, they enact these in their work which is critical in upholding the CSO’s reputation and in achieving its mission (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003:6).

Strategic internal communication creates a cohesive internal brand based on the organisation’s strategic intent, ensuring that when stakeholders interact with the organisation they receive a consistent experience. As Brown and Yoshioka (2003:6) note, when employees are familiar with and share the values of the organisation, as evident in its brand, they will enact these in their work which is critical in upholding the CSO’s reputation and in achieving its mission. It is the role of strategic internal communication to ensure that employees gain that familiarity. Both Quirke (2002:169-170) and Watson Wyatt (2004) note that, in order to embody the organisation’s values, and its strategic intent in their actions, employees need to go beyond awareness of those values and strategic intent to actual commitment.

It is in making that progression that one-way and two-way asymmetrical forms of communication come up short. As noted by Quirke (2002:170), to achieve commitment requires widespread participation in the process and a sense of ownership, something that can only be achieved through significant dialogue. Therefore, building commitment to an organisation’s strategic intent that leads to the desired action requires a postmodern strategic internal communication based on dialogue and negotiation.

It should be noted, however, that to create a consistent internal and external image for the organisation and maintain its reputation the internal communication function must be closely integrated with external communication functions within a programme of strategic communication. This principle is reflected by Mellor and Dewhurst (2008) who note the importance of effective partnerships with other communication-related departments in order to achieve the desired results of this function.

4.4.6.2 Realistic expectations

INGOs are in the ironic situation of being the sort of organisation from whom great results are expected while, at the same time, undertaking the sort of work where results are very difficult to identify and quantify. Thus, INGOs face the dual challenge of finding ways of communicating successes while creating realistic expectations among their stakeholders.

INGOs face high expectations in a variety of areas. As organisations, the public generally expects them to rely largely on volunteers or hard-working professionals who require only minimum compensation because of their unwavering commitment to a particular cause (Carson, 2002:430). Their resources are expected to go primarily to beneficiaries and programmes with very little for overhead and administration costs (Carson, 2002:431). As Lewis (2005:253) notes, “the public seems to expect that such organizations will and should accomplish their missions without spending much on themselves.” At the same time, INGOs are held to a higher ethical standard than government or business (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:226) and a scandal in one INGO, generally tarnishes the reputations of all (Carson, 2002:431). Meanwhile, the previous idealised view of INGOs as the key to development is now giving way to a view of INGOs as failures (Lewis 2007:228). Thus, there is a greater need to manage public expectations to ensure ongoing support and the long-term survival of INGOs. Thus this process poses an ongoing communication challenge for these organisations.

The difficulty INGOs often have in both creating realistic expectations and communicating success with their stakeholders can lead to frustration for their internal stakeholders if their expectations for the organisation are not met, or if they feel they are not meeting the expectations of the organisation or of the broader public. Strategic internal communication can address this challenge by managing the expectations internal stakeholders have of the organisation. As Puth (2002:196) highlights, this function must communicate the context within which the strategy develops, where the strategy is taking them, where they are currently and how they are going to get between the two. By communicating these four elements of the organisation’s strategic intent, strategic internal communication ensures that employees understand the reasoning behind the strategy, the current position of the organisation, its long term goals and the plan for reaching them. Also, by actually contributing to the development of that strategy through dialogue, employees’ identification

with the strategy increases. In this manner, employees develop realistic expectations for the organisation and are better able to evaluate its success and understand any setbacks.

In addition, strategic internal communication helps address this challenge by communicating the organisation's expectations of its internal stakeholders. As highlighted by Watson Wyatt (2004), a key component of strategic internal communication is to link employees' particular areas of work with the organisation's strategic intent. This is supported by Puth (2002:196) who notes that it is important to "translate the issues to make sense in your [employees'] own context". As a result of this process, internal stakeholders understand how they fit into larger strategic picture and are thus better able to prioritise their work in line with the expectations the organisation has of them.

4.4.6.3 Information and knowledge management

Lewis and Madon (2004:117) identify three types of information that NGOs require to operate effectively: information about their work on the ground, information about their context and information about inputs and outputs to ensure the efficient use of resources. However, the information in NGOs is often fragmented and rarely formalised, (Hume & Hume, 2008:130) and the nature of information makes it difficult in the current climate of change and complexity for NGOs to determine what information is actually useful and how it should be used (Lewis, 2007:213). The problem is compounded in many INGOs by the high turnover of volunteers and employees (Hume & Hume, 2008:130), an organisational culture that restricts information flow, a geographically scattered and compartmentalised workforce and the role of power between an INGO and its stakeholders that results in a rejection of information that does not 'fit' their worldview (Lewis, 2007:214). Therefore, managing information and knowledge in INGOs is challenging.

Fundamentally, managing information and knowledge requires "a system of formal and informal communication within an organization" (Lewis & Madon, 2004:118). Strategic management is concerned with the development of processes needed to support organisational goals (Hume & Hume, 2008:129). While strategic internal communication is not focused on the day-to-day management of information, it plays a role in ensuring that the organisation, its culture and its structure can address the challenges of this process.

Verwey *et al.*'s communication triad at work (Figure 5.6) notes the importance of horizontal and vertical communication. In particular, they note the contribution of horizontal communication to both innovation and the development of employees' abilities to achieve their organisational goals. Therefore, horizontal communication is important for achieving an organisation's strategic intent. Strategic internal communication helps build structures for horizontal communication by promoting dialogue and understanding throughout the INGO. As each programme gains a better understanding of the strategic intent, it is better placed to see how the information it holds may be useful to other parts of the organisation. In this manner, strategic internal communication helps to build the underlying processes needed for managing and sharing knowledge and information.

The various challenges discussed have the potential to be mitigated through strategic internal communication. By encouraging strategic dialogue throughout the organisation, strategic internal communication has the potential to build a consistent vision and understanding of the organisation that helps to develop realistic expectations and increase the sharing of information throughout the organisation. In this manner, strategic internal communication can help improve the performance of an organisation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Strategic internal communication is conceptualised in this study from the communication management approach as well as the stakeholder perspective because it is concerned with the managed use of communication and views the organisation as both affected by and affecting multiple stakeholder groups. More specifically, strategic internal communication is a subset of strategic communication which means that it has a role to play at the highest levels of an organisation and is focused on strategic alignment.

Strategic internal communication is as important for the performance of an INGO as for any other organisation. INGOs face several communication challenges which an effective strategic internal communication function can help address. At the same time, there are several barriers to the establishment of such a function that can impede progress in this regard. Overall, strategic internal communication offers the opportunity to INGOs to address many of the challenges they face.

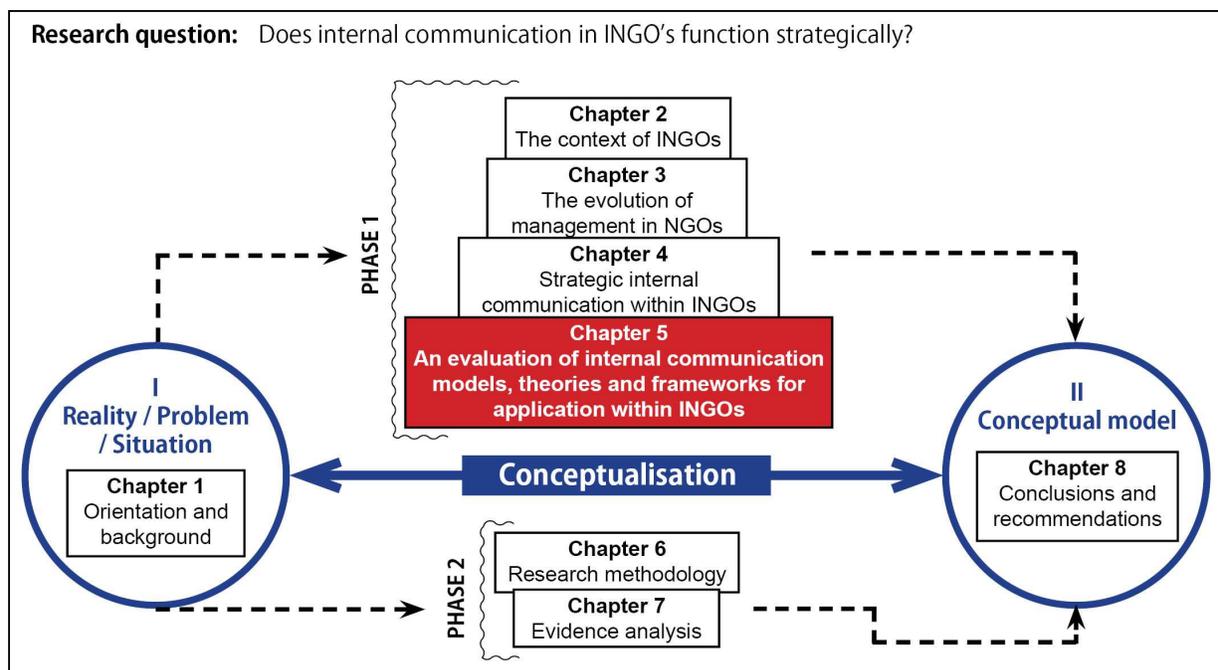
Chapter 5

An evaluation of internal communication models, theories and frameworks for application within international non-government organisations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 provided the contextual background for the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs. Meanwhile Chapter 4 introduced the concept of strategic internal communication and how it could help INGOs address the challenges they face. Against the backdrop of these discussions, this chapter focuses on the models, theories and frameworks of internal communication, considering how well they support the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs developed in Chapter 4. Figure 5.1 illustrates the position of Chapter 5 in relation to the other chapters.

Figure 5.1: Chapter 5 in relation to the other chapters



The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs against which the models, theories and frameworks for internal communication will be evaluated. The second section explains and

critiques the models, theories and frameworks. The chapter concludes with an overview of all the models, theories and frameworks discussed and comments on them with regards to the normative ideal.

5.2 A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Several authors have proposed various theories, frameworks and models for internal communication and different elements thereof. However, no particular theory, framework or model appears to have heavily influenced the later literature around internal communication. This chapter aims to evaluate these models, theories and frameworks based on the normative ideal for strategic internal communication developed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 laid out how internal communication should look to play a strategic role and the opportunities it would fulfil if it were implemented in INGOs based on the normative ideal. Fulfilling this ideal for INGOs involves two elements:

1. *Strategic internal communication*
 - a. *Strategic*: To be strategic, internal communication must be centred on the organisation's strategic intent with the purpose of strategic alignment. The communicator must also be in a position to be part of strategic management and play a role in both strategy development and implementation.
 - b. *Process*: To be effective, strategic internal communication needs to incorporate certain elements into its process, notably: an internal communicator with strategic knowledge, a strategic orientation, leadership commitment from both senior and line managers, symmetrical communication and dialogue around strategic issues and a holistic internal communication infrastructure.
2. *INGO context*: To be applicable in an INGO, strategic internal communication needs to take into consideration the challenges posed by the INGO's context, form, structure, culture and workforce as well as the communication challenges they face.

The models, theories and frameworks discussed in this chapter will be evaluated against this framework to determine their fit with the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs, and whether they offer any additional insights into this process.

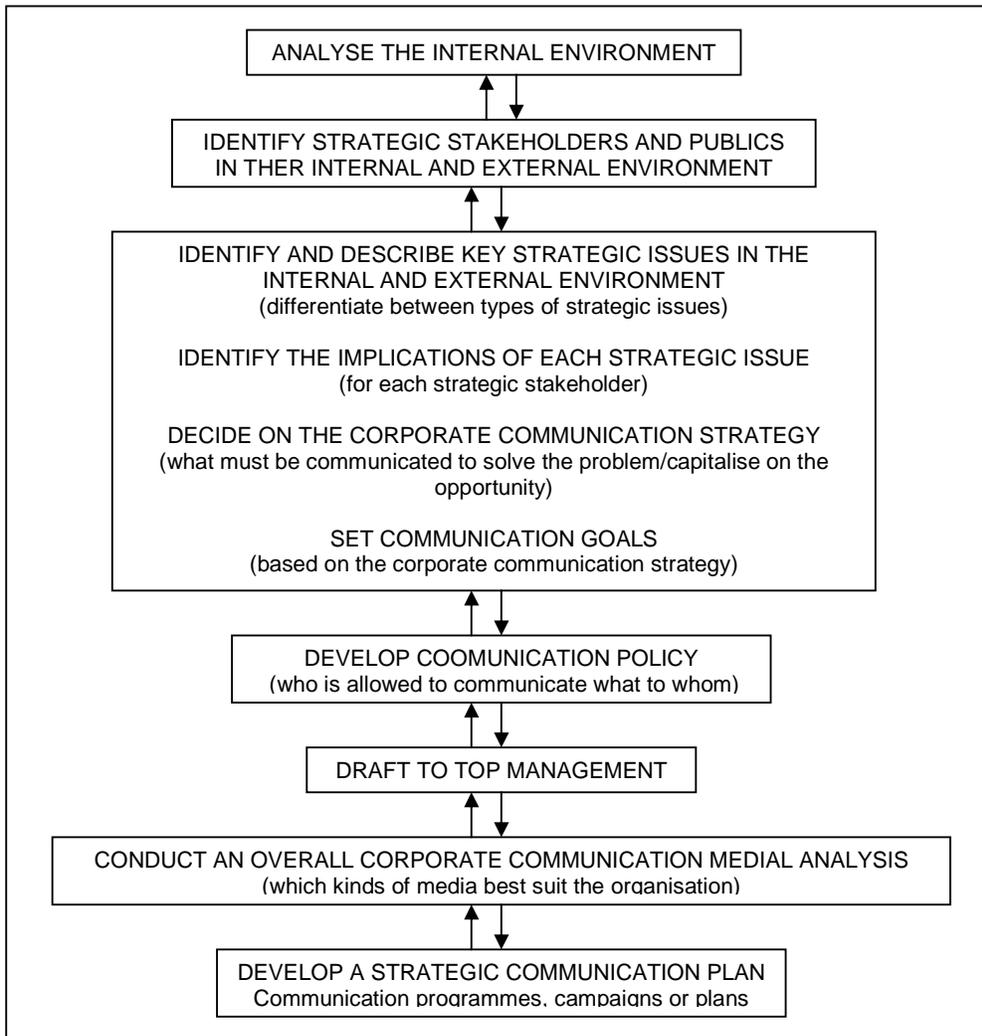
5.3 CURRENT THEORIES, MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

In the literature, there are several models and frameworks that relate to internal communication. However, in a review of the literature, the majority of these models have only been considered in a very limited setting or only within the theoretical domain. As a result, there is no generally agreed upon model of strategic internal communication. This section reviews the various models, theories and frameworks individually in chronological order and evaluates them based on the criteria for the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs outlined in the previous chapter. As each model, theory and framework does not use the same conceptualisation of internal communication nor focus on the same aspects thereof, they are not specifically compared with each other but rather insights are drawn from each to build a better understanding of the management of strategic internal communication.

5.3.1 Steyn and Puth's (2000) strategic communication theory and model for developing a corporate communication strategy

Steyn and Puth's (2000:63) book entitled *Corporate Communication Strategy* provides significant input into the theory of strategic communication. In relation to this study, it helps to illustrate both the relationship of strategic communication to strategic internal communication as well as some of the key principles of both concepts. Their model for developing a corporate communication strategy, Figure 5.2, illustrates many of their key principles.

Figure 5.2: Model for developing corporate communication strategy



Source: Steyn and Puth (2000:63)

5.3.1.1 Explanation

It is clear from Figure 5.2 that strategic communication incorporates communication with internal stakeholders within its framework by its emphasis on both the internal and external environment. While Steyn and Puth's theory and model are focused on strategic communication overall, they illustrate several key components of strategic internal communication. First, by placing 'Analyse the internal environment' at the top of their model, Steyn and Puth (2000:63) emphasise the importance of this environment to all communication. The internal environment includes the organisation's mission and vision (which form the basis of its strategic intent) as well as other elements such as its culture

and values. Figure 5.2 also emphasises the importance of identifying key stakeholders and the issues that affect them. It is through this identification process that the organisation is able to build and maintain effective relationships with each group (Steyn and Puth, 2000:66). Several other important elements in this model of strategic communication include the identification of top management acceptance as a key component of the process, the need to evaluate the infrastructure or media used for communication and the identification of the process as a two-way undertaking.

5.3.1.2 Critique

Steyn and Puth's model for developing a corporate communication strategy is based on a foundation of strategic communication theory they developed in their book. This strategic communication theory provides the foundation for this study's understanding of what it means for internal communication to operate strategically. This is emphasised in the model in figure 5.2 where strategy and strategic intent are embedded into the content of the corporate communication strategy and where the involvement of top management is clearly noted as part of the process. While not entirely evident in the model, Steyn and Puth (2000) clearly emphasise in their theory the importance of the senior communication being positioned to take part in the strategic management of the organisation and possessing the knowledge to operate strategically at that level. Steyn and Puth's theory of strategic communication also identifies most of the key criteria for determining the normative ideal of how internal communication should operate at the strategic level.

Steyn and Puth's theory of strategic communication and model for developing a corporate communication strategy highlight some elements of the communication process as well. For example, the model clearly shows the need for strategic orientation and the identification and consideration of strategic issues. Similarly, Steyn and Puth (2000) emphasise the need to ensure the involvement of senior management in the communication process. However, while the elements of strategic communication identified by Steyn and Puth (2000) are applicable to internal communication, the unique nature and intensity of the relationship between internal stakeholders and the organisation indicate that additional factors may need to be considered. While Steyn and Puth (2000) provide the foundation for understanding the strategic aspect of internal communication, they do not provide the necessary detail for understanding the complete process within the

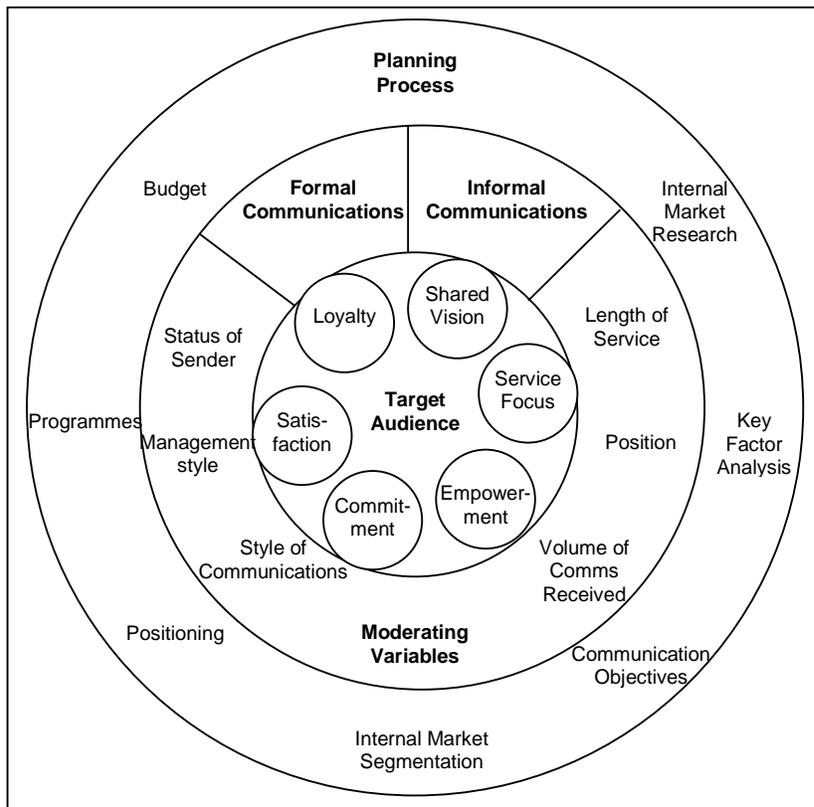
organisation. It should be noted, however, that strategic internal communication is not separate from strategic communication because as Steyn and Puth (2000:66) point out, communication with different stakeholder groups must be integrated in order to be effective. Rather, strategic internal communication is one key component of the broader strategic communication process.

A study by Steyn and Nunes (2001) established the applicability of Steyn and Puth's (2000) strategic communication theory to a community development organisation. Similarly, Figure 5.2 notes the importance of analysing the internal and external environment, a process that would bring into focus many of the challenges posed by the INGO's context, form, culture and workforce. Therefore, Steyn and Puth's strategic communication theory and model for developing a corporate communication strategy would have relevance within the INGO context. However, it does represent a relatively structured and top-down approach to communication, particularly if it were strictly implemented within the internal environment. An increased emphasis on dialogue and negotiation would make it fit better with the INGO values (in many cases) of participatory communication as well as help build a consistent brand for the organisation to which all its internal stakeholders are aligned.

5.3.2 Asif and Sargeant's (2000) model of internal communication

Using an inductive methodology and focusing on the financial services sector, Asif and Sargeant (2000) developed a model for internal communication which provides more detail on the elements involved in the internal communication process. Their model is presented in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Model of internal communication



Source: Asif & Sargeant (2000:306)

5.3.2.1 Explanation

Asif and Sargeant’s model (2000:306) illustrates several elements of internal communication. The centre circle represents the target audience with the small circles the desired outcomes of the communication with the audience. The desired outcomes are: shared vision, service focus, empowerment, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty. The middle circle consists of the moderating variables to effective internal communication, notably the style of management and communication and the volume of communication received.

Finally, the outer circle represents the internal communication planning process. One component of the planning process identified in the model is internal market segmentation. This is an important component because often organisations treat all employees the same, which can result in a deluge of information that they do not necessarily require (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:303). In addition, the notation of formal and informal communication in the

middle circle acknowledges that internal communication involves the facilitation of informal as well as the use of formal communication channels (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:308).

5.3.2.2 Critique

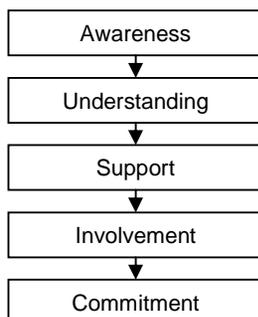
While Asif and Sargeant's model illustrates several important elements of internal communication, it is lacking in strategic theory. In particular, it does not draw a clear link between the overall strategy of the organisation and the internal communication process. The only element that hints at strategy is the inclusion of 'shared vision' as a goal, indicating a desire to achieve strategic alignment. However, overall, the model does not reflect any recognition of the strategic contribution of internal communication.

In terms of the internal communication process, Asif and Sargeant's (2000:306) model does indicate a need for a holistic infrastructure and notes that management style plays an important role. However, it does not identify symmetrical communication and dialogue as a component of the strategic internal communication model nor does it identify any need to consider the context in which the internal communication occurs. Therefore, while their model may reflect the reality of internal communication within the organisations they studied, it does not reflect the normative ideal identified in the theory and literature around strategic internal communication and INGOs.

5.3.3 Quirke's (2002) progression of internal communication objectives

Focusing on the goal of internal communication, Quirke (2002:169) identified a line of progression for internal communication objectives (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Progression of internal communication objectives



Adapted from: Quirke (2002:169-170)

5.3.3.1 Explanation

Quirke's progression starts with awareness of organisational values, goals and strategy. Awareness can generally be achieved through one-way communication. The second goal is understanding, which involves more information than awareness and additional feedback to ensure that employees actually understand what they are being told. The third goal is eliciting support for the organisation's goals. This involves more explanation into the rationale behind organisation decisions so that employees, even if they do not like the decision, accept that it is happening and can support the logic behind it (Quirke, 2002:170). In order to elicit support, communication exchanges must be less formal and have room for continual discussion.

The fourth goal is involvement, which means engaging in dialogue to share thought processes and explore alternatives and best means of implementing organisational strategies. The final goal is commitment. Commitment results from "a sense of ownership, and this comes from having participated in the process" (Quirke, 2002:170). As a result, achieving commitment involves significant dialogue with employees that includes reviewing the pressures on the organisation and the different strategic options available.

5.3.3.2 Critique

Quirke's progression of objectives is based on the ultimate goal of strategic alignment among all internal stakeholders. However, his progression illustrates that it is easier to see the process as consisting of different stages which each employee or group of employees must first achieve in order to move on to the next stage. Thus Quirke's progression provides insight into how strategic alignment is achieved through strategic internal communication.

Quirke (2002:170) also provides support for the need for symmetrical communication and dialogue within the organisation in order to achieve strategic alignment. By noting that achieving the final goal, commitment, depends on symmetrical dialogue around strategic intent, Quirke supports a postmodern strategic management process which, as discussed in Chapter 4, fits the context and form of INGOs.

5.3.4 Mounter's (2003) framework for global internal communication

Mounter (2003) identifies several steps that are necessary for managing internal communication in an international context. These are presented in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5: Global internal communication

Seven steps to a global communication heaven:

- i. Senior management commitment
- ii. Evaluation/research of issues, both local and global, to uncover cultural nuances
- iii. Identification of the few, key messages
- iv. Creation of a communication network to support local management
- v. Identification of non-negotiables concerning delivery and feedback
- vi. Empowerment of local management and the communication network to deliver the messages and control feedback on them, to stimulate ownership
- vii. Engagement of management and leadership, at all levels, in a continuing process

Source: Mounter (2003:268)

5.3.4.1 Explanation

The first of the seven steps necessary for internal communication in international organisations identified in Figure 5.5 is senior management commitment, which has already been identified as necessary for effective internal communication in any organisation. Step 2 relates to the internal market segmentation and research noted in Asif and Sargeant's model (Figure 5.3), and is necessary for identifying the cultural difference among groups of employees and tailoring communication appropriately. Step 3, the identification of key messages, requires identifying the necessary elements of the organisation's values, strategic intent and goals that require communication to all employees no matter their location. Step 4 involves developing a communication network that includes representatives from local management in order to provide support for local strategic internal communication.

Step 5 is identifying the non-negotiables regarding how internal communication is conducted locally and what sort of feedback must be received internationally (Mounter, 2003:268). For an INGO, these non-negotiables may relate to the organisation's values, for example, if they require internal democracy, or to requirements from donors. Step 6 involves the empowerment of local management to control the internal communication locally, in line with the key messages and non-negotiables previously identified (Mounter, 2003:268). This is important because it promotes ownership and, in turn, commitment and

also because local management is better positioned to understand the cultural nuances of each location. Finally, Step 7 identifies internal communication as a continuous and evolving process which requires leadership and engagement at all levels of management.

5.3.4.2 Critique

The seven steps for global internal communication identified by Mounter (2003:268) are useful in understanding some of the considerations necessary for managing strategic internal communication in INGOs. As the only model found in the literature that specifically considers this function in an international context, its insights are unique in their application to this study. However, it lacks a foundation in strategic theory and does not consider the strategic contribution of internal communication to the organisation.

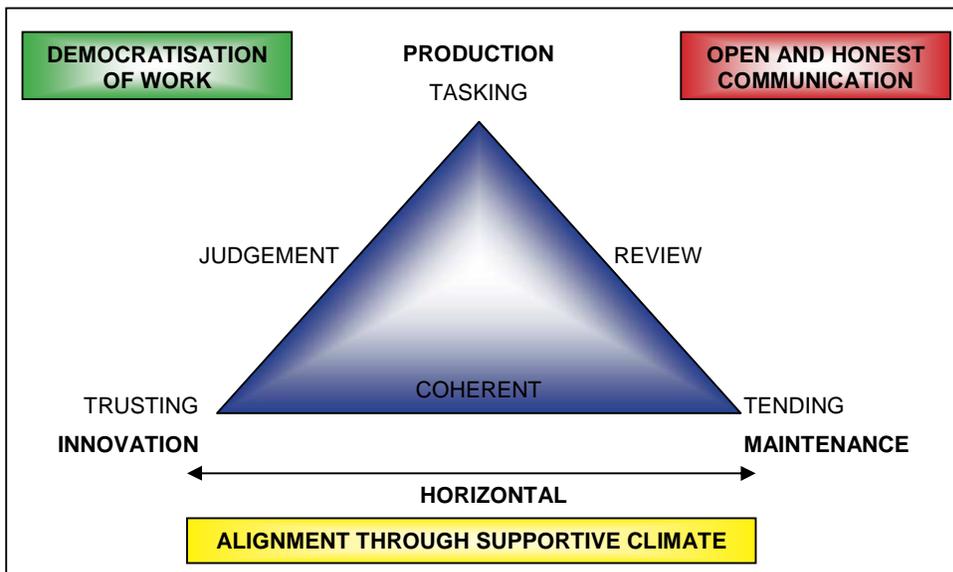
In terms of the internal communication process, many of Mounter's seven steps are in line with the overall model for strategic communication put forward by Steyn and Puth (Figure 5.2). For example, the identification of key issues and the need to obtain top management commitment are part of both frameworks. While Mounter (2003:265) does not identify symmetrical communication as a key component, he does note that successful organisation requires symmetrical dialogue, and not monologue, in the countries in which they work. He also advocates local empowerment and ownership of the process, with constraints, that suggests a need for dialogue. In addition, he notes that good global internal communication is seventy percent listening. Thus, the model of global internal communication (Figure 5.5) put forward by Mounter (2003) does include several of the normative elements of strategic internal communication discussed in Chapter 4.

With his focus on uncovering cultural nuances and empowering local management, Mounter's (2003) model provides insight into how strategic internal communication can be implemented within the INGO context.

5.3.5 Verwey, Du Plooy-Cilliers and Du Plessis' (2003) communication triad at work

Verwey *et al.* present a model (Figure 5.6) that helps to explain how strategic internal communication fits into the overall communication within an organisation.

Figure 5.6: The communication triad at work



Source: Verwey, du Plooy-Cilliers and du Plessis (2003:163)

5.3.5.1 Explanation

Verwey *et al.* use the ‘Triad of Work’ developed by Stamp (quoted in Verwey *et al.*, 2003:161) as the basis for their model. They associate each work function in the ‘Triad of Work’ with a specific communication function. Tasking is associated with production communication whereby information regarding tasks, roles and requirements is communicated. Trusting is associated with innovation communication wherein information is communicated that allows the organisation to plan and adapt to changes in its environment and through which employees are trusted with the responsibility of developing new ideas. Finally, tending is associated with maintenance communication wherein employees are recognised for their contribution and their development is supported in pursuit of organisational goals.

5.3.5.2 Critique

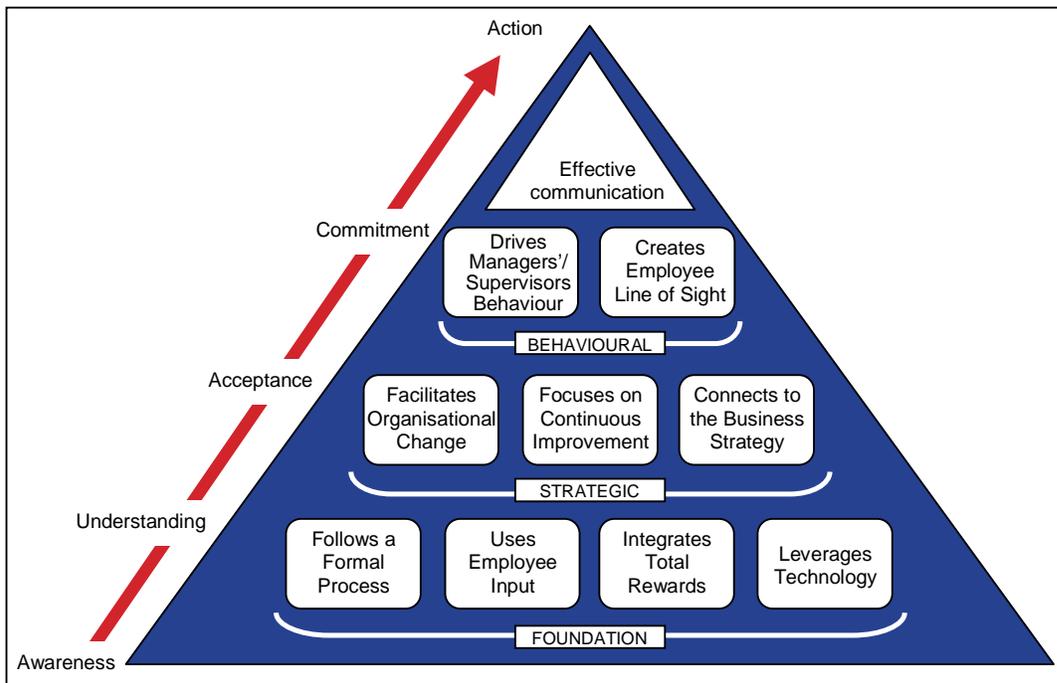
Through the process of tasking, tending and trusting, management creates a supportive climate based on a democratic workplace and open and honest communication through which employee goals are aligned with the goals of the organisation (Verwey *et al.*, 2003:163). Thus Verwey *et al.*’s model supports the strategic contribution of internal communication by focusing on strategic alignment and illustrating how strategic internal

communication depends on all aspects of communication in the organisation, including production, innovation and maintenance communication. However, their model provides little insight into the process of internal communication. In terms of the INGO context, the model supports a participatory environment based on symmetrical communication which is part of the normative ideal of strategic internal communication in INGOs.

5.3.6 Watson Wyatt Worldwide's (2004) hierarchy of effective communication

As Kelly (2000:88) notes, when a functional area is ignored in academic literature, practitioners often step in to fill the void. This is the case with internal communication, where consulting firm Watson Wyatt International has developed its own model for effective internal communication (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: Hierarchy of effective communication



Source: Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2004)

5.3.6.1 Explanation

The Watson Wyatt model highlights several elements of the internal communication function. To start with, it builds on the line of progression identified by Quirke (2002) for internal communication objectives. The progression goes from awareness to

understanding through acceptance to commitment and finally action, this last being a key addition. As Quirke (2002:48) notes, employees must not only understand the organisation's values and goals but "be able to convert that understanding into action." When employees are able to do this, they can take responsibility for decisions at a lower level because they will be aligned with the organisation's strategic intent. While neither Watson Wyatt nor Quirke makes the connection, identification, as discussed in Chapter 4, can be associated with achieving commitment and changing it into action.

The Watson Wyatt model (Figure 5.7) also identifies several key components for the management of internal communication. Firstly, they argue that the foundation of effective internal communication is a formal communication process, employee input, the linking of desired behaviour from employees and their compensation and the effective use of communication technology (Yates, 2006:73). At the strategic level, effective internal communication must facilitate organisational change, focus on continuous improvement and connect employees to the organisation's strategy. Finally, at the behavioural level, they argue that effective internal communication should communicate the organisation's vision so that it drives the behaviour of management and supervisors and develops a clear line of sight so that employees can understand how their jobs contribute to the organisation's goals and achievements (Yates, 2006:74).

5.3.6.2 Critique

The Watson Wyatt model recognises the strategic contribution of internal communication. It is based on a goal of strategic alignment and notes the importance of communicating around strategic intent and linking employees work with the overall strategy. However, the model does not indicate the position of internal communication, not just as part of strategic management for implementation purposes, but also for strategy development purposes.

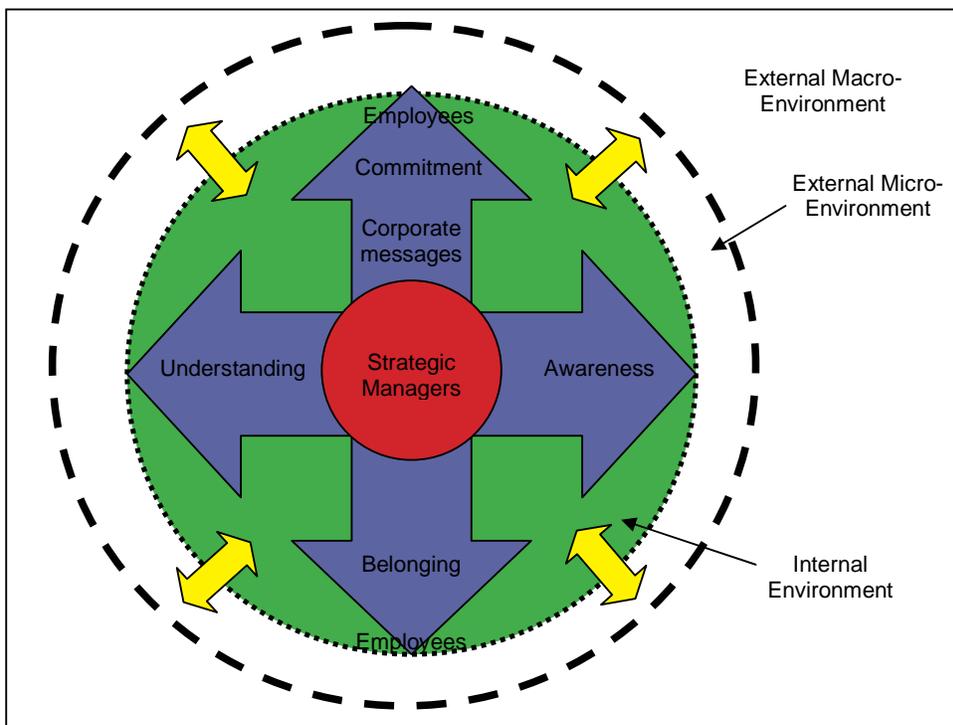
In terms of the internal communication process, the Watson Wyatt model includes several of the elements identified as part of the normative ideal. For example, it notes the necessity of engaging with senior executives as well as line managers as part of a formal internal communication process wherein internal communication develops its own strategy (Yates, 2006:74). However, the model is also missing certain components of the strategic internal communication process. For example, while it does identify employee input as part

of the foundation for effective internal communication, the overall model remains linear in approach and driven from the top down. As a result the principle and necessity for symmetrical communication is not apparent. Similarly, the model provides no consideration for the external context or internal culture, structure or workforce characteristics of the organisation. Therefore, the Watson Wyatt model does not appear to be appropriate for INGOs because it does not facilitate a postmodern approach that allows the values and other characteristics of an INGO to be taken into account.

5.3.7 Welch and Jackson's (2007) internal corporate communication model

Welch and Jackson (2007) put forward a model (Figure 5.8) to illustrate how their concept of internal corporate communication achieves its goals.

Figure 5.8: Internal corporate communication



Source: Welch and Jackson (2007:186)

5.3.7.1 Explanation

Welch and Jackson (2007:187) identify four goals for internal corporate communication: to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its

changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims. They argue that their four goals are achieved through communication from the organisation's strategic managers to all employees as symbolised through the arrows emanating from the centre circle. In contrast to the Excellence Theory of PR, they argue that this type of internal communication must, by necessity, be asymmetrical in large organisations, particularly because messages regarding organisational goals and strategy must be consistent throughout the entire organisation. The model also acknowledges the influence of the organisation's internal and external environment on internal corporate communication.

5.3.7.2 Critique

Welch and Jackson's model is based on a partial understanding of the strategic contribution of internal communication. While they identify four distinct goals for internal communication, their four goals are all necessary for aligning employees behind the organisation's strategic intent. They also recognise the importance of internal communication being positioned among the strategic managers of the organisation. However, their argument for asymmetrical internal communication is at odds with the theory on strategic communication and strategic internal communication, as discussed in Chapter 4. What their approach does not consider is the role that stakeholders, including employees, need to play in the development of the organisation's strategy and the role of the internal communicator in ensuring their views and issues are brought into the strategy development process.

Overall, Welch and Jackson (2007) do not specifically address many elements of the internal communication process. However, for the one element they do address, symmetrical communication, they do not acknowledge its importance for achieving strategic alignment at all levels and across all functions of the organisation. Welch and Jackson (2007:187) do acknowledge, as indicated by the double-headed arrows in Figure 5.8, that strategic internal communication should be underpinned by two-way symmetrical communication. However, they define the purpose of this as identifying what employees need to know; an asymmetrical purpose because it does not acknowledge that the organisation might be open to changing on the basis of the communication.

Welch and Jackson do acknowledge the role played by the organisation’s internal and external context and its influence on the internal communication process. In this regard, their model would assist in applying this process within an INGO. However, as it does not support a postmodern approach based on dialogue and negotiation, it is difficult to see how it would be able to address the many challenges faced by INGOs.

5.3.8 Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008) strategic communication maturity model

Grimshaw and Mike (2008) developed a model to measure the maturity of the strategic internal communication function in an organisation. This model is illustrated in Figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9: Strategic communication maturity model

Maturity Level	How internal communication drives business results...	Seat at the leadership table
1	... very indirectly, if at all, by delivering formal communication products to specs, efficiently and reliably (Tactical only)	None (internal vendor status only)
2	... by delivering formal communication products targeted at specific “know, believe, feel and do” outcomes (A strategic orientation limited to formal communication products)	Guest/Consultant (appear when summoned to participate in problem solving)
3	... by helping leaders manage meaning through symbolism (decisions and action, rewards and recognition), informal communication and formal channels and vehicles)	Trusted Advisor
4	... by promoting strategic alignment (driving leadership’s overall strategic communication objectives, effectively and credibly communicating strategy and engaging all employees around it)	Trusted Advisor and Senior Strategist
5	... by promoting organisational effectiveness (strategic alignment and cross-functional collaboration, coalition building, effective partnering, etc.)	Fully Integrated Senior Leadership Team Member (e.g. Chief Communication Officer)

Source: Grimshaw & Mike (2008:30)

5.3.8.1 Explanation

In their model, Grimshaw and Mike (2008) outline five levels of maturity for an organisation’s strategic internal communication function. Starting at level one and progressing to level five, the levels diagnose the maturity, or more specifically the strategic maturity, of an organisation’s internal communication function.

Each level outlines the position that people, processes, content and measurement need to attain in order to achieve that level of strategic maturity (Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:29). For

example, an internal communication function with a maturity level of one is efficient and reliable at delivering formal communication products but content-generation and other decisions are undertaken outside of the function. Meanwhile, an internal communication function with a maturity level of five is actively engaged in improving organisational performance through effective communication (Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:30-31). At this maturity level, the lead communicator plays an active role on the organisation's leadership team and marries his/her strong communication skills with a deep understanding of the organisation's strategic intent.

Grimshaw and Mike (2008:31) argue that their model helps an organisation identify its current internal communication maturity, its desired, or even required internal communication maturity level and the means to move from one to the other. They therefore put their model forward as a means of helping organisations generally, and internal communication practitioners in particular, develop more strategic internal communication functions. In this way, the model is designed to help organisations address the barrier posed by communication personnel who are not strategic enough, as discussed at the end of Chapter 4.

5.3.8.2 Critique

Similar to the Steyn and Puth model (Figure 5.2) and the Watson Wyatt model (Figure 5.7), Grimshaw and Mike's model (Figure 5.10) is based on a solid foundation of strategic thinking. They note that, in a function with a maturity at level three and above, strategic or "brand" alignment is key (2008:30). In addition, they also note the need for the senior communicator to play a role at the highest level of the organisation. Finally, Grimshaw and Mike's (2008) five levels of maturity reflect the need for internal communicators to possess the knowledge necessary to operate strategically.

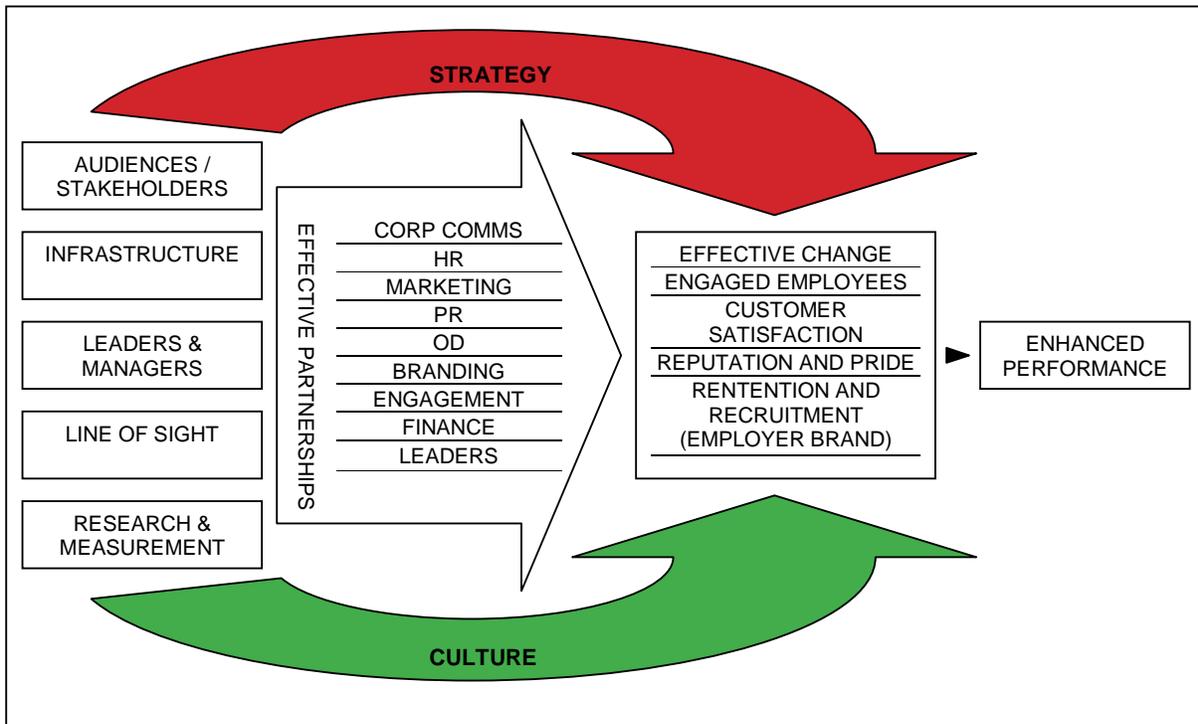
Grimshaw and Mike's model does not specifically address the internal communication process. However, it does emphasise the incorporation of formal and informal channels of communication, which they see playing a role in functions with a maturity level as low as two, and the incorporation of feedback within the function, which suggests a holistic internal communication infrastructure incorporating symmetrical communication. It does not preclude a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication which would help

INGOs address the challenges they face. However, their model does not consider the organisational and contextual elements that need to be considered in order to build a mature strategic internal communication function. As a result, while Grimshaw and Mike (2008) reflect the normative ideal of what a strategic internal communication function should look like, their model does not incorporate any consideration for the possibility of adaptations to meet the overall INGO context.

5.3.9 Mellor and Dewhurst’s (2008) framework for an effective internal communication function

Similar to Watson Wyatt International, consulting firm Melcrum developed its own model for effective internal communication. It is presented in Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10: Melcrum’s Framework for an effective internal communication function



Source: Mellor and Dewhurst (2008)

5.3.9.1 Explanation

Melcrum’s framework identifies five key elements as necessary for an effective internal communication function: audience/stakeholders, infrastructure, leaders and managers, line

of sight, and research and measurement. These five elements must work together through partnerships with multiple other departments of the organisation in order to achieve the five goals of internal communication: effective change, engaged employees, customer satisfaction, reputation and pride, and retention and recruitment (employer brand). Achieving these goals all then contribute to the overall performance of the organisation (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). The final component of the framework is that the entire internal communication must take place within the context of the organisation's strategy and culture.

5.3.9.2 Critique

The Melcrum Model (Figure 5.5) recognises the role of strategy – notably in the sense that all aspects of internal communication must be undertaken within the context of the organisation's strategy and that there is a need to create a line of sight between the strategy and the individual employees. However, the model does not identify the purpose of strategic alignment, nor does it position internal communication within the strategic management of the organisation.

In terms of the process of internal communication, the Melcrum Model does make several key contributions. Like Asif and Sargeant's model (Figure 5.4), it identifies audience and stakeholder research as an important component of the process, noting that internal communication needs to be tailored for different employee groups (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). This point is also similar to Steyn and Puth's model of strategic communication (Figure 4.2), where analysing the environment and identifying strategic stakeholders is key to strategic communication. Secondly, it identifies the internal communication infrastructure as a main component of the internal communication function (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). Infrastructure refers to the activities, process and channels that are used to implement strategic internal communication and these are thus important considerations for the management of the function. It also notes the need for effective partnerships, echoing the importance of taking a strategic orientation to the internal communication process which integrates it with the broader communication function. Finally, it recognises the importance of involving managers in the internal communication process (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008).

While the model does reflect many of the process elements of the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs, it does not identify employee input and symmetrical communication as components of the strategic internal communication process. As a result, the model is linear and top down in approach and does not adopt the postmodern strategic management approach identified as assisting INGOs address their particular challenges. However, the Melcrum model does demonstrate that internal communication is shaped by the organisation's culture as well as its strategy (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). This is an important contribution as it highlights the importance of the organisation's strategic intent, culture and values to the management of strategic internal communication. In addition, it shows consideration for the fact that different contexts, such as the INGOs, may have implications for internal communications.

5.4 OVERALL CRITIQUE OF THE MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

As can be noted from the previous section, no model, framework or theory found in the literature fully encapsulates the normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs discussed in Chapter 4 and outlined in section 5.2 above. The following will provide an overview of how the models, theories and frameworks discussed in this chapter integrate with three elements of the normative ideal: strategic focus, process and INGO context.

The strategic communication theory presented by Steyn and Puth (2000) provides the foundation for strategic thinking and focus behind strategic internal communication and outlines the content, positioning and knowledge required for communication to function strategically. The earlier models and frameworks, Asif and Sargeant's (2000: Figure 5.3) in particular, did not adopt a similar strategic focus to their conceptions of internal communication. Later models, such as Watson Wyatt's (2004: Figure 5.7), Welch and Jackson's (2007: Figure 5.8) and Melcrum's (2008: Figure 5.10), do indicate a shift towards more strategic thinking in the implementation of internal communication. However, it is only Grimshaw and Mike (2008: Figure 5.9) who identify all the elements of the normative ideal as integral parts of internal communication.

No one model, theory or framework discussed in this chapter identified all the necessary elements for an effective strategic internal communication process: a strategic orientation, leadership commitment from senior and line managers, symmetrical communication and dialogue and a holistic internal communication infrastructure. However, each of these did receive support from one or more models or frameworks. For example, Melcrum (Figure 5.10) and Watson Wyatt (Figure 5.7) both noted that strategic orientation, in terms of integration with an overall communications strategy and the overall orientation of the function, is an important component of effective internal communication. Similarly, Mounter's model (Figure 5.5), the Watson Wyatt model (Figure 5.8) and the Melcrum model (Figure 5.10) all identified commitment from senior leaders and line managers as part of an effective internal communication function.

In terms of symmetrical communication and dialogue, Quirke's framework (Figure 5.4), Verwey *et al.*'s model (Figure 5.6) and Grimshaw and Mike's model (Figure 5.9) embrace this approach to internal communication, although not the importance of it concerning strategic issues. Finally, in line with Steyn and Puth's identification of a media analysis as an important component of building a corporate communication strategy (Figure 5.2), Melcrum (Figure 5.10) identifies the infrastructure as an important part of the internal communication process. As a result, while the models provide support for the ideal process for internal communication, none reflects it in its entirety.

Several of the models, frameworks and theories identify elements that are useful to consider when looking at strategic internal communication in the INGO context. For example, both Asif and Sargeant (Figure 5.3) and Melcrum (Figure 5.10) identify the need to consider the audience, such as the INGO workforce and its characteristics, when implementing internal communication. In addition, Melcrum (Figure 5.10) notes the importance and influence of the organisation's culture on effective internal communication. Finally, Welch and Jackson place internal communication firmly within the internal and external context of the organisation, highlighting the impact of these two contexts on the internal communication process. However, it is only Mounter (Figure 5.5) who actually considers internal communication within a non-generic context, the international organisation. From this perspective, he saw the importance of understanding cultural

nuances and empowering local management, while, at the same time, maintaining non-negotiables across the organisation.

Overall, the models, theories and frameworks support the view that context including form, culture, structure and workforce characteristics could have an impact on strategic internal communication within INGOs. By ensuring consideration for context and a focus on dialogue that INGOs require, it is possible for strategic internal communication to help INGOs address their many challenges.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Strategic internal communication functions within the broader context of strategic communication and the organisation's context, form, structure and culture. The theories, models and frameworks discussed in this chapter highlight this fact, while at the same time providing more detail about the process of internal communication. While none of these models, theories or frameworks fully reflects the normative ideal for strategic internal communication developed in Chapter 4, they all provide support for one or more elements thereof. The next phase of this study will look at the current internal communication practices in INGOs, noting how closely actual practices reflect the normative ideal and identifying how to improve the strategic contribution of internal communication to help INGOs address their many challenges.

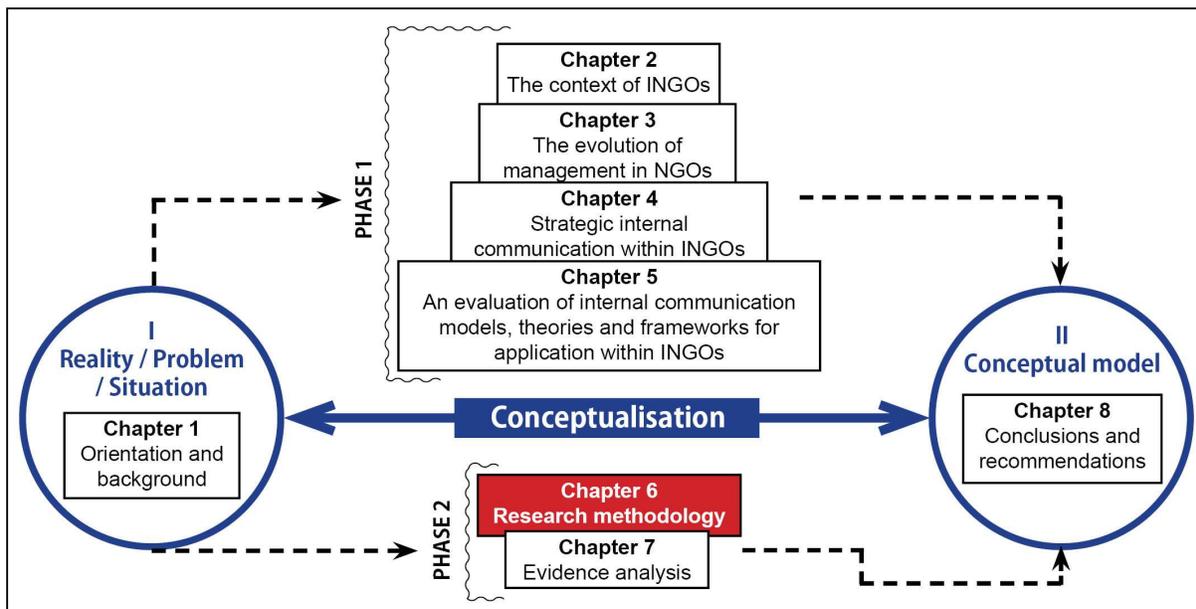
Chapter 6

Research Methodology

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the process for the empirical research phase of this study. As can be seen in Figure 6.1, this chapter is part of the conceptualisation process in the Mitroff *et al.* (1974) model of problem solving and focuses on the methodology through which an empirical understanding of the problem is developed. In addition, the decisions made with regard to the research design and method for this study were influenced by the research question and objectives and the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 1 as well as the theory that arose in Chapters 2 to 5. Figure 6.1 highlights this chapter's position in relation to the rest of this dissertation.

Figure 6.1: Chapter 6 in relation to the other chapters



The result of this influence is a qualitative approach to an exploratory multiple-case study research design. Within each case study, two qualitative research techniques were used to collect evidence from two sources: (i) semi-structured interviews with senior communicators and (ii) organisational documents. The evidence gathered is analysed

through four phases identified by Morse and Field (1995): (i) comprehending, (ii) synthesising, (iii) theorising and (iv) recontextualising.

The following sections describe the research design and methodology in more detail. They conclude with a description of the criteria necessary for rigorous qualitative research and how this study aims to meet them. Chapter 7 then describes the evidence collected and provides the individual and comparative case study analysis to complete the empirical phase of this study.

6.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

6.2.1 Exploratory

This study has an exploratory purpose because relatively little literature exists on the topic. Exploratory studies aim to clarify and improve understanding of a problem (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:133). Since, as illustrated in the previous chapters, there is relatively little literature on the strategic contribution of internal communication and more importantly on its role in the INGO context, an exploratory study is the best way to develop the necessary background for future investigations of this topic.

6.2.2 Qualitative

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it was appropriate for both the research problem and objectives and the conceptual framework adopted. Qualitative research seeks to understand the complex nature of phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95). In its simplest form, it uses words, images or anything non-numerical as its source of data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:470). However, the approach is much more complex than this suggests. Four characteristics of qualitative research make it a particularly appropriate approach for this study: (i) naturalism, (ii) the insider perspective, (iii) the level of detail and (iv) flexibility.

Naturalism refers to the fact that qualitative research techniques are better situated than quantitative research to examine phenomenon in their natural environments (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). Unlike the quantitative techniques which often try to isolate variables

from their environments, qualitative research seeks to understand events and phenomenon as they naturally occur (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:6). In this sense, qualitative research allows the research to obtain some form of direct experience of the phenomenon (Trochim, 2006). As a result, qualitative techniques are often embraced by interpretive, critical and postmodern scholars (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:163) because of the importance placed on context.

In addition to fitting the worldview of this study, naturalism is particularly relevant to the study topic as well. To start, strategic internal communication is a phenomenon that is firmly embedded within its environment. Secondly, since the purpose of the study is exploratory, the goal is to understand how strategic internal communication is 'naturally' occurring, not to test any interventions or specific variables.

Another characteristic of the qualitative approach, which makes it an ideal approach for a study with a postmodernist and social constructivist worldview, is its emphasis on the insider perspective. The insider perspective refers to the qualitative researcher's desire to view and understand the world through the eyes of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:6). In this study, that means that the researcher can investigate how those who actually manage strategic internal communication see it work. This is a characteristic appealing to the researcher with a postmodernist and social constructivist worldview because it places the focus on the perspectives of the participants and not the researcher. In particular, qualitative research fits the ontological assumptions of this study that reality is socially constructed based on each individual's perspective (Trochim, 2006).

As a direct result of its naturalism and insider perspective, qualitative research is able to provide a higher degree of detail of the research phenomenon within its context than quantitative research. Qualitative research thus enables the researcher to describe the research phenomenon in greater detail (Trochim, 2006a). It allows for the development of a fuller description of the subject than depending solely on quantifiable elements (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:472). Since the goal of this study is to explore the characteristics of the research problem, as opposed to finding a solution, achieving a high level of detail is a necessary condition for the success of this research.

Finally, qualitative research tends to be more flexible than quantitative research. It allows the researcher to be flexible in the inquiry in each particular context (Trochim, 2006b). As such, it is appropriate for an exploratory study such as this one because it allows the research to explore new avenues of research should they arise and prove relevant. In addition, the qualitative approach is cognizant of the role of the researcher in research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5) and is therefore in line with the value-conscious axiological position of this study.

6.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

6.3.1 Case study research

Case studies are often a good overall research design for exploratory studies (Gerring, 2007:79/43), such as this one. Yin (2003:13) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Yin’s definition emphasises a key characteristic of case study research, the importance of context. It is primarily because of this quality of case study research that this research design was chosen for this study.

The context of the research phenomenon or unit of analysis is a significant part of a case study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:281). As is emphasised in Yin’s (2003:13) definition, a case study is particularly appropriate when the research phenomenon cannot be easily separated or distinguished from its context. Within communication and public relations research, this makes case study research a useful design for understanding contemporary communication events in their context (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:105). Yin (2003:9) also notes that case studies are the preferred research design when dealing with ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions about contemporary events when behaviour cannot be manipulated.

This study’s research question is concerned with how internal communication makes a strategic contribution in INGOs, a contemporary event which is very much embedded within the context of the INGO. As was noted in Chapter 4, several elements of an organisation’s context can have an impact on the management of strategic internal

communication, including organisational form, structure and culture. Therefore, case study research is an appropriate design to explore this phenomenon.

In addition to being an appropriate design for the research problem, the focus on context in case study research fits neatly within the integrated postmodernist social constructivist worldview of this study. Both these positions argue that reality is contextually situated. Case study research, by focusing on a limited number of cases, allows the researcher to uncover a holistic view of the research phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:282; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:107). Therefore it is possible to gain an understanding of multiple elements at play in the research phenomenon. The case study design avoids oversimplifying the phenomenon and the development of generic meta-narratives which run contrary to the postmodernist worldview.

6.3.2 Multiple case study design

Yin (2003:40) distinguishes single and multiple case study designs. He (2003:46) highlights several situations in which a single case study is appropriate, but notes that evidence is generally more compelling and the study more robust in a multiple-case study. The reason is two-fold. First, by conducting multiple case studies, the volume of evidence available to the researcher increases considerably. Second, multiple-case study design allows for the application of replication logic similar to a multiple experiment design (Yin, 2003:47). In other words, by replicating the study in multiple cases, the support for the proposed theory or conclusions increases.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, INGOs are a very diverse group of organisations both in form and function. In order to be able to differentiate between contextually dependent elements and elements that impact INGOs more generally, it is necessary to consider multiple organisations. Therefore, in order to provide more compelling evidence and conclusions, the researcher adopted a multiple-case study design.

6.4 CASE SELECTION

6.4.1 Number of cases

There is no clear consensus in the literature on the ideal number of cases to include in a multiple-case study project. Perry (1998:794) suggests a minimum of four and a maximum of fifteen, highlighting the restrictions of the researcher's time and resources as a major component of selecting a number. Yin (2003:51) does not provide a specific number, but notes that the decision is dependent on the amount of certainty the researcher desires through the 'replication' of case studies. What this means is that cases are selected based on replication, as opposed to sampling logic, where they either replicate each other to achieve similar results for predicted reasons (literal replication), or to achieve contrasting results for predicted reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin, 2003:47). Taking these two considerations into account, the researcher aimed to conduct between 5 and 7 case studies because it was within the resources of the researcher and was an adequate number to be able to explore the diversity of INGOs that would result in sufficient evidence to provide compelling observations and conclusions.

6.4.2 Selection criteria

As noted in section 6.3.1, in case study research the context cannot be easily separated from the research phenomenon. This means that a detailed description of the case (the unit of analysis) is necessary to understand and interpret the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:282). Similarly, Perry (1998:793) notes that case selection is purposeful and depends on the conceptual framework developed for the study from theory. Therefore, an important component of the case selection process is the development of a theoretical framework that states the conditions necessary for the particular phenomenon under study to be found or not found (Yin, 2003:47). The following discussion outlines the specific contextual details that were used to select the cases.

The theoretical framework developed in Chapters 2 to 4 identified organisational form as a key criterion for the way strategic internal communication is managed in an organisation. In this study, the form under investigation is the INGO. Therefore, all cases were selected from organisations that meet the criteria of an INGO. This means that, based on the

definition outlined in Chapter 2, they are private, not-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary organisations working in development in two or more countries. Further characteristics of the cases' organisational form are described in section 6.4.4 below. Based on the theoretical framework of this study, these cases were selected based on organisational form to achieve a literal replication.

Organisational form was identified as a key contextual element for the management of strategic internal communication irrespective of the specific purpose and work of the INGO. In order to ensure the veracity of this statement, as well as to broaden the theoretical generalisability of the study and its applicability to a broader range of INGOs, an attempt was made to select INGOs from different sectors within the development category. The particular sectors from which cases were chosen were education, social enterprise, humanitarian assistance, poverty alleviation and human rights. In addition, different sizes and structures were also chosen.

With the above in mind, practical considerations were, as Gerring (2007:150) argues they should be, the final criteria used to select the cases. As Berg (2001:29) notes, for case study research to be successful the researcher must have access to the case and the ability to conduct the necessary research at the site. Thus the pool of potential cases was limited to those with offices in Gauteng province in South Africa. As well, selection was biased towards those organisations where the researcher had contacts and other connections to ease the problem of access.

6.4.3 Selection process

In order to facilitate the selection of cases, the researcher used the Prodder database. The Prodder Database is a comprehensive online database of NGOs and development organisations in South Africa. The database lists 256 INGOs with local offices in South Africa, 166 of which are located in Gauteng. This list was further refined based on the criteria identified in the previous section. A final pool of 23 potential cases was initially contacted through a telephone call or email. The initial introduction included a brief description of the research study and confirmed that the organisation met the selection criteria. All INGOs which expressed an interest in the project were sent further details on the research, the participation requirements and the necessary permission forms

(Annexure A). Only 5 INGOs responded favourably and granted formal permission for the research within the necessary timeframe. As each of these INGOs met the selection criteria, including the need to represent different sectors, they were confirmed as an adequate number of case studies.

The major challenge in finding case studies was in getting a response from INGO contacts. Many contacts simply did not return telephone calls or emails. In addition, due to the international nature of their roles, as well as the time of year of the research (December to February) many contacts were away from their offices for extended periods of time. Therefore, the researcher struggled to get an affirmative reply from the organisations and the formal written permissions to conduct the research, resulting in only five case studies being conducted.

As noted by Saunders *et al.* (2007:320-324), questions of anonymity and privacy can hamper access to evidence sources. While not a concern for most in this study, the researcher did assure the INGOs that their participation would be anonymous and worked with each organisation to identify appropriate means of maintaining this anonymity. In addition, the researcher provided information regarding the use of the evidence collected and its presentation so that the organisations could make an informed decision to participate.

6.4.4 Case descriptions

As noted above, a detailed description of the case is necessary to understand and interpret the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:282). The following provides a description of each case and its in context. Further discussion of each case in included in Chapter 7 as part of the evidence analysis.

6.4.4.1 Case A

Case A is an INGO with headquarters in South Africa but partner organisations all over the world. It operates in the education sector in the global arena, and also in national contexts via local partners. Considering the three types of INGO structures identified by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:65-67) in Table 2.5, Case A resembles a network. Its control of

its work in local, national and regional contexts is decentralised and depends on the actions of its partners. However, unlike Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's classification, its localisation is not local but global, meaning that it adopts a global presence and position on global issues. In Case A, the local positions and presence are determined by its partners.

The organisational structure of Case A is neither fully functional nor divisional. There is a structured communication function; however, certain communication roles are housed in specific campaigns and programmes. A new global campaign has resulted in a rapid increase in the organisation's staff and increased confusion regarding roles. The majority of employees are located in the organisation's headquarters in South Africa, with a group primarily related to the new campaign in London, and two staff members in Washington, D.C. Overall, the organisation has a diverse employee group, many of whom are frequently travelling or otherwise not working at the headquarters in South Africa.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Lewis (2007:40) identified three main roles for INGOs: an operational service-oriented role, a global policy and advocacy role and a counter-hegemonic activist role. Of these, Case A mostly fulfils a global policy and advocacy role. This role centres on its strategic intent which takes the form of three goals: (1) to achieve a specific development goal in poorer countries, (2) to secure investment and conducive policies from richer countries and international institutions for this development goal and (3) to grow the scale and strength of the organisation and the movement of which it is a part.

6.4.4.2 Case B

Case B is an INGO working around social enterprise. It is headquartered in Washington DC, with 25 regional offices throughout Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. Considering the three types of INGO structures identified Table 2.5, Case B most closely resembles a global organisation with a relatively centralised structure and a global position. However, within the organisation, regional offices do have some ability to modify their corporate strategy in line with the local context.

Case B did not have an organogram they could share with the researcher; however, based on their staff list they appear to have a divisional structure around specific programmes and regions. The interviewee identified a global communication structure but there is no formalised regional communication team. Overall the organisation has 160 staff, with a diversity of nationalities and cultures across the regions.

In terms of the three main roles for INGOs identified by Lewis (2007:40), Case B fulfils a global policy and advocacy role. The interviewee was not able to provide a clear understanding of the organisation's strategic intent or a strategy document; however, the organisation does have a mission and vision.

6.4.4.3 Case C

Case C is an INGO headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland with a regional Africa office in Johannesburg. It works in the sector of humanitarian assistance. The organisation also has regional offices for Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. In addition, the organisation is closely affiliated with national organisations in most countries in the world. Through the headquarters, regional offices and national affiliates, Case C operates in global, regional and local contexts. Considering the three types of INGO structures identified in Table 2.5, Case C most closely resembles a federation. It adopts a multi-domestic position with a central coordinating body that establishes an organisation-wide strategy and a global position on issues, but national affiliates can make independent decisions on local positions and activities.

Within its headquarters, Case C adopts a functional structure but its regional offices are structured using a matrix. For example, in the Africa region, the most senior communicator's line manager is the Africa Zone Director, but he also reports to his technical manager, the head of the Communication Unit in headquarters. Case C has over 1600 employees working around the world. Overall, both within and across offices there is significant diversity among employees.

Case C fulfils two of Lewis' (2007:40) roles for INGOs: an operational service-oriented role, and a global policy and advocacy role. These roles are centred on their strategic

intent which includes three strategic aims to prevent and alleviate human suffering, and three enabling actions.

6.4.4.4 Case D

Case D is an INGO that works on poverty alleviation with headquarters in South Africa but offices and affiliate organisations all over the world. It operates both in the global arena via its international secretariat and regional offices and in the national context through national affiliates and country programmes. Considering the three types of INGO structures identified in Table 2.5, Case D most closely resembles a federation. It has a central coordinating body which establishes an organisation-wide strategy and a global position on issues, but national affiliates have a significant amount of control to determine local positions and activities. Through this multi-domestic position, Case D aims to be 'Glocal' in its outlook: having influence and relevance at both the global and local levels.

The organisational structure of Case D is a matrix. Axes related to function, theme and region criss-cross the organisation with staff possessing multiple accountabilities and working in collaboration as teams. Case D has over 2000 employees working in 43 countries. Many employees, particularly those in the international secretariat, regularly work away from their home offices. Overall, the organisation has a diverse and disparate workforce.

In terms of Lewis' (2007:40) three main roles for INGOs, Case D fulfils two: an operational service-oriented role, and a global policy and advocacy role. They are held together by a strategic intent based on four goals and six priority areas related to human rights and poverty alleviation.

6.4.4.5 Case E

Case E is a human rights INGO headquartered in Washington DC, with 11 regional offices around the world, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. Considering the three types of INGO structures identified in Table 2.5, Case E most closely resembles a global organisation with a relatively centralised structure and a global position. However, it does not have a clear global strategy, although it does have a mission and vision. Within

the organisation, regional offices do have some ability to develop their strategy in line with the local context but it is not clear how this is linked to the work of the global organisation. Of the three roles for INGOs identified by Lewis (2007:40), Case E fulfils a global policy and advocacy role, as well as a small operational service-orientated role.

Case E has a divisional structure around specific regions. For example, there is the Africa Manager who oversees both an Africa team in the head office and the regional Africa offices. Overall the organisation has 120 staff globally, with a diversity of nationalities and cultures across the regions.

6.5 EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Being able to draw upon multiple sources of evidence is one of the characteristics of case study research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:108) and is what allows it to achieve a holistic view of the research phenomenon. By using multiple sources of evidence, the researcher can create converging lines of inquiry that make the findings of the case study more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2003:98). Within each case study, two sources of evidence were used: local senior communicator and organisational documents.

6.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect evidence from the most senior communicator in INGOs in South Africa. In particular, semi-structured interviews were used to gain an understanding of the strategic contribution of internal communication in INGOs and how it is managed from the international and local level. The development of the interview guide is discussed in section 6.6. The following sections discuss how the communicators were selected and the process of conducting the interviews.

The decision of what communicators to interview was made based on theoretical sampling. In this method, the researcher selects evidence sources based on their perceived relevance to the theory and research question under consideration (Pole & Lampard, 2002:37). Since the research question centres on the management of strategic internal communication, which is an integral part of the overall communication function of an organisation, the most senior communicator in each INGO was interviewed.

Since INGOs are, by definition, international organisations, the offices in South Africa are not necessarily the headquarters of the organisation. Therefore, an attempt was made to interview both the local and the international senior communicator. However, except in the three cases where the INGO was headquartered in South Africa, this proved very difficult. Even with the support of the local senior communicator, it was not possible to get a response from the overseas communicators of the three remaining case studies.

All interviews with senior communicators were semi-structured, face-to-face interviews except for one which was conducted telephonically. Semi-structured interviews are interviews undertaken with a list of pre-determined questions, but, unlike in a structured interview, the interviewer can and should probe beyond these with additional questions that arise through the conversation (Berg, 2001:70). Semi-structured interviews are common in qualitative exploratory studies because they allow the researcher to question the meaning of what is said and can lead the researcher into areas not previously considered (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:315-316). The semi-structured interview is an appropriate method for this study because the structured portion allows the researcher to ensure that the appropriate topics are covered, while the unstructured elements mean that new perspectives and ideas can arise, an important component of an exploratory study.

The process of collecting evidence from the INGO case studies via semi-structured interviews was multi-stepped. Within each selected INGO, the researcher arranged the interview with the senior communicator directly. Each interview was scheduled for forty-five minutes to an hour at a time and place convenient to the interviewee. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts are available from the researcher.

As prophesised by Saunders *et al.* (2007:74), various issues arose during the evidence collection phase that had the potential to hamper access to the evidence sources as well as influence the quality of the evidence collected. For example, questions of anonymity and privacy hampers access to individual managers just as it hampered access to the organisation. Similar principles as those followed with the organisation (see section 6.4.3) were used to reassure individual managers who had concerns in this regard. Informed consent forms (Annexure B) were provided to and signed by each interviewee.

6.5.2 Organisational documents

The second evidence source is organisational documents. Yin identifies the most important use of organisational documents as corroborating and augmenting the evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003:87). The documents chosen had two main functions in the study. Firstly, documents such as annual reports and the website provided contextual background for the case study. Secondly, theoretically relevant documents might yield further evidence on the strategic contribution of internal communication.

Documents were chosen for analysis based on their theoretical relevance and their selection is discussed in section 6.6.2. However, not every INGO possessed all the documents identified as relevant. The documents available for each INGO are identified in Chapter 7. The documents possessed were identified and obtained during the interviews with the senior communicators.

Although a simpler process compared to the interviews, collecting organisational documents posed its own challenges. The first challenge was determining which documents were theoretically relevant. Each INGO possessed different types of documents that were called different names. Therefore careful questioning of the senior communicators was needed to determine which documents existed and were relevant to the study. The second challenge was gaining access to the documents as many were internal documents that the INGO was nervous about sharing with the researcher. Therefore, careful assurances were made about ensuring the anonymity of the INGO and the researcher was careful to explain exactly how the documents were to be used. These assurances were sufficient in most, but not all cases, to gain access to the necessary documents for this study.

6.6 DEVELOPMENT OF EVIDENCE GUIDES

6.6.1 Interview guide

When conducting a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses a list of pre-determined questions to guide the interview or discussion. The guide is based on the nature and objectives of the research being undertaken (Berg, 2001:74). Annexure C contains the

interview guide used in this study. The following describes the process through which this guide was developed.

When creating an interview schedule, Saunders *et al.* (2007:74) suggest starting with an outline of the major themes to be covered in the interview and then developing lists of questions for each of these. Perry notes that interview questions are developed from current theory (1998:790). Therefore, the major themes correspond to criteria for internal communication to be considered strategic, the key components of the internal communication process and the specific context of INGOs. Following Perry's (1998:791-792) suggestion, the guide contains broad questions that capture the perceptions of the interviewee on these research themes. Table 6.1 shows the correlation between the themes from the theory and the research questions.

Table 6.1: Correlation between themes and question numbers

Themes		Question number
Criteria for internal communication to be considered strategic	Strategic content	Throughout
	Strategic purpose	4, 11, 14
	Strategic position and role	1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9
Internal communication process	Strategic orientation	11
	Leadership	3
	Strategic knowledge	7
	Symmetrical communication and dialogue	13
	Internal communication infrastructure	10, 12
INGO Context		15, 16, 17

Where necessary during the interview, the researcher supplemented each of these with probe questions, based on the theory, to discuss any issues that did not arise on their own. This structure for the guide also helped to limit researcher bias in the interviews and discussions (Perry, 1998:791-792). Researcher bias occurs when the preconceptions and actions of the researcher influence the evidence collected (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:318), such as may occur if questions are worded to elicit specific responses. By starting the interview with broad questions, the participants' perceptions were captured before they were influenced by the researcher and the theoretical background (Perry, 1998:791-792).

In addition to researcher bias, several other potential issues were considered during the development of the guide. For example, there was a need to ensure that the guide did not include leading or ambiguous questions or questions that included jargon or technical terms (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:175). It was also necessary to ensure that the guide gathered the information needed for the study. To deal with these issues, the researcher followed Berg's (2001:80) recommendation and had the guide critically examined by a person familiar with the study's subject matter (the study's supervisor) and conducted practice interviews. This second part was done during the pilot test of this study which is described in the next section.

6.6.2 Organisational documents guide

In order to ensure that the same documents were collected from each case study, a list of relevant documents was created. The process for developing this list was similar to the process for developing the interview guide, in that it started with the main themes of this study. Each theme, the criteria for being strategic, the internal communication process and the INGO context, was considered to determine if a specific document that an organisation possessed had the potential to provide insight into it. The result of this process was that two types of organisational documents were identified as useful to the study. First, the annual report, website and organogram were identified as potentially providing background information for the case and the INGO's particular context. Second, the organisation's strategy, communication strategy and internal communication strategy were identified as potentially providing insight into the strategic criteria and the internal communication process.

For the documents, a checklist was developed to assist the researcher in confirming which documents (or equivalents thereof) the organisation possessed and whether those documents contained the key attributes associated with the main themes of this study. This document is included in Annexure D. It should be noted that not all case studies possessed all documents and the specific documents used for each case study are indicated in the case descriptions in Chapter 7.

6.7 PILOT STUDY

The purpose of conducting a pilot study is to refine the content of the evidence collection tools and the procedures to be used (Yin, 2003:79). As such, it is more than just a test of the interview guides, but also an opportunity to identify and address potential issues in accessing, organising and conducting the case studies. The following two sections discuss the process of conducting the pilot study and its results.

6.7.1 The process

Yin (2003:79) argues that convenience, access and geographic proximity are the key criteria for selecting a pilot study because it allows the researcher to develop a more prolonged relationship and use the study to try different approaches on a trial basis. As such, the researcher's place of current employment, an INGO that meets the criteria for this study, was chosen as the pilot site.

In conducting the pilot study, the researcher used draft versions of the interview guides developed, using the procedures identified in the previous section. In addition, feedback was sought from the interviewee at the end of the discussion on the process, the questions and the researcher's technique. The results of this process are discussed in the following section.

6.7.2 The report

As noted by Yin (2003:80), the pilot study can identify both substantive and methodological issues. It can also complement theoretical work done by identifying issues that may not currently be covered prior to the full case studies. The following identifies the lessons learned during the pilot study and how these were incorporated into the research design for the actual case studies.

Three methodological issues were identified during the pilot study. First, it became apparent through discussions with the interviewee that most INGOs did not have dedicated internal communication people, particularly in their local offices. As a result of this realisation and strategic internal communication being integrated within the broader

communication function, it was determined that interviews in each case would be conducted with the most senior communication person available as reflected in the previous section.

Second, the pilot interview highlighted an issue with the order of the questions on the interview schedule. The original interview schedule started with a discussion of the communication function overall before moving to questions on organisational strategy and finally internal communication. While the order made sense from a theoretical perspective, the result was confusion for the interviewee as to what the questions were referring to. For example, was the researcher asking about organisational strategy or communication strategy or internal communication strategy. Therefore the final interview schedule was reorganised to move from the broad, organisational strategy level, to the overall communication function, to the internal communication function and ended with a discussion of the INGO context.

The third and final methodological issue was that several questions were found to be redundant in that they received similar answers. Therefore, in the final interview schedule, several questions were removed or combined with others in order to (i) avoid duplication, (ii) focus the interview and (iii) avoid confusion thereby improving the quality of the evidence collected.

In terms of theoretical issues, the pilot study only highlighted one new issue that had not been previously considered. The pilot case is a relatively small INGO which operates out of a primary secretariat in South Africa with only limited staff in other countries. Therefore, they rely heavily on partners in other countries to implement their projects. As a result, the senior communicator included communication with these partners as part of internal communication. While external organisations are theoretically not considered part of internal communication, in situations such as this, where they are intricately involved in the delivery of the INGOs work, their alignment with the organisation's strategy is equally important. Therefore, it was decided that if a similar situation was uncovered with any of the case studies, the researcher would ask the relevant questions both with regards to the narrower definition of internal stakeholders as well as for the broader version that includes external partner organisations.

In addition to the above issues, the pilot study provided the interviewer with an opportunity to practice conducting a semi-structured interview and ensure that future interviews would run smoothly. All lessons learned were incorporated into the final case studies.

6.8 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Daymon and Halloway (2002:232) note that there are no set rules or processes for undertaking qualitative analysis, rather, researchers need to follow the approach which they consider to be the best fit for their overall research design and the nature of their evidence. For the purpose of this study, it was determined that the four cognitive phases of qualitative analysis proposed by Morse and Field (1995:103) were useful in organising and analysing the evidence in this study. The phases are: comprehending, synthesising (decontextualising), theorising and recontextualising. Each phase depends on the previous ones in order to be successful.

While Morse and Field's four phases are useful for organising the analysis of qualitative evidence they do not provide a specific method of data analysis. For this process, this study undertook a thematic open-coded analysis. The use of Morse and Field's four phases and open-coded analysis bears some resemblance Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory in that it starts with an attempt to comprehend and code the evidence as broadly as possible without reference. However, unlike Strauss and Corbin, the process this study follows incorporates already existing theory into the analysis process, primarily at the theorising stage. The process and steps followed during each of the four phases in this study are discussed below.

6.8.1 Comprehending

In qualitative analysis, comprehending means "learning everything about a setting or the experiences of participants" (Morse, 1994:27). As such, it occurs not just during the empirical phase of this study, but also during the literature review when the researcher gains understanding of the research topic and the study's context.

As advocated by both Yin (2003:111) and Morse and Field (1995:104) the researcher developed a familiarity with the literature on the research phenomenon prior to data

collection in order to be able to recognise what was interesting and relevant during the data collection process. However, during the evidence analysis, prior theory was kept separate from evidence collected in order not to contaminate the evidence with a perspective it does not reflect (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:232; Morse, 1994:26). This separation was achieved through the use of post-coded thematic analysis. Post-coded or open-coded themes are themes that develop from the data during analysis rather than being pre-determined by theory (Henning, 2004:105). Therefore, while the interview questions are related to the themes and constructs developed in Chapters 2 to 5, the analysis of the responses was not directly connected in the same manner. This point is important, given the exploratory purpose of the study because it allowed for the emergence of new themes and patterns from the evidence.

The comprehending phase of evidence analysis is achieved when the researcher can write a coherent and detailed description of the case (Morse & Field, 1995:174). Several steps in the analysis process helped the researcher achieve this aim.

Firstly, as noted in section 6.5, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher and reviewed for accuracy. During this process, the researcher started to develop a list of initial ideas regarding themes around the functioning of internal communication to be used in coding the evidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150; Braun & Clarke, 2006:87). As Henning (2004:105) notes, by transcribing the interviews herself, the researcher stayed closer to the data and was more competent when it came to the second step, coding.

Coding is the process by which segments of interest in the evidence are tagged with relevant labels (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:234). As noted above, the study adopted an open coding approach wherein codes were identified within the evidence. Codes are used to identify features in the data and are the most basic component of the data that is meaningful (Braun & Clarke, 2006:88). The evidence was coded through a systematic reading that gave careful attention to each part of the evidence. Any piece of evidence that seemed like it might be relevant was coded.

Once all the data was coded, the codes were grouped together under relevant themes related to the functioning of internal communication in INGOs. Themes are the broader

levels of analysis which allow arguments to be made about the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006:88). This process involved grouping and regrouping the codes to form meaningful themes. It should be noted that the process is iterative with new themes and sub-themes being continuously identified during the coding, requiring the already-coded evidence to be recoded (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:482). Therefore, once an initial set of themes was identified, the data was read again to ensure it fitted the themes identified. The themes were then grouped according to their relevance to the major thematic areas in the research phenomenon, internal communication content, purpose, position, process, as well as additional groups for themes related to the INGO context and the communication of strategy.

The organisational documents were analysed in a different fashion. First, the documents were read once to gain a background understanding of the case. Second, the documents were reviewed again using the checklist in Annexure D to determine how well they fitted into the normative criteria for strategic internal communication in INGOs developed in Chapter 4. Finally, the documents were reviewed a third time following the coding of the interview transcripts to determine their support or contradiction of the themes arising from that process.

This process allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of strategic internal communication within the context of each particular organisation, thus starting to fulfil Objective 2 of this study. The evidence was strengthened by the review of both documents and transcripts, as it was possible to identify where they corroborated and contradicted the picture each drew of their particular case. This contextual analysis is important, given the postmodern approach to this study as well as the importance of context to the research phenomenon. The individual case descriptions are included at the beginning of Chapter 7.

6.8.2 Synthesising

Objective 2 of this study is to identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically. Comprehending this process in each individual case study is the first step. However, to meet the objective fully, there needs to be a synthesis of understanding across the INGO case studies. As defined by Morse (1994:30), synthesising is “the

merging of several stories, experiences, or cases to describe a typical, composite pattern of behaviour or response.” Therefore it is the phase where the evidence is decontextualised in the sense that analysis is no longer focused on the evidence within the context of a particular case but rather on the comparison of evidence across cases. The process of synthesising thus allows the researcher to identify both areas of commonality and difference across cases and to explain the variations (Morse, 1994:30-31).

The case studies were considered from two perspectives. As suggested by Eisenhardt (2002:18), the case studies were grouped into broad categories and examined both for within-group similarities and between group differences. The categories related to INGO structures and size: two cases were large federations with over 1000 employees, two cases were global organisations with approximately 150 employees, and one case was a network organisation with only 30-50 employees but with many members with whom it worked closely worldwide. In terms of internal communication practices, there were significant similarities within these groups and significant differences between the groups making these useful contexts within which to consider the research phenomenon. In addition, themes that cut across all cases were also identified. The results of the cross-case analysis are presented in the second half of Chapter 7.

6.8.3 Theorising

Morse (1994:32) defines theorising as “the constant development and manipulation of malleable theoretical schemes until the “best” theoretical scheme is developed.” The process of theorising involves the development of working propositions and then testing them against the data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:239). It includes the conscious consideration of alternative explanations in order to ensure that the explanation developed is indeed the “best fit” (Morse, 1994:33).

Several strategies can be used to assist in theorising. This study used what Yin and Moore (quoted in Berg, 2001:230) describe as process matching, whereby information from a case study is examined for a relationship to a theoretical proposition. This process brings together the theoretical and empirical phases of this study by comparing the hypothetical propositions and themes that emerged from the evidence to the theoretical criteria for strategic internal communication developed from the literature and presented in Chapters

4 and 5. The first step of this process was to take each theoretical element of strategic internal communication individually and compare it to the related themes which arose from the evidence. Empirical evidence was sought for each theoretical construct. Where appropriate, explanations for differences were proposed. Since much of the theory around strategic internal communication is normative, areas where the theory indicated that a change in management could potentially improve strategic internal communication in INGOs were also noted. In addition, the evidence was also analysed for new elements of internal communication or the removal of those that were theoretically identified but not empirically supported. The final component of this analysis was to refine the criteria for strategic internal communication in INGOs based on the comparison between theory and evidence. The results of this process are integrated in the cross-case comparison in Chapter 7 and conclusions are presented in Chapter 8.

6.8.4 Recontextualising

The final phase of the evidence analysis process is recontextualising. This phase involves presenting the emerging theory so that it is applicable in other settings (Morse, 1994:34). This process involves making theory-based generalisations and positioning the study within the field's current body of knowledge (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:239). The theorising phase described above included, in this study, the process of generalising from the specific cases to the current theory in the field. Based on the results of this process and the lessons learned during the study, further recommendations on how this study can contribute to further research and development of the field are included in Chapter 8.

6.9 CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC SOUNDNESS

Since this study adopts a qualitative approach, the standard means of demonstrating the rigour of quantitative research, reliability and validity, are not easily applied. However, rigorous research and quality of design are still important in qualitative research (Pole & Lampard, 2002:207). Lincoln and Guba (quoted in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:276) developed criteria for evaluating qualitative research which has been widely adopted by researchers using this approach to replace reliability and validity. For them, the key criterion for good qualitative research is trustworthiness, which they identify as establishing the merit of the research with the researcher's audience. As such, trustworthiness is determined by the

readers of the research and the researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient information so readers can form their own judgement.

Four criteria are generally used to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:93). These criteria are discussed individually below, along with those elements of the research design that demonstrate their presence in this study for the reader.

6.9.1 Credibility

Credibility is similar to the concept of internal validity but conceptualised for qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003:601). As such, it is concerned with whether the constructed realities of the study are recognized as truth by the people in the study (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:93). In other words, do the participants of the study agree that the findings of the study reflect their social reality. Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) suggest several procedures to ensure credibility of qualitative research, including: triangulation, referential adequacy and member checks. This study uses the first two techniques to demonstrate the credibility of the research.

Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources to verify what the evidence from one source is saying by allowing it to be compared to data from another (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:139). Data source triangulation is part of this study's research design where evidence is collected from both interviews and organisational documents. It is a key element of this study's credibility because it helps to corroborate the evidence collected and establish a 'complete' picture of the social context under study (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:98). Therefore, by using triangulation, the likelihood of the research findings accurately mirroring the 'reality' within the organisations in this study is increased.

The study's credibility can also be judged based on its referential adequacy. Referential adequacy refers to having adequate materials to document the research findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). As noted above, in addition to the documents collected for each case study, the interviews conducted for this study were recorded and transcribed. This provides a large collection of materials which are used to document and support the research findings in Chapters 7 and 8. All this documentation is available from the

researcher. By the use of triangulation and referential adequacy, the reader can establish the credibility of this study.

6.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is to qualitative research what external validity is to quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003:601). As such, it refers to the extent that research findings can be applied to other contexts or populations (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). However, since all qualitative research is defined by the context in which it occurs, it is not easily generalized to larger populations, nor is this usually the goal of the researcher. Therefore, in qualitative studies, it is the obligation of the reader to determine whether the study's findings are applicable in the context to which they want to transfer them (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). This means that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the reader has the information needed to do so. In order to meet this obligation, this study provides clear criteria for the selection of INGOs in this study (see section 6.4.2 above) as well as a detailed description of each case in Chapter 7.

In addition to the above conceptualisation, transferability can also be viewed as closely related to the idea of theory-based generalisations (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:93). Advocated by Yin (2003:10) for use in case studies in particular, theory-based or analytical generalisation means that the research findings are used to support, disprove or modify a theory as opposed to their findings being applicable to a specific population. By developing theoretical propositions prior to evidence collection and using those propositions as the basis for analysing the evidence, the case study design has a high level of analytical generalisation. By this means and the contextual information provided, the reader can establish the transferability of this study.

6.9.3 Dependability

Reliability, the ability of other researchers to achieve similar results, is not a concept that is strictly applicable to qualitative research, simply because qualitative interviews by definition are conducted within a particular context and their flexibility in this regard is one of their major strengths (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:319). It is not possible for another researcher to apply the same methodology in a different context and achieve the exact

same results. Therefore, reliability is conceptualised differently for qualitative research and the term dependability is used instead (Golafshani, 2003:601).

Dependability means that the research findings are consistent and accurate (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:94). Since it is nearly impossible to repeat a qualitative research project with the same respondents in the same context and achieve exactly the same results, this generally means opening both the research findings and the process by which they were obtained to public scrutiny, so that the reader and other researchers can establish their dependability for themselves (Pole & Lampard, 2002:207). In this study, in addition to the information located within this dissertation, the researcher kept all notes on the research process which are available upon request.

6.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research replaces the notion of objectivity and neutrality (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:94). It refers to the degree that the research conclusions are related to the focus of the study and not to the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:94). In order to establish confirmability, Lincoln and Guba refer to a confirmability audit trail (quoted in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). An audit trail consists of various elements, including raw data, various research notes, proposals and draft documents, which allow an auditor (another researcher) to determine if the research findings can be traced to their source and are supported by the evidence. Similar to the information necessary for establishing dependability, these elements are available from the researcher.

6.10 LIMITATIONS

This study is limited in several key ways, due both to its subject matter and its methodology. Firstly, it is limited to the concept of strategic internal communication as defined herein. Thus any conclusions drawn may not be relevant to internal communication with any other goal but strategic alignment, such as task communication and information management. Secondly, this study is limited to exploring the research problem and not to finding a solution. Therefore the conclusions only provide an indication

of the elements that need to be considered in managing strategic internal communication in INGOs and not how to undertake that management.

Related to its methodology, this study is limited by its focus on interviewing only management and not employees in each case study. The result is that the evidence captures only the views and challenges of managers. The views of employees, as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of current strategic internal communication practices within each case are missing. This limitation was deemed acceptable given the exploratory nature of this study. However, as a result, the conclusions of this study should be viewed only as an initial foundation on which to build future studies that consider the employee perspective as well.

This study is also limited by its case selection. By only using INGOs in South Africa as case studies, the transferability of the study to INGOs more broadly may not be possible. In addition, in three case studies, only the local senior communicator was interviewed meaning that the results may not be an accurate depiction of internal communication in the organisation as a whole.

6.11 CONCLUSION

A qualitative approach was taken to the empirical phase of this study because of its fit with the postmodernist and social constructivist worldview through its emphasis on context and obtaining the insider perspective and its appropriateness for the exploratory purpose of this study. Within this approach, a multiple case study research design was adopted in order to obtain a holistic view of the research phenomenon. The case studies were selected based on criteria developed during the theoretical portion of this study as well as practical considerations such as convenience and access.

Within each case study, evidence was collected from three sources. The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with local senior communicators. In addition, organisational documents provided further support to the evidence collected in the interviews. The evidence collected from these three sources was analysed in four

phases: comprehending, synthesising, theorising and recontextualising. The results of this process are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Finally, the criteria for judging the rigour of this research design were identified as being credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. While it was noted that the ability to judge these criteria rests with the reader, the researcher highlighted several components of the research design and this study can aid the reader in this process, notably: the use of triangulation, the depth of the description of the research contexts and the availability of the research transcripts and notes from the researcher.

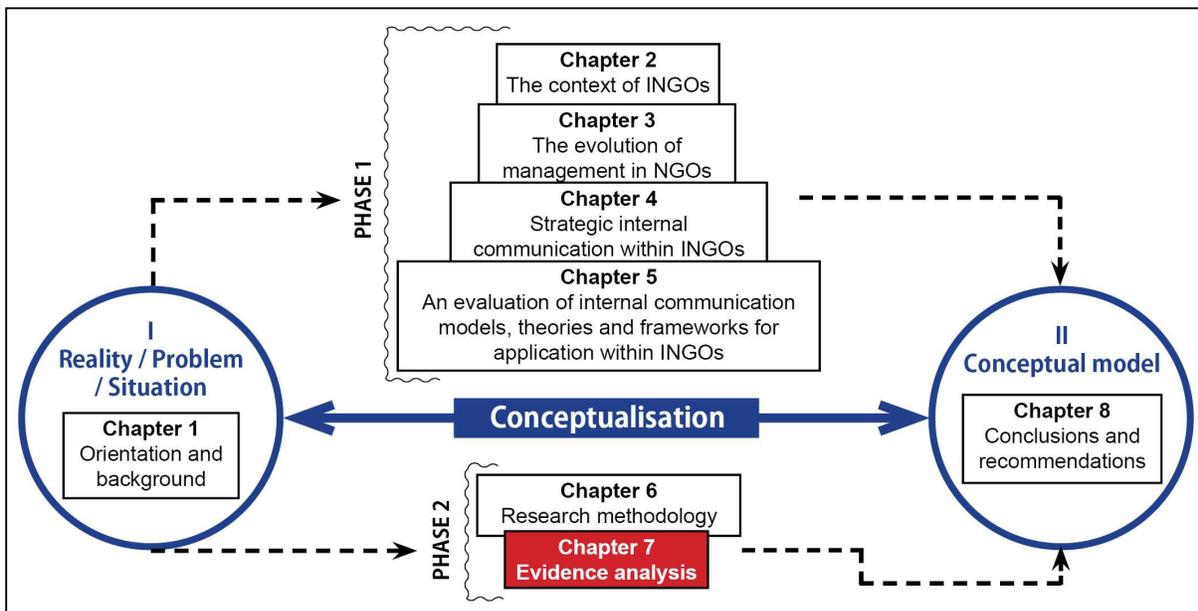
Chapter 7

Evidence Analysis

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the evidence collected and analysed using the process described in Chapter 6. As such, it provides the results for the empirical phase of the study towards the completion of Objective 2: to identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically. In addition, this chapter starts the integration of the theory discussed in Chapters 2 to 5 towards the achievement of Objective 3. Figure 7.1 highlights this chapter's position in relation to the rest of this dissertation.

Figure 7.1: Chapter 7 in relation to the other chapters



This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides a brief review of each case study and internal communication within its particular context. The second section provides a cross-case comparison examining similarities and differences between cases, as well as starting to compare the key themes in the evidence with the theory developed in Chapter 2 to 5.

7.2 CASE STUDIES

This section provides a review of each case's internal communication based on the evidence collected. Table 7.1 shows what sources of evidence were available for each case.

Table 7.1: Evidence available per case study

	Interview	Website	Annual Report	Organogram	Organisation Strategy	Comm. Strategy	Internal comm. strategy
Case A	√	√	√	X	√	X	X
Case B	√	√	√	X	X	X	X
Case C	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Case D	√	√	√	X	√	√	√
Case E	√	√	√	√	X	X	X

Based on the evidence, each case study reconstructs the characteristics of its internal communication following a similar outline to the normative criteria developed in Chapters 4 and 5. Thus it considers the purpose, position, role and content of the internal communication function, the knowledge of the most senior communicator and the process of internal communication within the case. However, since the evidence suggests that, in most of the case studies, the internal communication function does not undertake the communication of corporate strategy, this process is also discussed separately for each organisation. Following this, the challenges and barriers for internal communication as they manifest in each case are discussed. Finally, each case study concludes with brief overall comments on internal communication in the case as it relates to the theory discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

7.2.1 Case study A

As noted in Chapter 6, Case A is a 'network' INGO with headquarters in South Africa but partner organisations all over the world. It operates both in the global arena and in national contexts via local partners and primarily fulfils a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.1.1 Scope of Internal communication

Case A does not have any official internal communication function nor was this officially incorporated within the responsibilities of the most senior communicator. Therefore, much of the discussion revolved around broader communication or communication with partner organisations – who are integral to achieving the organisation’s strategic intent – which the interviewee, as well as the terminology in the organisation’s strategic plan, characterised as internal communication. Table 7.2 outlines the content, purpose, position and knowledge of internal communication in Case A as derived from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.2: Characteristics of internal communication in Case A

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Not part of senior management	Tactical	Task related	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Organisational documents	Information sharing	Tactician	N/A	N/A	Interactive

7.2.1.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

Case A does not have any formal objectives for internal communication. The primary purpose appeared to be the planning of and dissemination of information pertaining to specific campaigns and activities of the organisation. For example, a major component of their internal communication, as noted by the interviewee, is every week they have “calls with all of our [members] and we’ve kind of given them an update, you know: so this is the latest, we’ve signed so and so up and we’re ... well whatever we are doing.”

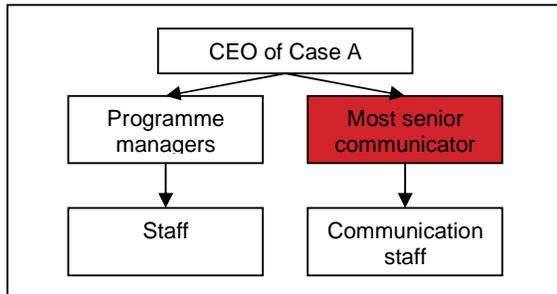
However, despite the lack of strategic focus, the interviewee did recognise the role of internal communication in aligning the organisation and “making sure everyone is on the same page.” She also noted the important role of internal communication in facilitating dialogue throughout the organisation both on strategic and non-strategic content.

7.2.1.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In Case A, internal communication is not formally structured nor is the responsibility for it formally assigned to the most senior communicator. The most senior communicator does

report directly to the head of the organisation and therefore communication is positioned within the strategic management of the organisation. Figure 7.2 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.2: Position of internal communication in Case A



Case A does have a participative strategic development and implementation process; however, the role and position of communication in this regard is not clearly stated. The interviewee also noted that overall the strategic process is ad hoc and is “something that kind of happens on demand”. Therefore, internal communication is not regularly considered in the strategic management of the organisation.

7.2.1.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee in Case A does not have any formal communication education but rather is educated in the subject matter with which the organisation is engaged. She does have previous work experience in communication. The communication function is clearly managed with a tactical understanding of the role and importance of communication to specific campaigns and activities. However, the underlying strategic role is not apparent both in terms of the strategy of the organisation as a whole as well as the overall communication strategy. This is even more evident in terms of internal communication, although as noted above, the interviewee did recognise the purpose of this function in aligning all stakeholders behind the organisation’s strategic intent.

7.2.1.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The content of internal communication appeared to centre primarily on specific activities and relate to specific tasks. The organisation’s strategy provides specific tasks to improve the internal communication between the organisation and its members including improving its e-newsletter, developing an online contacts page of members and producing a

membership handbook. However, these tactics for internal communication were not clearly linked to achieving the strategic intent nor was there an indication that there was room for additional strategic planning around internal communication.

7.2.1.1.5 Internal communication process

Case A is quite a small INGO thus allowing it to rely on meetings and phone calls as its primary means of internal communication. A majority of the internal communication tools identified were typically one-way and/or asymmetrical. As the interviewee described “we will ... communicate to all of our national coalitions and will expect them [to] post or have a meeting or do other things” indicating a reliance on cascading communication. In addition, the interviewee noted a move towards the use of online tools to facilitate international collaboration. Finally, both the organisation’s strategy and the interviewee did identify internal stakeholder interaction and dialogue as an important component of internal communication.

7.2.1.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As noted, there is no formal internal communication function or strategy, or even an overall communication strategy in Case A. The communication of the organisation’s strategic intent to internal and external stakeholders is not coordinated through the communication function, although the function does communicate specific campaign or programme strategies. Instead, the interviewee noted the important role played by the board of directors and the organisation’s leader in communicating the strategic intent: “to actually feed strategy out and get people involved, it’s kind of the board’s responsibility.” Therefore, there is senior leadership of the communication of corporate strategy; however, this is primarily to external stakeholders including members and not to employees.

The organisation’s strategic intent is developed through consultation with its member organisations who ultimately adopt it at Case A’s World Assembly every three years. In this regard, the strategic development process is participatory from an external perspective, but it is unclear as to whether employees have the opportunity to contribute to this process. However, during the strategy implementation process, employees play a more active role in developing their work plans around the strategic intent, suggesting an

opportunity for the organisation to become aligned. As the interviewee notes: “our regular plans will come out of a team meeting where we’ll discuss what we need to focus on, how our work, works into each other ... and we are fairly flat in that structure.” The interviewee also emphasised the need for Case A’s strategy to remain flexible and adaptable given the speed of change in their sector: “it’s less of a let’s think three years ahead [about strategy because] ... our circumstances change [and] also to be able to react to whatever happens in the climate.” Thus the dialogue around work plans helps to build strategic alignment with a changing strategic intent.

7.2.1.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several challenges that she faces in the implementation of strategic internal communication in Case A. First, there is a need to satisfy various stakeholders – the board of directors, members and donors – who influence the organisation’s direction and the work it undertakes. The second challenge is that many of their communication decisions are made because of resource constraints in terms of cost and the demands on the time of the most senior communicator who wears multiple hats within the organisation. This challenge is further exacerbated, since the organisation has recently grown very quickly placing even more demands on the senior communicator’s time.

Third, there is a focus on specific campaigns and projects, as opposed to the overall strategic intent of the organisation, which is quite broad to start with. Fourth, the interviewee noted a difficulty in remaining true to some of the values of the organisation around participative governance: “I think a lot of NGOs ... like to pride themselves in having this very flat structure but it doesn’t necessarily work and then people kind of resent [it].”

Finally, the interviewee’s responses indicated that there is an action culture within the organisation, where internal processes are not considered as important as external activities because the impact and results are not as evident. For example, she said:

“Ultimately we’ve got to be getting stuff out ... and stay fairly sane and so I think it is something that ultimately when you’re doing what’s urgent and

what's important, I feel [internal communication] does slip off the urgent and important box and it will be on your work plan and it might just not get done."

Overall, Case A faces several challenges in implementing strategic internal communication.

7.2.1.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case A

Despite some recognition of its strategic function, internal communication in Case A did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. In terms of Grimshaw and Mike's (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level two with "a strategic orientation limited to formal communication products." A lack of a formal function may not be the most detrimental aspect to Case A's internal communication. The interviewee's comments suggest the need for a postmodern approach to strategic management that is flexible and adaptable to changing circumstance. This approach emphasises dialogue to build strategic consciousness within the organisation (Puth, 2002:182). Given the small size of Case A, it may not need to invest its limited resources into a formal internal communication function if its senior management reflected this commitment to dialogue in its words and actions. The important role that senior leadership can play in this regard is highlighted in the literature (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:152; Yeomans, 2006:345). However, this commitment to dialogue is not reflected in the interviewee's responses or the organisation's documents.

7.2.2 Case study B

As noted in Chapter 6, Case B is an INGO headquartered in Washington DC, with regional offices throughout Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. It is a global organisation with a divisional structure and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.2.1 Scope of internal communication

Case B's communication function is centralised at the Headquarters in Washington DC. It contains a small internal communication function but the activities of this function were not known in the Southern Africa office. For the most senior communicator in South Africa,

communication is only a small part of her role. Therefore, because Case B possesses no communication strategy and the international communication staff were not available for interviews, it was difficult to get a complete understanding of the communication function within the organisation as a whole. However, the interviewee provided evidence on how communication is undertaken in the region and how she views the global communication structure, thereby allowing the researcher to gain some insight into communication and internal communication in the organisation. Table 7.3 outlines the purpose, position, knowledge, content and process of the internal communication function in Case B as derived from the interview. Case B could not provide any organisational documents except for a regional annual report.

Table 7.3: Characteristics of internal communication in Case B

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Centralised, not part of senior management	Tactical	Resources	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Organisational documents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

7.2.2.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

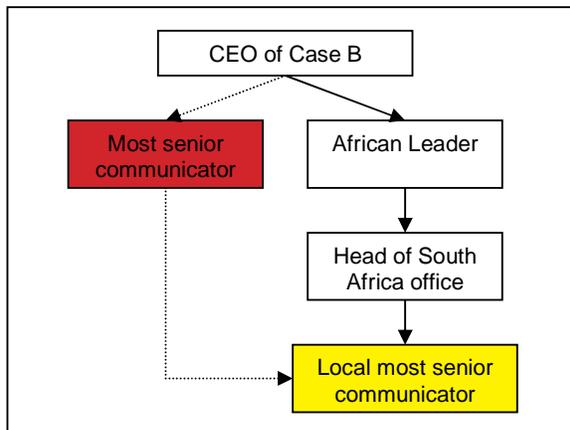
Case B did not have any formal internal communication objectives. The interviewee recognised the importance of strategic alignment, noting a role for internal communication in “creating a more efficient way of doing business in each of the local offices and that’s obviously tied in with the vision, the global vision.” However, this purpose is not reflected in the internal communication activities the interviewee described. Instead, the interviewee highlighted the role of internal communication for information sharing and knowledge management.

7.2.2.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In Case B both internal and external communication is driven from headquarters. Unfortunately, the position of the most senior communicator globally could not be determined. Communication is only a small part of the interviewee’s role in the organisation. As she describes it, she “kind of takes [communication] on as an additional

kind of service to the organisation but generally speaking Global would provide any communication material, collateral, and we'd implement it within the South African context." As such internal communication in Case B is primarily one way. The global communication team asks her, as the local most senior communicator, to assist in disseminating communication materials regionally but she does not engage in dialogue with them on the communication strategy. The link between the Southern Africa Office and the senior management of Case B is via their 'African Leader' who is the representative for Africa (although based in Washington) on the Board of Directors. While serving as a communication channel between the regional and head offices, the interviewee indicated that the African Leader is not primarily a communicator, but a programme manager. Figure 7.3 further illustrates this position of the local most senior communicator.

Figure 7.3: Position of internal communication in Case B



From what could be determined from the interviewee's responses, the communication function does not play a specific role in either the strategy development or strategy implementation process.

7.2.2.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee has a background in marketing and communication for NGOs. However, her role does not focus on communication enough to provide it with a strategic foundation. It was not possible to evaluate the knowledge of the global communication team. However, the interviewee states "our target driven by the head office is awareness of our fellows and awareness of the organisation as a whole." This does not indicate an overall strategic

functioning for communication in the organisation. Instead, the examples of internal communication within the organisation indicate a tactical approach.

7.2.2.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

Case B did not have a strategy document they could share with the researcher nor was their strategic intent clear from their website. In any case, the formal internal communication in Case B appears primarily to centre on the provision of resources by the communication team in Washington to staff in regional centres. For example, the interviewee describes how the international communication team “sends out regular newsletters, both staff focused newsletters ... and various other kinds of nice-to-know information. It’s called ‘News you can use’ and it literally is news you can use.” She did discuss various ways that strategy was communicated, but this was not coordinated through a communication function.

7.2.2.1.5 Internal communication process

As noted above, locally there is no separate internal communication process and internal communication activities occur on an ad hoc basis. Global internal communication appears to primarily centre on the provision of resources. The primary vehicle for internal communication from the internal communication team was a staff-focused newsletter. In addition, the interviewee noted the recent adoption of an online database that facilitates internal communication within Case B. Regular conference calls and annual face-to-face meetings were also identified as key forums for internal communication. Finally, cascading communication through the African leader were noted as an important medium for communication to and from the local office. Overall, while some local forums for dialogue were identified, the main internal communication tools between the local office and head office appeared asymmetrical.

7.2.2.2 Communication of corporate strategy

The communication of the organisation’s strategic intent to internal stakeholders does not appear to be coordinated by the communication function. However, the interviewee did describe a process both globally and locally for the communication of corporate strategy.

In terms of the development of strategy, in Case B, this occurs at the global level and there was no indication that local internal stakeholders were involved. From the local perspective, it appears to be a non-participative process directed by the organisation's Board. As the interviewee describes "we have a strategy that comes down from the board which is based in DC. So we have a strategy, we have targets, we have ... performance agreements that come down from the board."

The communication regarding strategy between the local office and the headquarters occurs through two avenues. At one level, the local employees interact directly with global employees through yearly meetings in Washington and regular conference calls. As the interviewee notes, this process involves discussions on all aspects of the organisation from fundraising to strategy. She also notes that they "do various reports – quarterly reports. The template is set and we plug in our achievements, challenges etc in those templates and that is sent to the US office." The second avenue of communication around strategy is with the African leader who represents the African region on Case B's Board of Directors. As the interviewee describes "this person represents us when feeding back our performance to the board and also is able to kind-of key in to any challenges or any opportunities that may come up when they do report to the board."

Locally, the organisation's strategy is communicated each year through a participative strategic planning session, where the global strategy is applied to the local context. This is followed up throughout the year by regular meetings where progress and challenges are identified. However, the interviewee identified a major deficiency in this process:

"we communicate the local strategy and that's obviously informed by the global strategy determined for us or with us, but ... we lack in being able to merge the two really well and communicate that to the staff so the staff tend to see this as 'this is our Southern African strategy' and we rarely tell them ... how this impacts on the global [Case B] world"

Overall, strategy is communicated throughout Case B, but it fails to create ownership of the overall strategy at the local level.

7.2.2.3 Barriers and challenges

Case B did not have a corporate strategy document nor was their strategic intent clear from their website. This lack of a clear strategic intent is a major barrier to effective internal communication. In addition, several challenges in the implementation of strategic internal communication in Case B were either identified by the interviewee or became apparent during the interview.

First, as noted in the previous section, in Case B there is a disconnect between the communication of the global and local corporate strategy. The interviewee's comments indicate that there may be a lack of effective communication between headquarters and local offices overall. For example, her description of their board member as knowing "what happens on the ground as far as an American or a non-African could" indicates that she views him as not completely representing the continent. Similarly, she says "everything happens in DC and sometimes what is communicated in DC doesn't always filter through in as much detail as it should when it reaches the local offices so that sometimes, but not always, poses a problem." These comments highlight the challenge of internal communication in an international organisation which is further exacerbated by time zone and language issues.

Secondly, the interviewee identified resource constraints as both a major challenge for implementing effective internal communication as well as a major reason why it needs to be done. She states: "We have such limited resources that internal communication done well and effectively maximises ... or mobilises the limited resources we have." However, she also says:

"The challenges are that everyone is wearing so many different hats that ... we'd rather not delve too deep into what could be the reasons why something [internal communication] is a consistent challenge because that means we need to commit resources and manage human capital resources and time and financial resources."

This statement also highlights the challenge of implementing effective internal communication when the most senior communicator is fulfilling multiple roles. As she notes: "It doesn't make for efficient and effective kind of strategy implementation because

everyone is focused on so many different things.” The time availability of other staff members also poses a challenge as they are less likely to engage with internal communication tools and activities when operating under time constraints.

Finally, the interviewee identified staff turnover as “a huge huge issue” because it means that any investment in staff is quickly lost when they move on. The reason she saw staff turnover being such an issue was because Case B, as a NGO, did not have the resources to provide substantial financial remunerations or other forms of rewards. She felt that this had a major impact on staff morale and “obviously staff morale equals not effective communication, not effective carrying out of strategic roles.” Resource constraints, therefore, play a big role in Case B’s ability to carry out effective strategic internal communication.

7.2.2.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case B

Despite some recognition of its strategic function, internal communication in Case B did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. Considering Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level two because any strategic orientation is limited to the development of formal communication products.

The overall structure of the communication function of Case B fits the global model for internal communication identified by (Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:245) as necessary for ensuring a coherent strategic intent across a global organisation. However, there is no ownership of the internal communication process locally as is called for in Mounter’s (2003:268) framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5). Based on the theory, this lack of ownership can lead to lack of commitment and poor implementation of internal communication activities in local contexts. This combined with the poor staff morale identified by the interviewee can help explain the poor strategic functioning of internal communication at the regional level. However, without more evidence from the global level, it is not possible to draw conclusions as to the reasons behind the lack of strategic functioning across the organisation as a whole.

7.2.3 Case study C

As noted in Chapter 6, Case C is an INGO federation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland with a regional Africa office in Johannesburg as well as offices in Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. Case C adopts a functional structure in its headquarters with a matrix structure in its regional offices. Overall Case C plays both an operational service-oriented role and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.3.1 Scope of internal communication

In Case C, internal communication is a separate unit within the communication function in the headquarters in Geneva. At the regional level, internal communication is a formal part of the regional most senior communicator’s job description. The local most senior communicator, the communication manager for Southern Africa, noted that there were two levels to their internal communication, communication within the secretariat (headquarters and regional offices) and communication between the secretariat and national affiliates. Table 7.4 outlines the purpose, position, knowledge, content and process of internal communication in Case C as constructed from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.4: Characteristics of internal communication in Case C

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Communication culture	Part of senior management	Strategic	Strategic	Asymmetrical, online
Organisational documents	Strategic alignment	Not part of senior management	N/A	Strategic	Online

7.2.3.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

The interviewee was not able to provide the researcher with the specific objectives of Case C’s internal communication. His answers did suggest that the internal communication function advised on change management, assisted with knowledge management and information sharing, and built communication capacity internally. He did not specifically note strategic alignment as an aim for the function, but Case C’s strategic document notes that the organisation uses “strong information-sharing platforms to share knowledge,

promote innovation and create organisational cohesion – a common sense of belonging and engagement that extends from the global level to both national and branch levels.” On a similar note, the interviewee did say that

“Internal comms isn’t just distributing information; it’s really trying to create a culture of talking you know. ... The approach you know has to be kind of an internal communication culture ... it has to be more part of everyone’s responsibility with communication perhaps just facilitating that.”

Based on this statement and the organisation’s corporate strategy, the purpose of internal communication in Case C can be devised as one of facilitating the flow of information and dialogue for the purpose of creating a more cohesive and engaged workforce and thus is linked to achieving strategic alignment.

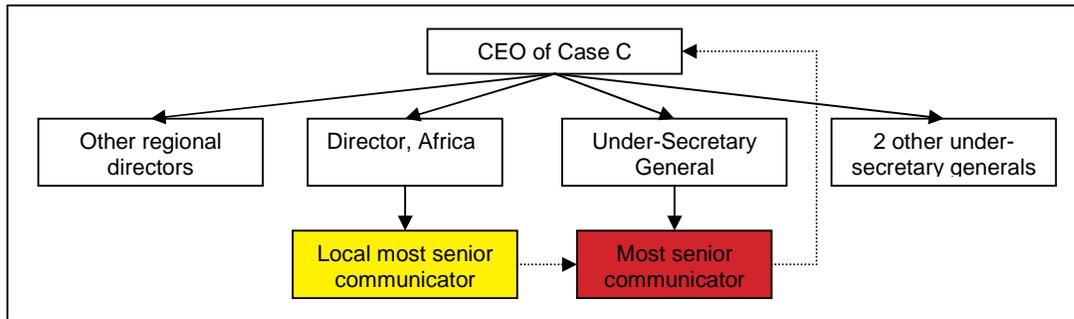
7.2.3.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In the organogram for Case C, the head of the Communication Unit reports to an under-Secretary General who then reports to the Secretary General. A similar structure is also in place at the regional level. Therefore, the senior communicator does not automatically have a position at the most-senior management level. As the interviewee describes:

“We’re not curing people of cholera, we’re not shipping relief into disasters zones and our value is not as immediately apparent and it’s very easy for us to be marginalised so we have to really earn our seat at the table.”

He goes on to say that the current most senior communicator in Geneva has earned the respect of the Secretary General for both himself and his team, meaning that he is in the position to play a real role at the senior strategic level. Figure 7.4 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.4: Position of internal communication in Case C



The interviewee cautions that this position is “based on personalities”. If the current Secretary General, Under-Secretary General, or head of communication were to change, the position of communication at the “cabinet table” would be in jeopardy. Similarly, the communication function globally is fairly decentralised, although there is an attempt to put in place a global communication strategy, meaning that the local most senior communicator’s access to senior management varies based on the personalities in each region.

Even with the senior communicator having direct access to top management at the head office, communication, particularly internal communication, is not always involved in the projects it should be. For example “because [internal communication] sits under the head of communication ... maybe it’s pushed a little bit to the side, he’s not involved with the very senior management who are overseeing [our restructuring] process, [therefore] it [consultations] doesn’t incur.” While communication is currently fairly well positioned to make strategic contributions, this is not the ideal position overall.

This less than ideal position is reflected in the internal communication function’s strategic role. While it does play a role in soliciting feedback during strategy development, not all the communication processes are led by the communication function. As the interviewee describes from a recent strategy development process:

“Efforts were made to use ... Facebook, which was reasonably successful, [but] I think the organisation learnt lessons ... I mean one of the issues for that is that it wasn’t coordinated through the communication department so some mistakes were made.”

For strategy implementation, the internal communication function undertakes a campaign that involves internal branding around the strategy to create a suite of materials to help affiliates and different functions adapt the strategy in their own region. However, while assigned this role, it is not involved in the overall strategic planning for the communication of strategy.

7.2.3.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee has an undergraduate degree in communication and psychology as well as over seven years experience in communication or related fields. Throughout the interview, he indicates that he and Case C's overall communication function understand the strategic value of communication. As he notes, the communication function plays a capacity building role with the communication in their national affiliates and always advocates that "communication to report directly to the Secretary General because it builds the profile, and also because ... it has strategic value even internally." Overall, communication in Case C appears to function with a sound understanding of its strategic role.

7.2.3.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The internal communication unit in Case C does play a role in the communication of the organisation's strategic intent during both strategy development and strategy implementation. In addition, it assists with the flow of information between different departments and programmes as well as providing communication resources. While not all the content of Case C's internal communication is explicitly linked to its strategic intent, the overall impression is that it is all undertaken with the goal of furthering it. As noted in their organisational strategy, "the core characteristics for ... effectiveness, includ[e] ... effective internal communication arrangements."

7.2.3.1.5 Internal communication process

Case C uses a variety of different tools for internal communication. The interviewee noted that the emphasis is often on email as it is the most reliable form of communication for them to reach all the national affiliates, no matter the quality of their internet connection. Case C does rely on line management for communicating some internal messages;

however, the interviewee noted that the success of this process really depended on the manager. In addition, the organisation uses an intranet, which is currently being updated, as well as conference calls, e-newsletters and face-to-face meetings.

Currently, internal communication in Case C is asymmetrical and “there’s no sort of structured institutional approach just yet” to encourage dialogue. The revised intranet is being developed to “set up these networks, informal ad hoc networks that don’t crumble under the weight of bureaucracy or anything like that.” The aim is to facilitate dialogue across the organisation, between regions, national affiliates and the head office. However, this process is not yet in place.

7.2.3.2 Communication of corporate strategy

Case C develops its global strategy every ten years and it is implemented in the headquarters, regional offices and national affiliates. However, it is designed to be a flexible document and describes itself as “a dynamic framework that is responsive to differing contexts and changing circumstances.” Strategy development is led by a senior person appointed by the Secretary General but is designed to be a participative process. The interviewee describes multiple rounds of feedback with tools designed “to be able to make sure that the feedback wasn’t just from [senior people in national affiliates] or from their governing boards but really trying to get it as far into the field structure” as possible. However, as noted above, not all the communication processes were led by the communication function. Overall, however, the strategy development process was participative.

Strategy implementation is clearly “a priority for all of us” in the organisation, according to the interviewee. For the internal communication function, it involves an “internal communication campaign if you will.” As discussed above, this campaign would involve internal branding around the strategy to create a suite of materials to help affiliates and different functions adapt the strategy in their own region. In addition, Case C is training about 70 strategy facilitators “in how to engage national [affiliates] to see how they can take this strategy and adopt it to their national context, how they can use it in terms of feeding into their own strategic plans and stuff like that”. However, this latter process is not led by the communication unit.

7.2.3.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several barriers for internal communication in his organisation. First, he argued that the ‘segmentation’ of internal communication as a separate unit within the organisation was detrimental because it meant that employees do not take responsibility for their own role in the sharing of information. Rather, he argued that there needs to be an “internal communication culture” in the organisation that engages all employees in the process of internal communication. He noted that this requires counter-acting many of the expectations of employees, who expected to receive from internal communication rather than contribute to it. The lack of understanding about the proper role of the internal communication function as well as its less than ideal position as described above, are challenges for effective internal communication.

Second, the organisation’s culture is a challenge for internal communication in the organisation. The interviewee noted that limited human resources are a barrier to effective internal communication: “the struggle ... is capacity; I mean it’s always a struggle for internal communication.” Part of the challenge is that, as he described it, internal communication is not as “exciting” and does not deliver tangible results. This suggests an action culture within the organisation. The interviewee described another challenge posed by the organisation’s culture when he says “we’re incredibly sensitive to criticism.” This has posed a barrier to the adoption of social media both internally and externally. In addition, it suggests a conflict between the organisation’s values of transparency and its desire to control the information that is part of the public domain.

Third, the organisation’s context is a challenge for Case C’s internal communication. The interviewee described the chaos in their external environment:

“sometimes it looks like our core business has changed, we’re constantly reinventing ourselves and restructuring because priorities shift very quickly, funding shifts very quickly, the expectations of our donors shift very quickly.”

The result is a need to be flexible and able to meet the needs of different stakeholders as change occurs. He also noted that this was further complicated by the digital divide between different parts of the world which limited the available internal communication tools and made it difficult to be effective across all parts of the organisation.

Finally, the interviewee described the difficulty of a “massive” mission and the need to prioritise. He noted that this is difficult to do for the benefit of the entire organisation when “ultimately you get your money to play your games from programmes and they want their programmes communicated”. Therefore negotiating these tensions is a challenge for internal communication in INGOs.

7.2.3.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case C

Internal communication in Case C meets all the normative criteria for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4 to some degree. While its position is not ideal, its purpose not fully committed to strategic alignment and its content focus somewhat on general information sharing, overall internal communication in case C does function fairly strategically. Considering Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level four because it does promoted strategic alignment. However, it is not a level five because the most senior communicator is seen more as a trusted advisor and senior strategist than a fully integrated member of the senior leadership team. Poor understanding of the role of internal communication within the organisation, lack of resources and an action culture may be the reason behind internal communication not completely fulfilling its strategic function in this case.

In terms of its functioning, Case C’s internal communication bears resemblance to both Mounter’s (2003:268) framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5) and Mellor and Dewhurst’s (20008) framework for an effective internal communication function (Figure 5.10). While centralised in headquarters, the internal communication function does operate globally via a network of internal communicators who take ownership of the function in their local offices. This reflects Figure 5.5, where globally a few key messages and non-negotiables are identified but local managers have the flexibility to deliver these in the most appropriate manner for their region. Case C reflects figure 5.10 because it identifies the role of strategy and culture in the internal communication process. As noted above, the interviewee identified building a communication culture as a major part of the purpose of internal communication.

This emphasis on culture supports over evidence in Case C of a shift toward a postmodern approach to strategic management and communication. For example, there was emphasis

of the need for the strategy to be flexible in order to adapt to changing external contexts. However, internal communication in Case C is primarily asymmetrical and does not include significant dialogue as a postmodern approach requires. Therefore, while there is support for the implementation of a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication, it is not yet reflected in practice.

7.2.4 Case study D

As noted in Chapter 6, Case D is an INGO federation with headquarters in South Africa but offices and affiliate organisations all over the world. Case D is structured along the lines of a matrix and plays both an operational service-oriented role and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.4.1 Scope of internal communication

Case D does have a formal internal communication unit; however, it is housed separately within the organisational effectiveness function (alongside human resources, information technology and impact assessment and shared learning) and not as part of the communication function. In addition, the communication function is currently undergoing major restructuring with many positions moving from Johannesburg to London. Therefore, it was not possible to interview the most senior communicator; instead the interview was conducted with the internal communication manager who had also previously held a senior role in the communication function. The internal communication unit was only established one and a half years ago and therefore has not fully established its role within the organisation. However, the internal communication manager did provide detailed comment on the role the unit has played so far and the vision for the future. Table 7.5 outlines the purpose, position, content, knowledge and process of the internal communication function in Case D as constructed from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.5: Characteristics of internal communication in Case D

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Collaboration, internal branding, information sharing	Not part of senior management, advisor	Strategic	Task-related	Asymmetrical (vertical), online
Organisational documents	Strategic alignment	Part of senior management	Strategic	Task-related	Online

7.2.4.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

The internal communication unit has several formal objectives:

- “To develop, implement and monitor the internal communication policy which will come out of the strategy to ensure standards compliance”;
- “to ensure higher quality and more effective and efficient collaboration and information sharing”;
- “to build staff capacity around internal communication and to raise awareness of and ensure internal brand compliance and organisational commitment”;
- “to provide internal comms expertise to the international secretariat management team”; and,
- to “ensure effective change management, [and] communication of strategic operational.”

The interviewee also noted that the key is developing community spaces where communication can occur, opposed to centralising all communication within the unit.

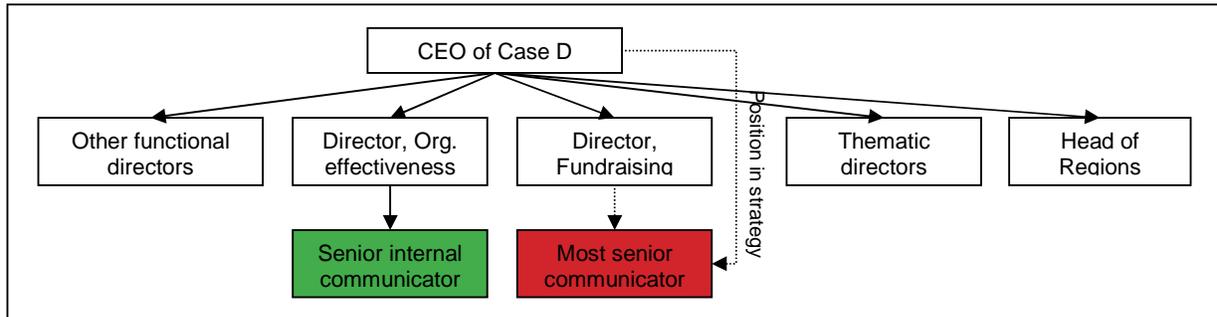
These objectives do not spell out strategic alignment as the purpose of the internal communication unit, but they do suggest recognition of internal communication’s role in establishing the internal brand and the communication of corporate strategy. In addition, the overarching goal of the organisational effectiveness function, of which internal communication is a part, does link its role to strategic alignment: “to shape the organisation’s mindset, structure, systems, staffing and culture to ensure best fit for the purposes expressed in [the organisation’s strategy].”

7.2.4.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

The communication function in Case D is established in its five year strategy as a key organisational function with direct access to the CEO. However, the interviewee established that recently, due in part to the departure of the most senior communicator, the communication function was placed under the fundraising department. Therefore, there is currently no senior communicator with a seat among the most senior managers of the organisation. In any case, as is specified in the organisation’s communication strategy, internal communication is not considered part of communication function. Instead, internal communication is positioned within the organisational effectiveness function alongside human resources, IT and impact assessment and shared learning. The international

director for organisational effectiveness does sit at the senior management table, however, there he is not a specialist in either internal communication or communication generally. Figure 7.5 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.5: Position of internal communication in Case D



The interviewee indicated that she did play a role in the strategic management of the organisation, but this was primarily to do with establishing a strategy for her unit that was linked to the organisation’s strategy. She did not identify a role for her function in overall corporate strategy development; however, she did note that for strategy implementation she would be involved in an internal branding campaign. Overall, her role among senior managers was that of an advisor, and not a full member, “to provide internal communication expertise to the international secretariat management team, ensure effective change management, [and] communication of strategic operational objectives.”

7.2.4.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

As noted above, the most senior communicator had recently departed the organisation and it was not possible to determine her background or the background of other members of the communication function. The interviewee does not have a formal education in communication. However, she had many years experience managing general communication functions before moving into internal communication. Her responses to several questions indicate an awareness and understanding of the strategic role of internal communication:

“Effective internal communication is absolutely vital ... to provide information for effective decision making, to develop buy-in for new processes and projects ...for change communication. ... [to] ensure that everyone’s on

*board, that teams know about key decisions and can implement those in time
... So without communication you might as well just go home.”*

Similarly, the goals of the overall organisational effectiveness function illustrates that the organisation understands and recognises the need for strategic alignment through communication, structure, culture and activities.

7.2.4.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The internal communication unit was not established when Case D's previous strategy was developed. However the organisation is in the process of developing a new strategy, and while the internal communication unit does not appear to be playing a role in the strategy development, the interviewee did recognise that once the strategy was complete “it would mean working closely with me on a whole internal communication campaign.” Therefore strategy is a part of the content focus of internal communication in Case D, but the interviewee did note that she did not focus enough on strategy. Instead, much of Case D's internal communication was focused on general information sharing and online collaboration among teams for task-related activities. This focus is, however, in line with the organisation's strategy which calls for “effective management of distant and virtual team working” and “more effective internal communication and more knowledge input.”

7.2.4.1.5 Internal communication process

The main focus of the internal communication unit since its creation a year and a half ago has been Case D's intranet. The intranet has been designed to both facilitate information sharing and online collaboration. The process of promoting and maintaining the intranet is decentralised, with intranet facilitators in each national affiliate serving as the focus point. The interviewee uses this intranet facilitators' network to serve as a broader internal communication network to both disseminate messages and obtain feedback and input.

A second process undertaken by the internal communication unit is development and communication of accessible documents outlining senior decisions that are distributed to internal stakeholders so that they have the information needed to implement these decisions in their work. Finally, a third focus of the internal communication unit is to work

with departments and units in Case D to develop internal communication strategies for new policies, new projects and other activities.

Other internal communication tools in Case D include email, video and teleconferencing, e-newsletters and fact-to-face workshops. Overall, while the intranet facilitates significant horizontal dialogue, vertical communication appears to be primarily asymmetrical.

7.2.4.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As noted previously, the internal communication unit was not established during the development and initial implementation of Case D's previous strategy. However, the organisation is starting the process of strategy development again. There is no indication from the interviewee that internal communication is playing a role in this process. Overall, it appears that the process is hierarchical and non-participative. As described by the interviewee "it's quite a detailed process of working through the international directors, the theme and function heads" and also involves consideration of external factors such as fundraising potential.

During strategy implementation, the internal communication unit plays a role by developing accessible documents and "a whole internal communication campaign to ensure this full understanding of the objectives and buy-in as well." However overall, the strategy implementation process appears to occur equally along vertical lines with unit heads developing their strategies that link to their function strategies that link to the overall strategy. The interviewee does note that in this process, she "would imagine that each of the team leader, because that is the way work we work, would consult with their teams." Case D's strategy similarly calls for "staff to be involved in shaping the organisation." However, the internal communication tools developed for dialogue appear to be primarily aimed at breaking down horizontal barriers to communication, rather than vertical ones.

7.2.4.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee noted several barriers and challenges for internal communication. For example, she identified resource constraints, both financial and human, as hindering her ability to implement a full effective strategic internal communication programme. The importance placed on internal communication when determining money and time

allocations was minimal, creating difficulties implementing a fully developed internal communication strategy across the organisation. This problem is further compounded by a poor understanding of the role of the internal communication unit, resulting in certain inappropriate tasks being given to the unit and it not being involved in other projects that it should be.

Similarly, she identified several challenges of working internationally, such as language and difficulty communicating across regions, as barriers that need to be overcome by internal communication. These barriers pose further challenges by “teams scattered around the world who hoard their information”. Facilitating the communication internationally is a challenge in a global organisation.

The interviewee also identified power and gender issues within Case D as barriers to effective internal communication. These issues directly contradict some of the values of the organisation, such as ‘mutual respect’ and ‘equity and justice’, and their presence within the organisation can directly threaten its legitimacy: a large focus of Case D is women’s rights and promoting the rights of the ‘powerless’. As the interviewee describes it:

“You’ll still find men will keep women in certain positions and not support their promotion or leadership development and all that sort of thing ... even though that is an area that we very much try to push, at the end of the day, what we do as an organisation and what individuals do will not always align as closely as you would like them to.”

Addressing these issues where actions do not support values is a difficult but important challenge for strategic internal communication. These challenges can threaten the external brand, reputation and legitimacy of the organisation, as well as the commitment of employees.

7.2.4.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case D

Internal communication in Case D meets some of the normative criteria for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. For example, its purpose is linked to strategic alignment and the most senior communicator does have some knowledge of its strategic role. However, it is not part of senior management, a major impediment to

functioning strategically that was identified by Steyn and Puth (2000). Considering Grimshaw and Mike's (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), Case D's internal communication would be classified as a level three. The most senior communicator for internal communication operates as a trusted advisor but is not a part of the senior strategic leadership team.

Case D reflects elements of both Mounter's framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5). The interviewee has organised a network of internal communication representatives across the different offices of Case D and uses it to undertake internal communication activities. This reflects step 4 of Figure 5.5 which identifies developing a communication network to provide support for local strategic internal communication. In addition, the interviewee has empowered this network to take ownership of internal communication tools like the intranet, reflecting step 6 of Figure 5.5. As Mounter (2003:268) points out, this is important because it promotes commitment and better positions the tools to address local needs and adapt to cultural nuances.

Overall, the functioning of internal communication in Case D reflects Welch and Jackson's internal corporate communication model (Figure 5.8). Case D identified communication of senior decisions as an important process for internal communication to manage. As discussed in Chapter 5, Figure 5.8 illustrates that the goals of internal communication are achieved through communication from the organisation's strategic managers to all employees, reflecting the outward communication described by the interviewee. In addition, Welch and Jackson (2007:187) argue that this process is by necessity primarily asymmetrical. Case D's vertical communication reflects this, with communication about strategy flowing primarily from top to bottom with only minor room for feedback. As such, similar to Figure 5.8 and many of the other models in Chapter 5, Case D illustrates a traditional linear approach to strategic management and communication.

7.2.5 Case study E

As noted in Chapter 6, Case E is an INGO headquartered in Washington DC, with regional offices around the world, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. Case E has a divisional structure and fulfils a global policy and advocacy role, as well as a small operational service-orientated role.

7.2.5.1 Scope of internal communication

Case E does not have a specific communication function. Many communication activities, including managing the website, media relations and the annual report, are coordinated through an advocacy function under the auspices of the Director of Advocacy at the head office in Washington DC. Other activities concerning writing and editing appear to be the responsibility of the publications team in the New York office. Internal communication is not formally assigned to either of these functions, nor was there evidence that it was considered the responsibility of human resources. Both the Director of Advocacy and the Human Resources manager were new to the organisation at the time of this research and therefore were not able to provide evidence for this case study.

For this study, a senior programme officer in the Johannesburg office was interviewed. She coordinates several of the internal and external communication activities regionally and thus serves as the local most senior communicator. While there is no formal internal communication function, she was able to highlight many of the current internal communication activities undertaken regionally and between the regions and the head office. Also, a recent visit to the head office allowed her to comment on several of the internal communication activities undertaken at that level. Table 7.6 outlines the content, purpose, position, knowledge and process of the internal communication activities in Case E as constructed from the interview. Case E did not have an organisational strategy or a communication strategy, although the interviewee did support her comments by showing the researcher examples of different internal communication tools.

Table 7.6: Characteristics of internal communication in Case E

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Not part of senior management	Tactical	Project information	Asymmetrical, cascading
Organisational documents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

7.2.5.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

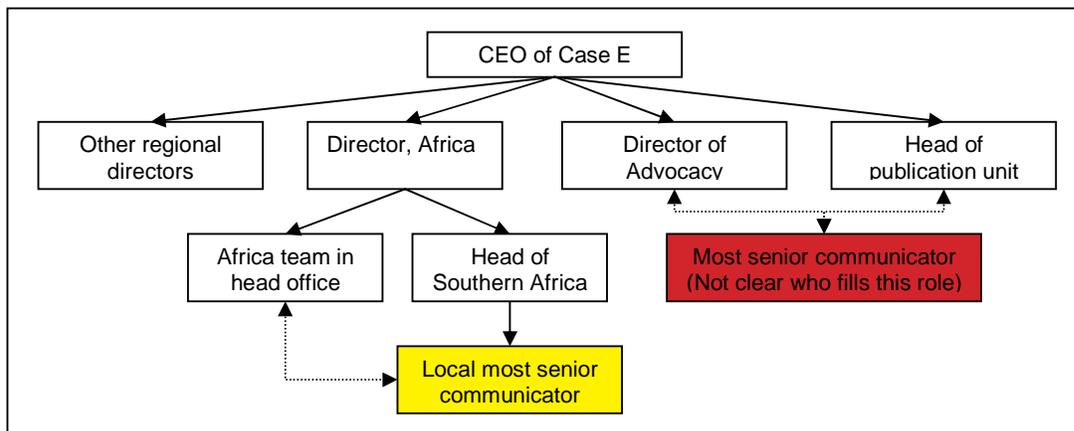
The interviewee described the purpose of the internal communication activities in the Case E as “to basically make sure that the branch offices know what’s going on in the head

office and that we can get proper approval for the things that we are doing ... [for which] we really need to make sure they (head office) know what is going on.” She did note that the overall purpose should be to ensure awareness throughout the organisation of its corporate strategy but that as it currently stands even “we are not so aware of it ourselves.”

7.2.5.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

Case E does not have a specific communication function and therefore does not have a senior communicator as part of the senior management team. The Director of Advocacy is a senior management position in the organisation, meaning that some of the communication activities are represented at the strategic level. However, internal communication is not part of the Director of Advocacy’s responsibility and is therefore not represented among senior management. Regionally, communication again is not formally assigned to any specific person and is centralised through the Head office. Figure 7.6 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.6: Position of internal communication in Case E



The interviewee has little direct access to the Director of Advocacy and others who undertake communication activities and she notes that the access she does have is the result of the personal relationships that she developed when she visited the head office rather than any formal organisational structure: “I find that I’m a lot freer to be able to speak to them (head office) because there is a personal relationship.” Overall, communication is not part of the senior management of the organisation, either globally or

regionally. Since there is no specific communication function, it also cannot play a role in corporate strategy development or implementation.

7.2.5.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee trained in journalism and has experience working in communication, giving her some understanding of the function. However, both her description of communication activities and the position of communication within the organisation illustrate an understanding of the tactics of communication, but not its strategic role. For example, she describes one of their main internal communication activities as follows: “they basically have what they call an update sheet which they put all their updates on and circulate.”

7.2.5.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The interviewee identified a variety of different internal communication tools in Case E, most of which were used to share information and coordinate projects between the head office and the regional office as well as within the regional office. She described the contents of a regular report from head office as follows: “it’s just what they’ve been doing, to some degree reports on the strategies they’ve been developing and what their thinking is around the strategy as well as different grants that they’ve been applying for.” While this does indicate some strategic content for internal communication, she emphasised that these strategies were project-related and not clearly linked to an overall strategy for the organisation.

7.2.5.1.5 Internal communication process

Internal communication in Case E centres on the communication between head office and the regional offices. As the interviewee describes, “we depend a lot on email,” and regular conference calls as well. The process of communicating organisational-wide information is via a cascade system: the information is communicated to the Africa team in the head office who then have the responsibility of communicating it to the regional African offices. As the interviewee describes “it really depends on single people at our head office to communicate it to us.” In addition the African team in the head office provides a bi-weekly newsletter to the regional offices and the regional offices send a weekly report to the

African team at the head office. Both these report primarily focus on project information. The head office also has monthly staff meetings and a monthly newsletter which is not sent regularly to the regional offices: “usually it’s just to the head office staff, but for the first time in 8 months I received it in our office just last month ... the first time I’d seen it was when I was there [in Washington DC].”

There is some room for dialogue and face-to-face communication in the regional office through regular staff meetings as well as video conferences with the African team in the head office. As the interviewee describes:

“in our office we try to have meetings and its an opportunity for everyone to engage at that level and even, we have meetings with the head office as well via video conference and everyone participates even the programme assistants and the finance people, so that’s great but the highest level there would be the Africa manager.”

As she notes, there is very little engagement between the regional offices and the organisation’s senior management. Overall communication in Case E is asymmetrical with information flowing from head office to the regions with very little opportunity for dialogue.

7.2.5.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As was noted previously, Case E does not have a corporate strategy and the interviewee could not describe how the organisation’s strategic intent is communicated to the regional office. She did note that the Africa team in the head office did develop strategies around the African programme which were communicated to the regional office through their bi-weekly report, conference calls and face-to-face meetings. While the head office team does appear to lead the programme strategy development process, there are opportunities for at least some members of the regional office to contribute by participating in meetings and engaging with the African programme officer and African manager.

Regionally, the Southern Africa office has developed its own strategy for the projects it is implementing. In terms of the link between the regional strategy and the global strategy of the organisation, the interviewee says the following:

“My experience has been that it’s not linked ... we’re not asked to contribute to their strategy and they contribute to our strategy in some ways. We have an Africa manager who manages all the Africa offices and manages the Africa team at the Head office and he feeds into our strategy.”

The regional strategy is developed through participative meetings of the programme team in South Africa and the African manager. The process is an ongoing strategy development process and is very flexible because the Southern Africa office works primarily in Zimbabwe and must try “to orient ourselves around the situation in the country as it changes.” The strategy process is also heavily influenced by the donors who are funding the Southern Africa projects. The interviewee describes the relationship with one influential donor: “they have the ability to kind of say ‘what about this’, ‘why don’t we do this’, and we can say ‘No’ but it’s not in our interest to do so.” Overall, the regional strategy development process is fairly participative but it lacks engagement with the organisation’s overall strategy development and implementation processes.

7.2.5.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several barriers and challenges for effective internal communication in Case E. For example, she noted that they are extremely busy in the regional office and do not necessarily have the time to engage with the head office on the corporate strategy issues. Another basic challenge is the digital divide most evident between the regional office and several staff members who regularly work in Zimbabwe.

A further challenge in Case E is the lack of a clear strategic intent and the focus on specific projects based on the funding from donors. As the interviewee describes, they are “a little bit isolated from our head office in some ways because we do our own strategy within Freedom House Southern Africa and sometimes that’s based around the grants that we get.” The lack of a clear organisation-wide strategic intent and a focus on specific projects as dictated by donors is a barrier for internal communication and its role in creating a cohesive workforce.

A less tangible barrier is a poor flow of communication between the head office and the regional offices which is exacerbated when internal stakeholders do not fully engage in the

internal communication processes. The interviewee describes a situation where this is a real challenge:

“[the deputy directors] won’t be fully informed of what’s happening on the ground, our daily work, and so sometimes things will get delayed at that level because things need to get communicated to them ... [you] just hope that your executives are reading your weekly reports, that they know what’s going on and they feel like they can communicate directly.”

Related to this challenge, regular turnover of staff at the regional office can result in the processes and relationships that do develop being regularly lost. Developing tools and processes to overcome these issues is a challenge for internal communication.

7.2.5.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case E

Internal communication in Case E did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. Since there is no formal internal communication function in Case E, it does not even register on Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9). For similar reasons, Case E does not reflect any of the models and frameworks related to internal communication discussed in Chapter 5. However, in its regional office, Case E does show evidence of postmodern strategic management. Post-modern strategic management requires the organisation to be open to its external environment and constantly adapt to it through self-organising dialogue on its strategic intent (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:37). Through ongoing discussions on its strategy in the ever-changing Zimbabwe environment, Case E illustrates a postmodern strategic management approach. As argued by Puth (2002:203), if that strategic discourse could be extended across the entire organisation at all levels, individual and collective strategic consciousness would be raised and strategic alignment achieved.

7.3 CROSS-CASE COMPARISON

This section compares the case studies along the same dimensions: scope of internal communication, communication of corporate strategy, and barriers and challenges. The cases are considered in their context to identify how contextual characteristics such as their size, and structure impact on each of these dimensions. In addition, key themes across cases are also identified. The theory developed in Chapter 2 to 5 is integrated into

the discussion to identify how current practices differ from the theoretical normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs.

7.3.1 Case study contexts

As outlined in Chapter 6, the five case studies covered all three structures for INGOs identified by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:65-67) in Table 2.5: federations, global organisations and networks. Their internal structures were combinations of functional, divisional and matrix structure, with no one format appearing predominant. Of the three roles for INGOs identified by Lewis (2007:40), an operational service-oriented role, a global policy and advocacy role and a counter-hegemonic activist role, only the first two were represented in the case studies. All cases fulfilled some sort of global policy and advocacy role.

7.3.2 Scope of internal communication

Only Cases C and D had formal internal communication functions. Case B had internal communication responsibilities assigned to the broader communication function. Case A had a communication function but internal communication was not officially part of its responsibilities, while Case E had no communication function at all. Despite the wide range in the formalisation of internal communication in each organisation, it was possible to construct the purpose, position, content of the function, the knowledge of the internal communicator and the process of internal communication in each case. Table 7.7 summarises each of the cases' positions along these dimensions as well as the normative ideal from the theory developed in Chapter 4.

Table 7.7: Comparison of the characteristics of internal communication in all cases

Type of organisation	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Theory (Chapter 4)	Strategic alignment	Part of senior management	Strategic	Strategic intent	Symmetrical, holistic
Networks					
Case A	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, Manager	Tactical	Task related	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Global organisations					
Case B	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, Tactician	Tactical	Resources	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Case E	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, tactician	Tactical	Project information	Asymmetrical
Federations					
Case C	Communication culture	Part of senior management, strategist	Strategic	Strategic	Asymmetrical, online
Case D	Collaboration, internal branding, information sharing	Not part of senior management, advisor	Strategic	Task-related	Asymmetrical (vertical), online

7.3.2.1 Purpose of internal communication

Overall, a primary purpose for internal communication across the case studies was knowledge management and information sharing. Both federations strongly emphasised, and were echoed by Case A, a network, that it was not internal communication's purpose to gather information and distribute it, but rather to facilitate the process and build a culture of open communication and collaboration in the organisation. This view is similar to the post-modern vision of organisational strategy and internal communication discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, where the goal is to build a flexible and adaptable organisation based on dialogue and communication. As noted by Foreman (1997:18), strategic internal communication is concerned with developing a culture or atmosphere of ongoing communication.

Knowledge management and information sharing are necessary in an organisation, but as discussed in Chapter 4, to be strategic, internal communication should be driven by an overall goal of strategic alignment (Doorley and Garcia, 2007:129). In all the case studies, the senior communicator and/or the organisational documents did provide some recognition of the role of internal communication in achieving strategic alignment. However, despite this recognition, only the federations undertook internal communication activities that were directly designed to achieve strategic alignment but even for them this

was not a focus for their internal communication. Thus internal communication in the case studies was not centred on a core strategic goal.

Finally, the activities the cases identified as being directly related to strategic alignment did not centre on the dialogue needed to build strategic consciousness. As discussed in Chapter 3, Puth (2002:185) describes the development of strategic consciousness through dialogue around strategic intent and related issues necessary for real strategic alignment to occur. Internal stakeholders must not only be aware of the strategic intent but imbue their daily activities with it. Similarly, Ridder (2004:20) argues that the role of strategic internal communication is to foster a “community spirit within [the] organisation [that] falls in line with its strategic direction”. This objective was not evident among the case studies.

7.3.2.2 Position and role of internal communication

The exact position of the communication and internal communication functions varied in each case study. In the global organisations, communication was generally centralised in the head office: a characteristic in line with general description of the organisational form. In the federations, there is a much more decentralised communication function, aligned with the multi-domestic strategy of these organisations, although there is still a fairly strong central communication structure. Finally, Case A, the network, only had the one communication function in the secretariat but relied on their members and partners for a significant amount of its activities and communication.

In most of the case studies, the senior communicator was not formally part of the senior management of the organisation. In the network, the senior communicator operated as a manager and consulted with senior management as and when asked. Unfortunately, in the global organisations it was not possible to accurately identify the role of the senior communicator in the head office, but at the regional level they operated primarily as technicians. In one federation, Case D, the internal communication manager was an advisor to senior management while in the other, Case C, the senior communicator was identified as having a seat at the ‘cabinet table’. However, a theme across all the organisations was that the position of the communication function generally, and internal communication in particular, was unstable and subject to devaluation. In other words, even

where communication had a good relationship or was part of senior management, this was not formally structured into the organisation and required constant vigilance on the part of the senior communicator to maintain.

Unfortunately, Steyn (2007:139) notes that when the senior communicator is not part of senior management it is not able to fulfil its strategic role. The case studies support this as in most cases the communication function was not closely involved in either the strategy development or strategy implementation process. As discussed in Chapter 4, in order to be strategic, internal communication must play a role in strategy development by incorporating the concerns and issues of internal stakeholders into the process and in strategy implementation by communicating the strategic intent. Thus, internal communication serves a role in both aligning the strategy with internal stakeholders and aligning internal stakeholders with the strategy. From the postmodern perspective, both these process occur simultaneously through ongoing negotiation and dialogue (Franklin, 1998:444).

Of all the cases, Case C is the case that most closely reflects the normative ideal position and role for strategic internal communication. The most senior communicator is part of senior management and the communication function does play a role in both strategy development and implementation. However, its role appears to be relatively minor and does not play the primary role identified for it in either strategy development or implementation. Overall, none of the cases do and this is even more apparent in comparison with the postmodern process identified as appropriate in INGOs.

7.3.2.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

In terms of internal communication, the functions in the network and global organisations appeared to solely focus on tactics with little knowledge of the strategic function of internal communication. This reflects Grimshaw and Mike (2008:28) who argue that one of the main reason for the poor strategic function of internal communication is because of the lack of knowledge of its strategic role. Lack of both human and financial resources in the networks and global organisations is a potential explanation for the tactical focus of the network and global organisations' internal communication. In these cases, the communication staff must be generalists, in order to fulfil all the roles they are assigned.

Only in the larger federations did there appear to be a sound knowledge of the strategic role the function should play, and these two cases are also the only two cases with dedicated internal communication staff.

7.3.2.4 Content focus of internal communication

Components of all the case studies' internal communication were centred on non-strategic content such as task-related communication and information resources. As was discussed in Chapter 4, in order for internal communication to be strategic, its content and messages need to centre on the organisation's strategic intent. Both global organisations, Cases B and E, as well as the network organisation, Case A, described issues with their strategic intents making it difficult for the content of their internal communication to be strategically focused.

Only the two large federations, Cases C and D, had very clearly developed strategic intents. These two organisations are also the only two organisations with formal internal communication functions. While both these functions were involved in the communication of corporate strategy, strategic intent was only the centre content element in Case C, Case D still focused primarily on task-related communication. However, in both cases, strategic intent was still viewed as a coherent piece of content to be communicated. The postmodern approach to strategic intent discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, where it is constantly being developed through dialogue and communication, was not evident.

As discussed in Chapter 2, federations generally adopt multi-domestic positions where national affiliates have significant autonomy over their own affairs (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:66-67). In this context, a strong strategic intent is mandatory to maintain the coherence of the organisation. This can explain the formal internal communication functions in these organisations and their focus on strategic intent. However, a clear strategic intent is equally important in both networks and global organisations in order for the entire organisation to work towards a common goal. It is possible that the smaller size and fewer resources of these cases have resulted in less well-developed strategies and internal communication functions. As discussed in Chapter 4, strategic internal communication has a role to play in the development of strategic intent by aligning it with

the values and views within the organisation (Verwey, 2003:2), but this content is not part of any of the case studies' internal communication activities.

7.3.2.5 Internal communication process

Unlike the theoretical ideal discussed in Chapter 4, the process of internal communication in the case studies had a very weak strategic orientation. Only one case, Case D, had a specific internal communication strategy and this is not linked to the organisation's communication strategy, as the function is housed in a separate department. In addition, only Case D had clearly identified objectives for the function. None of the case studies identified high-level involvement of senior leadership in internal communication. Argenti and Forman (2002:154) identify senior leadership as the most valuable asset for internal communication, but this was not apparent within the case studies. However, all the cases did use line management in some form as an internal communication tool.

The internal communication infrastructure in each of the case studies involved a wide variety of channels and media. The most commonly identified tools across the case studies were face-to-face meetings, tele- and video-conferencing, and cascading communication from senior management to line management to employees. A large emphasis was placed on email with three of the five case studies highlighting its major role in internal communication in their organisation. In addition, four case studies were either using or planning to use various forms of online tools to improve the information sharing, and in some cases dialogue and collaboration throughout the entire organisation. In this regard, there was some recognition of the importance of facilitating informal communication as well, suggesting a holistic view of the internal communication infrastructure as discussed in Chapter 4.

In the federations, they used decentralised networks of communicators to undertake internal communication throughout the organisation, similar to Mounter's model (Figure 5.5) discussed in Chapter 5. It was also in these large organisations with a dedicated internal communication function that internal communication campaigns and strategies were incorporated into the overall process of internal communication. In addition, these organisations were the only case studies that provided evidence that the organisations' were selecting their channels and media with consideration for their internal

communication goals and audience. In the smaller networks and global organisations, internal communication appeared to operate on an ad hoc basis with tactics being implemented as needs were identified.

Overall, internal communication appeared to be asymmetrical, with communication flowing primarily from top to bottom. It was only in the smaller network and at the regional level of global organisations that evidence of symmetrical communication and dialogue was apparent. However, the move to new online communication platforms was indicated by both federations as means of improving the dialogue across horizontal and vertical divisions in the organisation.

7.3.3 Communication of corporate strategy

In all the case studies, the communication function was not identified as playing a major role in the strategy development process. Similarly, a common theme was the major role played by external stakeholders, such as the board of directors, the organisation's members and donors, in developing the strategy. Particularly in the network and global organisations, the role of the Board in developing and adopting the organisation's strategy was emphasised. Overall, in the global organisations and the federations, the strategy development process was not very participative, although in some cases, there was room for feedback and input from different levels of the organisations. The smaller network did appear to have more room for dialogue around the development of the organisation's strategic intent.

In all the case studies, there was more participation in strategy implementation than in strategy development. The primary form this took was in the alignment of the organisation's strategy with specific regional or programme strategies. Both global organisations noted that this was not easy to do because of poor understanding of the organisation's strategic intent. In the federations, the formal internal communication functions were identified as undertaking internal communication campaigns to assist in this alignment process. Again, there was more evidence of dialogue and a participative process in the smaller networks than in the larger cases. As identified in Chapter 4, this dialogue is a necessary component of developing strategic consciousness which leads to strategic intent.

There was some evidence in the case studies to support a post-modern strategic management process as discussed in Chapter 3. The network, Case A, a global organisation, Case E and a federation, Case C, all noted the need for flexible and adaptable strategies that can adjust to meet local and changing contexts. An ongoing process of strategy development and dialogue was identified as assisting in achieving this flexibility. However, there was little evidence of this process being implemented in the cases, except in Case A and Case E which conduct regular strategy reviews in light of changing external contexts.

Overall, the case studies showed indications of attempts at participatory strategy development and implementation process but they were primarily top-down driven.

7.3.4 Barriers and challenges

The case studies highlight a number of challenges and barriers for strategic internal communication. These barriers and challenges can be grouped together under the characteristics of an INGO as was done with the theoretically identified barriers and challenges in Chapter 4.

7.3.4.1 Context-related barriers and challenges

Context-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Context-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 2-4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Context – related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many stakeholders with conflicting expectations Multiple complex environments which they have very little control Changing global contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many stakeholders with different expectations Limited space for internal participation in strategic planning Digital divide

The contexts in which the cases operate contain a wide array of stakeholders with different demands and expectations of the organisation. This mirrors the challenge identified in the literature regarding conflicting expectations from different stakeholders (see Chesters, 2004:326). The main impact of this identified in the case studies is that these stakeholders

have significant influence on the development of strategy, limiting the space for internal participation. This impact reflects the theory that INGOs have little control over the influence of the external environment (Anheier, 2005:251). Thus, both the challenge identified both in theory and practice supports the argument for a postmodern strategic management approach in INGOs which allows them to engage in ongoing dialogue and negotiation with their stakeholders to maintain a flexible yet cohesive strategic intent.

An additional contextual barrier identified for the cases was the digital divide. As international organisations, several of the cases, particularly Cases C, D and E, noted that overcoming the differences in access to internal communication tools posed by different levels of access to the internet and other technologies was a major challenge for the function. This challenge for internal communication was not highlighted in the literature, potentially because of the focus on for-profit organisations who may not face the same resource constraints as INGOs.

7.3.4.2 Form-related barriers and challenges

Form-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9: Form-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 2-4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Form-related	Scarcity of resources Ambiguous missions Subjectivity of the values on which INGOs missions are based	Lack of human resources Vague or broad strategic intent Difficulty living-up to expressed values

As was the case with the theory discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, several challenges from the case evidence can be directly related to the INGO form. To start with, resource constraints were identified as a challenge for all cases, echoing Burnett's (2007:6) characterisation of CSOs as having limited resources. In the smaller network and global organisations, this primarily took the form of a lack of human resources where the communicator had to fulfil multiple roles and internal communication is often the first to be

dropped. In the larger federations, the constraint was having the resources to implement effective internal communication across the wide array of national affiliates.

Second, four of the cases studies identified a challenge related to their strategic intent. These challenges ranged from a very broad strategic intent in Case C to a complete lack of an organisation-wide strategic intent in Case E. This reflects the observation in the literature that CSOs generally and INGOs in particular have vague value-based missions (Glasrud, 2001:37). As noted in Chapter 4, a clear strategic intent is a pre-requisite for internal communication to function strategically. By improving internal communication, particularly through the use of dialogue around strategic intent as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, these organisations may be able to further refine and negotiate their strategic intents to develop a cohesive understanding among internal stakeholders.

Finally, there was evidence in three cases, the network and the federations, that the organisation was not living up to its values in all its actions. This failure can impact on the perceived internal and external legitimacy of the organisation. As discussed in Chapter 2, lack of legitimacy is a major critique of CSOs and INGOs (Long, 2008:51). None of the interviewees made the link between the conflict between their values and actions, their legitimacy and ultimately their organisation’s reputation, which as discussed at the end of Chapter 4 is a problem for many INGOs (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:255). However, this conflict is a major challenge that can have ramifications for its funding, reputation and the commitment of the workforce.

7.3.4.3 Structural barriers and challenges

Structural barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Structural challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Structural	<p>Programme silos caused by the INGO funding structure</p> <p>Need to balance flexibility with a clear focus on a strategic intent to avoid both bureaucracy and mission displacement</p>	<p>Funding structure resulted in focus on specific programmes and not organisation as a whole</p> <p>Difficulty differentiating between internal and external stakeholders</p>

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the structure and particularly the funding structure in INGOs (Srinivasan, 2007:189) can pose challenges and barriers for developing strategic alignment through internal communication. In four of the case studies, there are indications that programme funding and silo structures result in the primary focus being on specific projects, programmes or regions, with the organisation as a whole only a secondary consideration. Thus internal stakeholders' primary commitment is to their project, programme and region. It is a challenge for internal communication to build commitment to the organisation as a whole despite these barriers.

An additional structural issue relates to how INGOs are structured to relate to their external environment. Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:23-24) identified associations as one legal-entity form a CSO can take. The main characteristic of this form is that it has a membership to whom it is responsible. Case A and Case C both identified themselves as having members. This results in a further challenge because of a lack of clarity around who is internal and who is external. For example, the network organisation considered internal communication both in terms of its employees and its member organisations. Similarly, Case C, as a federation, considered internal communication at the level of its international and regional offices and at the level of its national affiliates.

This challenge reflects a general theme in the internal communication theory that was mentioned in Chapter 4: external and internal communication are becoming increasingly blurred as employees are often also customers, beneficiaries or other classes of stakeholders (Cheney *et al.*, 2004). However, the internal communication literature found did not specifically discuss the challenge of members, possibly because of a focus primarily on for-profit corporation. Still, a postmodern approach to internal communication, with a focus on dialogue as an agent of shared understanding, could help address the member challenge. However, asymmetrical communication appeared to be the norm in the case studies. Overall, being able to address the needs and expectations of the different audiences is a challenge for internal communication.

7.3.4.4 Cultural barriers and challenges

Cultural barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Cultural challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Cultural	Action culture Multiple cultures Static cultural attitudes	Action culture

The literature identified several cultural challenges including action culture, multiple cultures and static cultural attitudes (Lewis, 2007:113). In the case studies only action culture was evident as a challenge. In three of the five case studies, the network, one global organisation and one federation, there was evidence of an action culture. The evidence suggests that the result of this action culture in these organisations was that less importance was given to activities with less tangible and immediate results, such as internal communication. This reflects the theory around the NGO culture of action, described by Lewis (2007:13) and discussed in Chapter 3. The postmodern approach to internal management discussed in that chapter, argues that an organisation needs to become a learning organisation in order to shift from this ‘action’ orientation to a focus on long-term learning and improvement (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:33). However, only Case D, with a specific impact planning and learning unit, showed evidence of moving in this direction. Case D also did not have any evidence of an action culture.

7.3.4.5 Workforce-related barriers and challenges

Workforce-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12: Workforce-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Workforce-related	Managing across geographical and cultural differences Managing diverse teams with differing commitment levels to the organisation Developing a workforce with continuity	Language and time zone issues Teams ‘hording’ information and not identifying what might be useful to others Regular changes in the workforce, around both poor retention and rapid growth

All the case studies faced challenges related to an international workforce. For example, language issues and coordinating work across time zones were identified as a challenge in

three of the five cases. In addition, three of the five case studies noted a tendency for individuals and groups to hoard information, which, coupled with a lack of realisation of what information should be shared across the organisation, can result in poor communication flows between different sections of the organisation. As was noted in Chapter 4, strategic internal communication has a role to play in overcoming this challenge by raising strategic consciousness so that individuals and work groups interpret and implement the organisation's strategic intent within their own area of work (Puth, 2002:196) argues. By helping each programme gain a greater understanding of the organisation's strategic intent, internal communication helps them to see how the information they hold may be useful to other parts of the organisation.

In the networks and the global organisations, regular changes in the workforce, around retention and growth, were identified as another major challenge and reflects what has been found in other studies (see Hume & Hume, 2008:130). This challenge was not apparent in the federations. One reason for the difference could be the resources available. For example, as noted by the regional most senior communicator in Case B, the lack of financial rewards results in poor retention rates and low staff morale in the organisation. This opinion reflects the theory which identifies lower-than market level remuneration as a characteristic of CSOs (Anheier, 2005:216). This characteristic is further compounded in INGOs where expatriate staff tend to have poorer retention than local staff (Walsh & Lenihan, 2006:417). However, the case studies did not indicate that this second reason was an issue for them. Overcoming the barrier posed by poor retention is a challenge for internal communication.

7.3.4.6 Communication barriers and challenges

Communication barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13: Communication challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapter 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Communi- cation	Organisational reputation Realistic expectations Information management	Poor information flow Poor understanding of the role of internal communication

Of all the challenges in Chapter 4, the communication barriers and challenges identified in the theory differed the most from those identified in the case studies. Of the three challenges identified in literature, only information management was also discussed in the case studies. For example, Case D noted poor flow of communication among disparate teams and a tendency to hoard information compounded by poor understanding of what information would be of use to other teams as a major challenge. As noted at the end of Chapter 4, building a better understanding of how a team’s work contributes to the organisation’s strategic intent helps to increase understanding of what information may be useful to others.

In terms of the remaining two challenges identified in the literature, the large federations both mentioned internal branding when discussing their internal communication function; however, they did not link this internal function with the overall reputation of the organisation. The literature identified brand and reputation management in INGOs as being particularly problematic (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:253). In addition, the literature noted the difficulty of building realistic expectations of an INGO among both internal and external employees. However, the primary view of internal communication within the case studies looked only at how it could facilitate task-accomplishment and not its integrated role with external communication and stakeholder management.

A potential explanation for why organisational reputation and realistic expectations were not considered internal communication challenges is because of the poor understanding of the role internal communication can play in that regard. The primary communication-related challenge and barrier identified in the case studies was the poor understanding of the role of internal communication itself. This challenge reflects the literature which identified poor knowledge of the strategic role of communication and internal communication as one of the primary reasons these functions do not fulfil their potential

(Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000:10). In both federations this lack of clarity on the role of internal communication was identified as a major issue that posed various challenges including: work being given to the function that should not be its responsibility, the function not being involved in activities it should be, and impossible expectations from internal stakeholders that the function cannot meet. Both interviewees in these cases emphasised the need to address these expectations. They argue that this involves building understanding in the organisation regarding internal communication's role as a facilitator and not the sole implementer of communication within the organisation.

Neither global organisation mentioned this challenge and the network only hinted at it in passing. However, the less developed nature of internal communication in these organisations could mean that this more specific challenge for the function has not yet appeared. That said, all the cases did note the need to improve overall internal stakeholder engagement in the internal communication process.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 defined strategic internal communication as *“the strategic management of communication to align the organisation's internal stakeholders with its strategic intent.”* None of the case studies cited strategic alignment and strategic intent as the core elements of their internal communication. While the larger federations showed evidence of operating more strategically than the smaller organisations, all the cases have the potential to be more strategic in their internal communication. There is evidence that postmodern strategic management and communication would be of value to the case studies both in terms of helping them be true to their values, meeting the many expectations placed on them by the different stakeholders and adapting to their changing external contexts. However, the evidence shows that the case studies are still primarily using traditional asymmetrical communication with only some evidence of dialogue. Overall, there are a variety of barriers and challenges that the case studies must overcome in order to implement strategic internal communication.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the conclusions of this study and recommendations for future research in this area. As such, it brings together both the theoretical and empirical phases of the study. Figure 8.1 illustrates the relationship of this chapter to the rest of this dissertation.

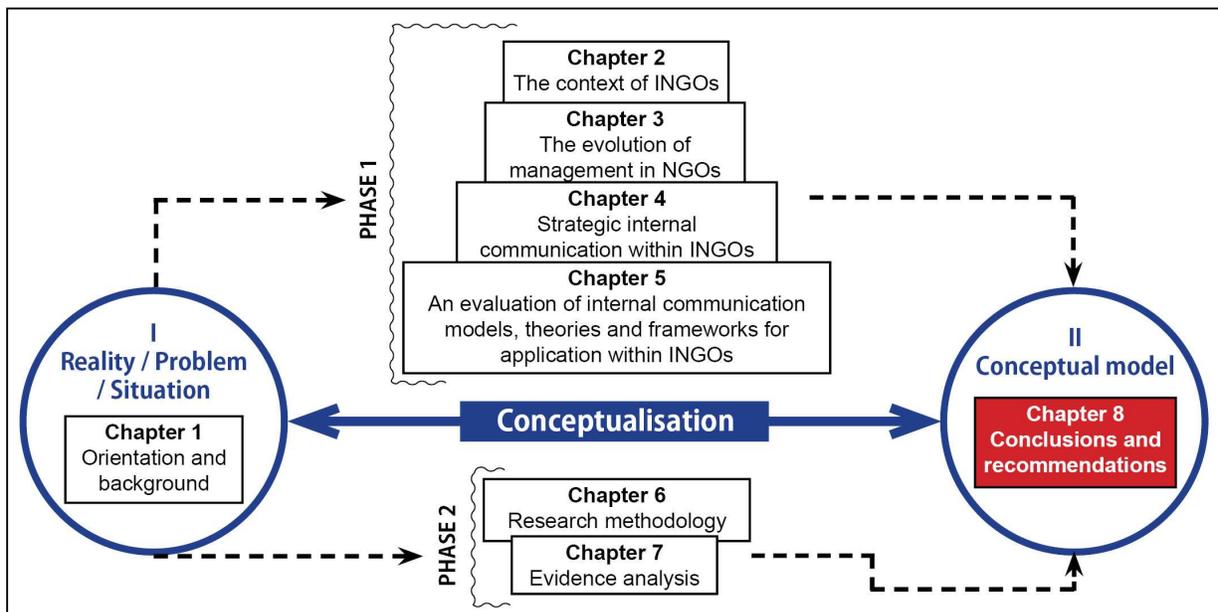


Figure 8.1: Chapter 8 in relation to the other chapters

This chapter is divided into six parts. The first section considers the three objectives of this study. The second section considers the overall research question and provides an explicit answer. The third section highlights recommendations for future research in this area as well as for practitioners working in internal communication in INGOs. The fourth and fifth sections identify the unique contributions of this study and its limitations respectively. Finally, the sixth section provides some concluding remarks on this dissertation.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the current state of strategic internal communication in INGOs in order to answer the research question “*does internal communication in INGOs function strategically.*” In order to answer the research question and achieve this study’s aim, Chapter 1 identified three objectives which the theoretical and empirical phase of this study attempted to meet. The following identifies the main conclusions that were derived from pursuing these objectives.

8.2.1 Objective 1

The first objective of this study was *to identify key components of strategic internal communication in INGOs through a review and synthesis of relevant literature.* Meeting this objective requires the consideration of two elements: strategic internal communication and the INGO context. These are each discussed below.

8.2.1.1 Strategic internal communication

In Chapter 4, strategic internal communication was defined as “*the strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent.*” The strategic functioning of internal communication is derived directly from its relationship to strategic communication, particularly as outlined by Steyn and Puth (2000). As such, in order for internal communication to be considered strategic, it must possess the following key elements:

- The **purpose** must be to achieve strategic alignment
- The **position** must be part of the senior management in the organisation and must play a **role** in both strategy development and strategy implementation
- The most senior communicator must possess the **knowledge** to understand and implement the strategic role of the function.
- The **content** must be focused around the organisation’s strategic intent

In addition to possessing these elements, several normative characteristics of the process of internal communication were also identified, including a strategic orientation that links

internal communication to the communication and organisational strategy (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008; Steyn & Puth, 2000), commitment for senior leadership (Argenti & Forman, 2002:154) and a holistic view of the internal communication infrastructure. Symmetrical communication is also important to develop the commitment of internal stakeholders (Grunig, 1992:531). From the postmodern perspective, the emphasis is placed on dialogue as a means of engaging with internal stakeholders to develop the strategic intent and a shared understanding of it (Puth, 2002; Ströh, 2007). As per the social constructivist worldview, it is through dialogue and communication that change can occur and, therefore, encouraging dialogue on the direction and future of the organisation is an important component of strategic internal communication.

8.2.1.2 INGO context

In Chapter 2, INGOs were defined as “*organised, private, not profit-distributing, self-governing, and voluntary entities working to improve the social, economic or cultural well-being of society in two or more countries*” (see Salamon *et al.*, 2004:8; Swilling and Russell, 2002:11). As part of their organisational form, INGOs have key context-related characteristics. In particular, they have complex operating environments with multiple stakeholders and multiple accountabilities. The result is what Anheier (2005:229) refers to as the “law of nonprofit complexity” which says that CSOs (and INGOs) tend to be more complex than businesses of comparable size. In addition to the multiple stakeholders, this characteristic is intensified due to missing profit motive and prominence of value-based missions in CSOs.

The unique characteristics of the INGO context require a composite framework of management, as proposed by Lewis (2007) that draws insight from business, CSO and development management. In particular, the complexity of the INGO context calls for the application of more postmodern forms of management for these organisations. In order to negotiate multiple stakeholders and changing environmental factors, INGOs must be flexible and adaptable in their strategic management approach.

In addition, INGOs operate within local, regional and global social context. As part of civil society, their coordinating mechanism is shared values (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:9) and they must live up to those values in their words and actions in order to

maintain their legitimacy (Kelly, 2007:89). As per the neo-institutionalist view of organisations, the social context of an INGO, through its own values and the values of the environments in which it works, impacts on the options it has to pursue its goals (Anheier, 2005:147). Postmodern strategic management again helps the organisation to negotiate these tensions and develop a shared understanding of its mission and values among all stakeholders.

The worldview of this study, integrated postmodernism and social constructivism, emphasises the deep dependence on context in terms of phenomenon such as strategic internal communication (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:45; Risse, 2007:128). Therefore, to fully meet the objective of identifying the key components of strategic internal communication in INGOs, it is important to consider strategic internal communication specifically within the INGO context. The result of this process was the identification of a variety of barriers and challenges for strategic internal communication in this context. For example, fragmentation of the INGO sector (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:10), scarce resources (Anheier, 2005:352) and workforce-related barriers were all identified. These and many others are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Addressing these challenges requires an emphasis on dialogue.

The social constructivist worldview identifies change as occurring through human interaction, thereby emphasising communication and discourse practices (Risse, 2007:131). Communication thus plays a central role in negotiating the complex relationships between the diverse players within the organisation (Ströh, 2007). The INGO context, and the barriers and challenges it poses, do not negate the need for strategic internal communication, but rather emphasises its role in the promotion of dialogue.

8.2.2 Objective 2

The second objective of this study is to *identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically*. This objective again requires the consideration of two elements: the function of strategic internal communication and the influence of the INGO context.

8.2.2.1 Strategic internal communication

Within the case studies, internal communication was identified as not being managed strategically. Some cases incorporated strategic elements into the function, but overall a formal strategic focus was lacking. Content focused on task- and project-related information. Communication of it was undertaken with the main purpose of information sharing. Only in one case was the senior communicator part of senior management and across all cases the position of the senior communicator was considered problematic. In addition, the role of the internal communication in strategy development and implementation was not apparent, with the senior communicator being only an advisor to the process and not an integral member of the strategy development and implementation team.

The process of internal communication within the INGOs studied was primarily asymmetrical. Current strategic internal communication practices are based on traditional linear, top-down forms of strategic management. However, dialogue was more prevalent in the smaller organisations and many of the cases were using or planning to use new technologies to improve organisation-wide dialogue and communication. As such, there is evidence of INGOs recognising the need to become more flexible, adaptable and dialogue-driven and they are starting to develop tools to achieve this. However, a major challenge that was identified by the communicators interviewed was that there is a lack of understanding within their organisations as to the role and importance of this function, making it difficult for it to move forward towards achieving its goals.

8.2.2.2 INGO context

The interviewees for the case studies, almost unanimously, describe a context for their organisation where there is significant influence from a wide variety of external stakeholders. This influence impacts on how strategy is developed, requiring it to be more flexible and adaptable to changing external contexts, but also limiting the room for internal stakeholders to play a role.

The case studies also brought to light a variety of other challenges and barriers for strategic internal communication in their specific context. One of particular note relates to

the value-centric characteristic of the INGO form. Within the postmodern worldview, values allow for the decentralisation of control and the self-organisation of the organisation, making it more flexible and adaptable in its environment (Ströh 2007:207). Strategic internal communication can assist in this process by encouraging dialogue around the organisation's value to ensure understanding and commitment to what they mean. However, compromising those values can threaten the survival of the organisation when the environment (for example, the public) can turn on it. It is precisely this problem that was identified in several of the case studies and poses a serious threat to the INGOs.

8.2.3 Objective 3

The third objective of this study is to *compare the empirical findings about current strategic internal communication practices in INGOs with the synthesis from the relevant literature*. This objective was pursued using the process described in Chapter 6. The conclusions of this process bring together both strategic internal communication and the INGO context and are thus discussed in combination below.

The role of values in INGOs and their complex context, as well as the challenges these both pose, were supported in both the literature (for example see Anheier, 2005) and the empirical evidence. The theory argued that these characteristics of INGOs made postmodern strategic management more appropriate than the traditional forms (see Chapter 3). None of the case studies showed conscious and committed adoption of postmodern strategic management, although Case A did illustrate several elements thereof. Thus the theoretical proposition that postmodern strategic management is the most appropriate management form for INGOs is not supported by current practices. However, there was evidence from several case studies of the need for flexible strategic management in order to adapt to changing contexts and the demands of multiple stakeholders. In addition, several cases noted a difficulty in remaining true to their values in their management activities. Theoretically, therefore, postmodern strategic management is still a viable process for addressing these challenges. In particular, a focus on dialogue and communication as part of the strategic management process can help ensure a flexible and adaptable strategic intent that negotiates the different interpretations of values within the organisation and the expectations of external stakeholders (Puth, 2002).

In addition to not undertaking postmodern strategic management, the case studies did not show evidence of practicing strategic internal communication, as described in Chapter 4. The empirical evidence from the case studies in terms of the content, purpose, position and knowledge of internal communication in INGOs did not match the normative ideal identified in the theory. It did not take the strategic focus outlined in Chapter 4, but neither did it provide any evidence that the theory was wrong or needed to be modified. What is apparent from the empirical evidence is that internal communication fulfils a wide variety of roles in INGOs, ranging from information sharing to knowledge management to capacity building. What is missing is the umbrella for these roles that ties them all together. That role is the strategic focus and purpose of strategic alignment that was discussed in Chapter 4.

Overall, the case studies did not show evidence of postmodern strategic internal communication but the theoretical foundation for the benefit of this concept if applied in INGOs remains sound. Instead, contextual, form-related, structural and cultural factors, identified in both literature and practice may be inhibiting the ability of INGOs to pursue postmodern strategic internal communication.

Many of the challenges and barriers posed by the INGO context identified in the literature (see Chapter 3 and 4) are supported by the empirical evidence from the case studies. For example, limited resources are a recurrent theme in both (Burnett, 2007:6; Lewis, 2007:199; Chapter 7). This is a major challenge for the development of strategic internal communication because it requires both financial and human resources to undertake.

In addition to limited financial resources, INGOs do not have just one environment, but multiple, complex environments over which they have very little direct control (Anheier, 2005:349). This proposition is supported in the case studies where the different expectations of external stakeholders were shown to both influence the management practices of INGOs and shrink the space available for internal stakeholder participation in the strategy development process. In theory, the available resources and context of an INGO can lead it to focus being more on satisfying donors instead of those to whom it is dedicated to serving (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:278). The need to conform to the often bureaucratic requirements of donors could inhibit an INGO from adopting a postmodern

approach to strategic management. In the empirical evidence, the influence from external context was shown to equate to less space for internal participation in strategy development. However, strategic internal communication has a specific role to play in strategy development by ensuring the views of internal stakeholders are incorporated in the process (Steyn & Puth, 2000; Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:30). Therefore, the limited space available for internal stakeholders to participate in strategy development may decrease the perceived need for strategic internal communication and inhibit its application in the INGO context.

Several characteristics of an INGO's structure can also help explain why it may not adopt postmodern strategic internal communication. Srinivasan (2007:189) describes how the funding structure of INGOs can lead to the establishment of silos, a fact confirmed in the case study evidence. While postmodern strategic internal communication has the potential to help overcome structural silos, these silos can also impede the application of this management tool. For example, as noted in the theory, structure should follow strategy (Boxall & Purcell, 2008:255; Robbins, 2002:191). However, where structure is firmly entrenched, it can inhibit an organisation's flexibility and ability to take a postmodern approach to strategic management. Similarly, as noted by Puth (2002:203), bureaucracy, programme silos and isolated work units can pose barriers to the establishment of cohesive strategic alignment. Where there is no cohesive strategic intent and each silo is focused only on its own goals, internal stakeholders are less likely to engage in strategic internal communication activities.

A second structural factor that can impede the application of strategic internal communication is the position of communication within the organisation. A position that is not part of senior management can prevent internal communication from playing its role in corporate strategy development and implementation (Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000). However, across all the case studies, the position of the internal communication was either not part of senior management or its position was tenuous. Strategic internal communication is dependent on support from senior management (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:145), therefore without easy access to this forum, it is very difficult to implement this function in the organisation. This issue is further compounded in the case studies by the poor understanding of the strategic role of internal communication,

another theoretical requirement for strategic internal communication (Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:28). Thus together, the position and role of strategic internal communication are major inhibiting factors for the application of strategic internal communication.

Finally, cultural elements may be inhibiting the application of postmodern strategic internal communication in INGOs. The action culture in INGOs, evident in many of the case studies and in the literature (Lewis, 2007:113), results in long-term improvement through activities like strategic internal communication being devalued compared to activities with immediate results. Becoming a learning organisation, such as the one described by Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:33-34), has the potential to assist an INGO develop their internal capacity and not simply focus on immediate actions. The evidence from Case D, which has already developed processes in this regard, illustrates that a reflective learning culture is not antithetic to INGOs. However, INGOs must first overcome their action cultures and develop flexible and reflective cultures that support and value postmodern strategic internal communication despite the benefits not being immediately evident.

8.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Now that the three objectives of this study have been met, it is possible to answer the main research question: “*does internal communication in INGOs function strategically?*” The answer is no. The empirical evidence from the case studies shows that internal communication in the INGOs studied does not fulfil the criteria for being strategic identified in the literature. Instead, internal communication fulfils primarily tactical and managerial roles, as defined by Steyn and Puth (2000), and is focused on information sharing and other task-related communication. There is some evidence that, in larger INGOs, internal communication does function more strategically, but even in these cases, it did not completely fulfil the theoretical criteria.

The empirical and theoretical evidence suggests several reasons why internal communication does not function strategically in INGOs. These include a lack of knowledge and understanding of the strategic role of internal communication (Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:28), both among communicators as well as within the organisations; limited time and finances (Burnett, 2007:6; Lewis, 2007:199) that, combined with an action culture

(Lewis, 2007:113), results in poor investment of resources in the function; and elements of context and stakeholder pressure (Anheier, 2005:251) that prevent internal communication from playing the role it should.

The implication of internal communication not functioning strategically in INGOs is that there is a high potential for a lack of strategic alignment within the organisation. The result is that INGOs will not gain the benefits that postmodern strategic internal communication has to offer them. The literature (see Chapter 4) identifies a wide variety of benefits if internal communication functions strategically, including employee commitment (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:31), improved morale, increased retentions and an overall benefit to its financial bottom-line (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299; Yates, 2006:72). For INGOs, strategic internal communication has the additional theoretical benefit of helping the organisation navigate its complex environment and negotiate its adherence to its core values in order to build a cohesive organisation working to achieve a single strategic intent. This is particularly the case when implemented from a postmodern perspective with an emphasis on dialogue with stakeholders (Foreman, 1997:18). By guiding the social construction of reality through dialogue, this process can improve organisational performance by giving focus and maintaining legitimacy. The empirical evidence, however, does not show this occurring in current practices for contextual, structural and cultural reasons as discussed in the previous section.

8.4 UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

This study has two unique contributions. First, it contributes to the academic research on the strategic functioning of internal communication. Second, it contributes the academic research on the internal management, and internal communication in particular, of INGOs.

As was noted earlier in Chapter 4, academic research on internal communication is limited. In particular, research on the strategic function of internal communication is lacking. This study makes a unique contribution by compiling and synthesising the theory in this area, as well as examining it within a particular context. By bringing together authors such as Doorley and Garcia (2007:129), Foreman (1997:19), Grimshaw and Mike (2008:28), Puth (2002), Steyn and Puth (2000), Verwey & du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) and

Welch and Jackson (2007), this study presents a normative ideal for strategic internal communication that synthesises the theory already present in the literature.

This study contributes to the internal communication research by testing this theory in a unique context, the INGO, thus providing additional support for the key elements of strategic internal communication identified in the literature. In addition, this study contributes to the theory around strategic internal communication by considering the different elements of this management practice from a postmodern perspective, drawing on authors such as Franklin (1998) and Ströh, (2007). Overall, this study contributes the academic research on internal communication by outlining a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication.

The second contribution of this study relates to its context, the INGO. Strategic internal communication is both an internal management function and a communication management function. As was noted in Chapters 2 and 3, research on NGO management is limited, but even rarer is research on internal management within NGOs. Similarly, only a few articles were found within the communication management field that consider the NGO context (for exceptions see Janse van Rensburg, 2003; Steyn & Nunes, 2001; Hewitt, 2006; Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). In addition, the research that does look at internal communication is generally focused on for-profit organisations. Therefore, this study makes a unique contribution by examining strategic internal communication in the INGO context. It thus fills a void in the literature between strategy, internal communication and the NGO.

This study's contribution in this regard is by considering the synthesis of the internal communication theory within the unique framework of the INGO. Drawing on authors in the field of NGO management such as Anheier (2005) and Lewis (2007), this study identifies the unique characteristics of the INGO context, form, structure, culture and workforce that may impact the application of strategic internal communication in these organisations. Based on these characteristics, it concludes that a postmodern approach to this management concept has the most potential benefit for INGOs. The empirical phase of the study considers these theoretically identified elements within actual INGOs. While the study determines that postmodern strategic internal communication is not applied in

practice within INGOs, it contributes to this area of research by noting that this approach does have potential benefit in this context and identifying key contextual, structural and cultural barriers that may be inhibiting the application of this approach in INGOs. Overall, this study contributes to the NGO management literature by providing a foundation for further studies exploring the potential contribution of strategic internal communication and the barriers that need to be overcome to achieve this.

8.5 LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. These relate specifically to the context in which it is undertaken, the concept under study and the methodology used. These are each discussed next.

The study was conducted among INGOs operating in South Africa. As such, the results of the study are limited to this context. In addition, because it was not possible to speak to head offices as well as local offices for all cases, not all case studies may accurately reflect internal communication throughout the organisation, but only as it pertains to regional offices in South Africa.

This study focused on the strategic function of internal communication or strategic internal communication. The concept has not been widely studied. The constructs and elements of this concept are based on strategic communication and internal communication theory; however, they have not been empirically tested in other contexts. As such, the validity of the constructs is limited.

Finally, several elements of the methodology used limit the conclusions. Only five case studies were completed and there was limited data from these. Two of the five case studies had no organisational documents. In addition, the meta-theoretical position of this study is that reality is socially constructed and differs based on the perspectives of individuals. This study only interviewed local senior communicators and therefore, with some support from strategy documents, the results of this study are limited to their perspectives and may not accurately reflect the reality throughout the organisation.

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study lead to several recommendations in two areas: strategic internal communication in INGOs and further research. These are discussed next.

8.6.1 Strategic internal communication in INGOs

The conclusions of this study suggest that INGOs would benefit if their internal communication functioned more strategically. By integrating their internal communication activities under the banner of strategic alignment, these activities would work together to build cohesion and commitment within the organisation. As Puth (2002) describes, through strategic discourse strategic consciousness is raised and employees can implement the organisation's strategic intent within their own area of work ensuring that the entire organisation works together towards the same goals. The internal communication infrastructure needs to be considered holistically so that the actions and words of senior leadership and the values of the organisation are reflected in all communication channels.

INGOs are challenged by their complex environments, their vague missions and their foundation on values (Anheier, 2005). The theory in this study, with support from the empirical evidence, suggests that INGOs would benefit from adopting more flexible, process-orientated strategic management that emphasised dialogue among stakeholders over top-down communication and directives. The postmodern approach to strategic management could help INGOs negotiate their complex environments, strengthen their vague missions and remain true to their core values. Thus, this approach could help stave off questions of legitimacy and improve the performance of the organisation.

Similar to the problem identified by Grimshaw and Mike (2008), a major challenge for internal communication in INGOs is the lack of knowledge among both communicators and the organisation as a whole regarding the strategic role of this function. INGOs could provide additional support and training for their communicators to strengthen their own knowledge and give them the tools to educate and build a communication culture within the organisation. However, INGOs also need to promote a widespread culture of learning within their organisations, to counteract the widespread 'action culture in INGOs (Lewis, 2007). Only through a learning culture will continuous improvement and reflection be

valued for more than its immediate impact. Finally, communicators in general may benefit from more emphasis on internal communication within communication management curricula at institutions of higher education. While internal communication should not be over-emphasised in terms of its importance for education and training, it is important that the unique needs and considerations for this function are recognised.

8.6.2 Further research

This study is exploratory and designed only to provide a foundation for further research in this area. There are several recommendations for how this study can be built upon.

Firstly, the focus on INGOs in South Africa limits this study. Further research on the strategic functioning of internal communication in different contexts would help to broaden the validity of the study and result in more specific conclusions. The different contexts could take several forms, including the head offices of INGOs across multiple countries, NGOs within South Africa, and a focus on a particular size and structure of NGO.

Secondly, the study is limited to the perspective of the senior communicator and what is included in organisational documents. By its nature, internal communication spans the fence with human resources and considering this perspective in further research could provide valuable insights. In addition, the effectiveness of internal communication cannot be determined without the employee perspective. In future research, this viewpoint could play a valuable role in understanding how strategic internal communication is experienced. Finally, this study only lays the foundation for the elements of internal communication that need to be considered for it to function strategically in INGOs. More research is needed on the process of strategic internal communication and how it impacts organisational communications. By strengthening the research in this area, there will be further clarity on the role of internal communication which, in turn, can impact on the practice of internal communication within organisations.

8.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over the last two decades, civil society, NGOs and INGOs have become more integrated into the social fabric of society around the world. They provide a wide array of vital



services. As governance and power take on increasingly global aspects, INGOs, as the vehicles through which the voices of the poor, the vulnerable and the local can reach the global stage, are ever more important. As a result, their functioning and their management require increased focus.

INGOs face a variety of unique challenges as a result of the context in which they operate and the characteristics of their form, including the importance of values. There is a need to look beyond traditional management techniques developed for for-profit organisations to identify management practices that can help these organisations meet these challenges.

Postmodern strategic management and strategic internal communication in particular have the potential to fill this need. Through an emphasis on dialogue and negotiation, strategic internal communication can build cohesion, can build support for core values and can build flexibility and adaptability into INGOs. By addressing INGO challenges and negotiating a shared strategic intent, strategic internal communication can help INGOs achieve the change they want to see in the world both internally and externally.

Annexure A

Introduction letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences
**Department of Marketing and
Communication Management**

Invitation to participate in an academic research study

Exploring strategic contributions of internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

Research conducted by:

Ms. J.M. Hume (28045808)

Cell: 082 768 0250

Email: jhume82@gmail.com

To whom it may concern,

Your organisation is invited to participate in a research study to consider the management of strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).

The increasing role that INGOs are playing in society makes their performance and management ever more important. Strategic contribution of internal communication through the alignment of an organisation's internal stakeholders around its strategic intent, has been identified as a contribution that can have a major effect on an organisation's performance. However, very little research has been done on this management function, particularly within civil society organisations generally and INGOs in particular.

This study will explore the current role of internal communication in INGOs. The research results will form a foundation for further study into this function, as well as contribute to the discussion and development of a solution for how to manage strategic internal communication in INGOs.

Your organisation is invited to participate in this study. All the details regarding participation and the expected time requirements appear in the synopsis of the project in the following pages. To participate in this project, please have the appropriate (senior) manager sign and fax the synopsis to 086 602 1194.

Please contact me (details above) or my study supervisor (Ms. Anné Leonard at (0)12 - 420 3399 / Anne.Leonard@up.ac.za) should you have any questions or require more information.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information and consider participating in this study. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hume
Candidate – Mphil (Communication Management)

Department of Marketing and Communication Management
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of Pretoria

Research synopsis and consent form

RESEARCH QUESTION: Does internal communication in international NGOs function strategically?

GENERAL AIM: To explore the strategic contribution of internal communication in INGOs.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: To identify key components of strategic internal communication through a review and synthesis of relevant literature.

Objective 2: To identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically.

Objective 3: To compare the empirical findings about current strategic internal communication practices in INGOs with the synthesis of the literature.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research approach: The study is exploratory in nature therefore a qualitative approach is adopted.

Research design: A multiple case study design was chosen. Each organisation will first be viewed as an independent case study before an inter-case and thematic comparison is made.

Case selection: The first ten INGOs indicating their interest in participating will be included. In order to participate the organisation must be an INGO, meaning: private, not-profit distributing, self-governing, working in development (i.e. improving the social, cultural and/or economic well-being of society) in two or more countries.

Sources of evidence and evidence-analysis: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the person responsible for internal communication in the South Africa office. Where no one has this responsibility, please consult with the researcher. Semi-structured interviews (via email or telephone) will also be conducted with the person responsible for internal communication in the international office (if different/available). Interviews will last for approx. 45 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

The following documents will also be requested (if available) for further evidence and contextual detail: organisation's strategy, organogram, annual report, communication and internal communication strategy. Any of these documents available on the Internet are considered part of the public domain and the research will assume that they can be accessed without formal permission.

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED FROM PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The researcher requires formal permission to conduct the study from the appropriate decision-makers in the organisation. This permission, allowing the researcher to pursue the sources of evidence outlined above, is provided by signing the bottom of this form.

ANONYMITY OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

The anonymity of all participating organisations and individuals is guaranteed. Case studies will be referred to by number and responses will be linked to their specific case study only. The anonymity of interviewees is also guaranteed. Please address any concerns in this regard with the researcher.

PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of this study will be published in the master's dissertation and made available to participating organisations. Additional publication may occur in academic publications or related forums.

TIMEFRAME: Interview will be conducted at your earliest convenience, ideally before February 2009.

CONSENT

Please sign this form and fax back to 086 602 1194 to indicate that:

- You have read and understood the information provided above with regards to the requirements of this research project.
- You give your consent for this research study to be conducted within your organisation

Senior Manager's signature

Title

Organisation

Date



Annexure B

Informed consent form



Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences
**Department of Marketing and
Communication Management**

Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Dept. of Marketing and Communication Management

Towards a framework for strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

Research conducted by:

Ms. J.M. Hume (28045808)

Cell: 082 766 0250

Dear Interviewee

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Jessica Hume, Masters student from the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria.

The growing role that INGOs are playing in society makes their performance and management ever more important. Strategic internal communication, the use of communication to align an organisation's internal stakeholders around its strategic intent, has been identified as a function that can have a major effect on an organisation's performance. The purpose of the study is to consider how strategic internal communication is managed in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous interview. Both your organisation and your name will only be referred to by an assigned letter and number. Neither will be associated with the transcript of your interview. The answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the interview questions as completely and honestly as possible. The interview should last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Ms. Anné Leonard at (0)12 - 420 3399 / Anne.Leonard@up.ac.za if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Respondent's signature

Date



Annexure C

Interview Schedule

Interview schedule

Section A: Corporate strategy

1. How does your organisation develop its strategic plan?
2. How is your organisation's strategic intent communicated with internal stakeholders?
3. What levels of management are involved in clarifying the strategy to internal stakeholders?
4. How familiar do you think your internal stakeholders are with your organisation's strategy?

Section B: Communication function

5. Explain how the communication function of your organisation is structured including the different specialisation areas.
6. What is the relationship between the communication function at the global headquarters and the same function in individual countries (if it exists at both levels)?
7. What is the typical professional experience or formal educational background of the staff in your organisation's communication function at...?
 - 7a. ...the global headquarter level
 - 7b. ...the local (individual country) level
8. How does the communication function contribute to the strategic functioning of the organisation? Is this directed from headquarters or incidental per country?
9. How is the most senior communicator of your organisation involved in the strategic management of the organisation?

Section C: Internal communication

10. How is internal communication structured in your organisation?
11. What are the objectives of your internal communication function?
12. What channels/media does your organisation use for internal communication? How do you choose these?
13. What mechanisms, if any, are in place to encourage dialogue among all levels of employees?
14. How do you determine your overall internal communication effectiveness?

Section E: Suggestions for the management of internal communication within INGOs

15. Do you think internal communication in INGOs needs to function at a strategic level?
 - 15a. If yes, how would you suggest this happen?
 - 15b. If no, why not?
16. What, if any, are the barriers/challenges to effective internal communication in an INGO?
17. What solutions would you suggest in order to overcome the previously mentioned barriers/challenges?

Conclusion

18. Is there anything else you would like to add about managing internal communication in your organisation?

Annexure D

Organisational documents checklist

Organisational Documents

Background Documents:

	Yes / No	
Annual report/website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organogram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strategy Documents:

Corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal Communication strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The organisational strategy ...

1. Reflects the organisation's mission statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Reflects the organisation's values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Articulates the organisation's strategic intent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

The (internal) communication strategy ...

	Yes / No	
1. Reflects the organisation's strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Reflects the organisation's structure, culture and context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Links its objectives to the organisation's strategic intent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Integrates the external and internal communication of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Recognises internal communication as part of an ongoing process of strategy development and implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Adopts a holistic view of internal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Recognises the diversity of internal audiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Identifies channels/media appropriate given the objectives and audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Recognises the role of top management in internal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Recognises the role of line managers in internal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Includes a process to identify key strategic internal/external issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Reflects a commitment to dialogue and symmetrical communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Provides for local empowerment and ownership of internal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

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