

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Harvey & Myers (2002: 169), research methods can be regarded as the means by which knowledge is acquired and constructed within a discipline. These methods have to be relevant and rigorous in order for them to be accepted as legitimate within a specific field of knowledge. Fetterman (1998: 1) states that the researcher usually enters the field with an ‘open mind, not an empty head’ and before any questions are asked, the researcher has to start with a problem, a theory or model, a research design, specific data collection techniques, tools for analysis and a specific writing or reporting style.

This Chapter will, therefore, present the research approach, design and methodology that will be followed to address the main research question, as outlined in Chapter 1. It will also provide a comprehensive description of the research procedure, data collection techniques and data analysis that will be used to ascertain whether CI tools and techniques can be implemented in Public Service departments in South Africa, in order to enhance the quality of services delivered. Ethnographic research purposes, characteristics, benefits and limitations, design, validity and reliability, writing the report and ethics will be discussed. The use of ethnographic research in public administration will also be identified and discussed in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACHES

All research is informed by particular perspectives called paradigms within a discipline. Paradigms serve as a way to look at the world, and interpret what is seen. They then also allow a researcher to decide which observations are real, valid and important to document (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 41). The most common paradigms in social science research are positivism; interpretative, phenomenological

or constructivist theory; critical theory; ecological theory; and social network theory (Table 3.1). Table 3.1 also highlights the most important features of each of these paradigms, and these features serve to provide a comparison between the paradigms.

The aim of positivistic research is to provide explanations leading to the prediction of causal relationships. Critical research aims at investigations into the sources and dimensions of inequality in actions and policies of the dominant social paradigm or institution. The aim of ecological research is to look for continuous accommodation among individuals, institutions and the environment, whilst the social networking paradigm aims at providing an important analytical framework for social science research.

The terms ‘interpretive’, ‘phenomenological’ and ‘constructivist’ are used interchangeably when describing paradigms and, according to LeCompte & Schensul (1999₁: 49) this approach is inherently participatory in nature because meaning can only be created through interaction, and researchers must participate in the lives of the research participants in order to observe social dialogue and interaction. Furthermore, results from such interaction can produce a deep sense of shared understanding of a particular social problem as well as a shared view that can lead to a specific direction or action to remedy the identified problem. Phenomenologically oriented studies are generally inductive and they make few explicit assumptions about sets of relationships (Mouton, 2001; Fetterman, 1998).

Table 3.1: A Comparison of Paradigms (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 59).

	POSITIVISTIC APPROACHES	INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES	CRITICAL APPROACHES	ECOLOGICAL APPROACHES	NETWORK APPROACHES
CONCERN	Self as defined by society/ form/ social structure, i.e. what’s going on outside individuals	Society/form/social structure as defined by self, i.e., what’s going on within and between individuals	Self as defined by the structure of domination, i.e., what’s going on within and between individuals as a consequence of their given material and historical conditions	Self as defined by social structures representing levels of influence, i.e., what’s going on within individuals influenced by family, peers, school, work, community and society	Self as defined by interaction with significant others in specific cultural domains, i.e., what’s going on within and between individuals as a consequence of social relationships
ORIGINS OF KNOWLEDGE	By definition, by deduction from laws or theoretical statements, from experience	From shared understandings, negotiation, historical and social context	From different access to knowledge regarding historical context, political,	From beliefs and behaviors of individuals to knowledge of structural factors influencing their	From beliefs and behaviors of individuals to knowledge about their social interactions with



			economic, and social conditions	behaviors	important others
ROLE OF RESEARCHER	Affectively neutral, uninfluenced in the conduct of study by personal experience of the research	Involved, informed by researcher's personal experience in interaction with the study participants	Educative, analytic, transformative; active teacher/ learner	Detached, uninfluenced in the conduct of study by personal experience of the research	Involved, informed by researcher's personal experience in interaction with the study participants; may also be detached and uninfluenced
ROLE OF RESEARCHED	Affectively neutral, objective	Involved, subjective	Educative, analytic, transformative; active teacher/ learner	Detached, objective	May be either involved or detached; Objective or subjective
FOCUS	Observable behavior. Measurement and quantification. Qualitative operationalisation of variables. Controlling variances and bias.	Elicited meanings for observational behavior. Intersubjective understanding. Explaining variance and bias.	Structural asymmetries, critical consciousness, hidden meanings and assumptions, patterns of oppression. Exposing variance and bias.	Observable behavior and elicited meanings in relation to structures, policies, norms, behaviors typical of other levels in the system.	Observable and measured behavior, both qualitative and quantitative and elicited meanings in relation to explication of social relationships.
PROCEDURES	Definition (by researcher); Description (by researcher); Classification/ codification (by researcher); Enumeration; Correlation; Verification; Prediction	Definition (by subject); Description (by subject); Classification/ codification (by researcher subject to member checks); Enumeration; Correlation/ association; Interpretation (by researcher in conjunction with subject); Communication	Definition (by researcher and subject); Description (by researcher and subject); Classification/ codification (by researcher subject to member checks); Enumeration; Correlation/ association; Interpretation (researcher in conjunction with subject); Communication (by researcher); Action/ transformation (researcher and subject)	Definition (by researcher); Description (by researcher); Classification/ codification (by researcher possibly subject to member checks); Enumeration; Correlation/ association; Interpretation (researcher in conjunction with subject); Communication (by researcher); Verification; Prediction	Definition (by researcher); Description (by researcher); Classification/ codification (by researcher possibly subject to member checks); Enumeration; Correlation/ association; Interpretation (researcher in conjunction with subject); Communication (by researcher); Verification; Prediction.
PROCESS	Achieving control of behavior by modeling its study after procedures used by scientists studying the physical universe	Achieving understanding of behavior by analysis of social interaction, meaning and communication	Achieving change in structure and behavior by exposing hidden patterns of meaning, communication and control	Achieving change in structure and behavior by analysis of levels and their interaction	Achieving change in structure and behavior by identifying influence of interaction among members of a social group on one another
GOALS	1) Generalization of results to subsequent similar events and phenomena 2) Development of universal laws which govern human behavior in all settings	1) Comparison of results to similar and dissimilar processes and phenomena 2) Development of workable and shared understandings regarding regularities in human behavior in specific settings	1) Analysis of results to unmask inequities in process and phenomena 2) Development of emancipatory stance towards determinants of human behavior	1) Analysis of result to identify relationships across levels in a local situation 2) Development of local predictors influencing individual, group and social behaviors 3) Inductive development of regional and larger patterns and laws	1) Analysis of results to identify social relationships among related individuals; 2) Development of predictors of social influences on individual behavior 3) Generalization from local and universal rules

Fetterman (1998: 5) states that, “ethnographers recognise the importance of understanding the epistemological basis of a selected paradigm.” The selected paradigm that is typically used for ethnographic research is usually based on a phenomenologically oriented paradigm. This paradigm embraces a multicultural perspective because it accepts multiple realities. People act on their individual perceptions, and these actions have real consequences.

For the purpose of this study, and in order to improve the delivery of service by the Department of Home Affairs as identified in Chapter 1, the phenomenological paradigm has been cited as the most suitable.

3.3 A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

After identifying the paradigm most suitable for this study, the research method that is most appropriate was decided upon. Qualitative research allows the researcher to provide details of the study area and develop a deeper understanding of the topic. The researcher found that no single research method for data collection was able to adequately address the complex issue of improving the quality of Public Service delivery through the implementation of CI tools and techniques. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, qualitative research approach will be applied using several methods of data collection. Examples of data collection for this form of research include face-to-face interviews, focus groups, document analysis, site visits, and participant observation.

Qualitative research emphasises the human factor and utilises intimate first-hand knowledge of the research setting, thereby avoiding distancing the researcher from the people or event/situation being studied (Neuman, 2003). Furthermore, this approach to research captures and discovers meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data, thus it can be regarded as a naturalistic approach where the researcher studies phenomena in their natural settings and tries to interpret and make sense of the results obtained.

Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena and they are able to help researchers understand people and the social / cultural contexts within which they live. Examples of qualitative methods would be participative / action research, case study research and ethnography (Myers & Avison, 2002: 4). A qualitative approach has benefited this study as it examined the issue of implementing CI tools and techniques to improve Public Service delivery and a detailed view of the subject was provided.

Had a qualitative method not been suitable, then the researcher could have selected a quantitative method. While quantitative research could be useful in researching the CI tools and techniques to enhance quality service delivery, two problem areas were identified. The first problem relates to measuring the different attributes pertaining to quality service delivery and the second problem relates to the rating scales that can be used for quality service research. In measuring quality service delivery, the attributes are usually intangible, cannot be clearly specified and are abstract in nature. Therefore, standard measurements / procedures of quantitative research can be misleading. Hence quantitative research was not regarded as an option for this study.

Figure 3.1 reflects the various alternatives of qualitative research methods and these methods were carefully investigated before an appropriate method for this study was decided upon. In order to successfully analyse and understand the complexity of the intangible attributes of the study, an ethnographic research method was selected as the most beneficial.

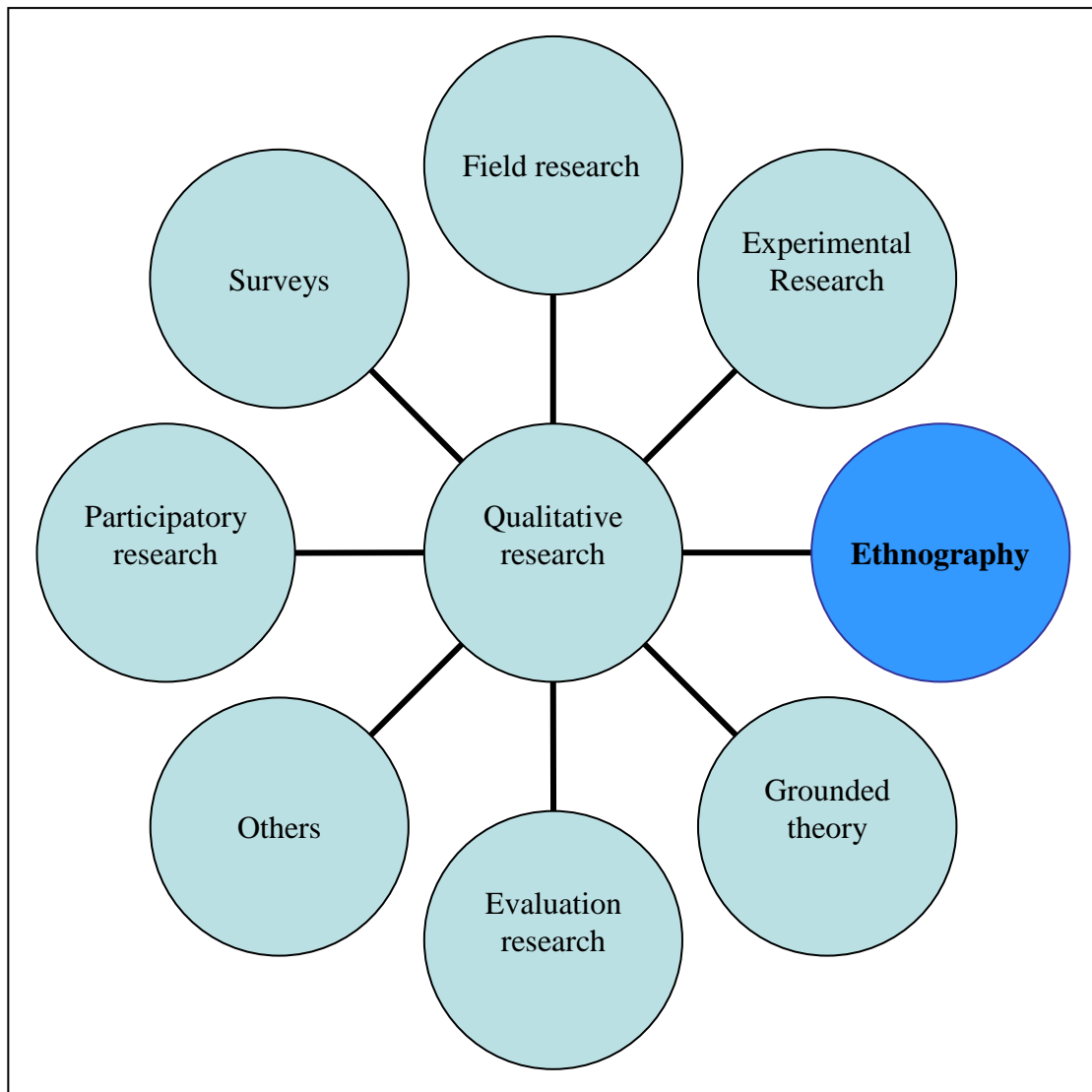


Figure 3.1 Qualitative research alternatives

3.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Mouton (2001: 148) describes ethnographic research as, “studies that are usually qualitative in nature which aim to provide an in-depth description of a group or community. Such descriptions are embedded in the life-worlds of the actors being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices”. This description of ethnographic research relates to the views of Gay, Mills & Airasian (2009: 404) where they indicate that ethnographic research is the “study of the cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural settings”. Usually the researcher in such a study engages in a long-term study of particular phenomena in

order to place their understanding of the phenomena into a meaningful context. By participating in varying degrees in the research setting, the researcher is able to discern patterns and regularities of human behaviour in social activity.

Ethnographic research can also be referred to as field research, participant observation research, or narratives and it involves the researcher directly observing participants in social settings (Neuman, 2003:366).

Van Donge (2006: 180) confirms the description of ethnographic research outlined above by describing it “as methods that attempt to study social life as it unfolds in the practices of day-to-day life”. This method of research avoids artificial research situations as much as possible. Further, ethnographic research can be regarded as one of the most in-depth research methods (Myers, 1999). This is because the researcher is at the research site for a long period of time and sees what people are doing, as well as what they say they are doing – the researcher obtains a deep understanding of the people, the organisation, and the broader context within which they function. This form of research is, therefore, well suited to provide rich insights into the human, social and organisational aspects of service delivery in a country.

Michael Genzuk (2003) sees ethnography as a social science research method that relies heavily on up-close, personal experiences and possible participation, not just mere observation from a researcher who is trained in the art of ethnography. This view is backed by that of Van Maanen (1995: 4) who states that, “when used as a method, ethnography typically refers to fieldwork conducted by a single investigator – who ‘lives with the lives like’ those who are studied for a lengthy period of time, usually a year or more”.

Ethnography has also been defined as, “the art and science of describing a group or culture. This description may be of a small tribal group on an exotic land or a classroom in middle-class suburbia,” (Fetterman, 1998: 1). The researcher writes about the routine, daily lives of people, and the more predictable patterns of human thought and behaviour become the focus of inquiry. Several purposes of this form of research have been identified.

3.4.1 PURPOSE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

LeCompte & Schensul (1999₁: 34), state that most ethnographic researchers are concerned with social issues and problems and their research questions focus on problems in relationship between community residents, families, or “clients,” and the institutions that are supposed to serve them. Within this context, the purpose of ethnographic research is to:

- Better understand a problem or situation
- Illustrate what is happening in a program or intervention that is implemented
- Obtain information that can complement quantitative data that has been collected, or is available, on a specific problem, situation
- Complement and better explain results of surveys and similar data, especially those outcomes that are unanticipated or unexpected
- Identify new trends, new solutions to social problems, and potential problems that may arise as a result of the implementation of new policies and practices (LeCompte & Schensul (1999₁: 38).

An important strength of ethnographic research is its comprehensiveness and deeper understanding of the situation or problem in question. According to Babbie (2007: 314), field research such as ethnography, is especially appropriate to topics and processes that are: not easily quantifiable; are studied in natural settings as opposed to the artificial settings of experiments and surveys; and are studies of social processes that change over time. These topics could include practices, episodes, encounters, roles, relationships, groups, organisations, social worlds and lifestyle or subcultures.

This study examines the delivery of services, which is not easily quantifiable and the researcher studied this delivery in its natural environment, namely, the Department of Home Affairs. The delivery of service by this department has deteriorated and requires some intervention to improve (South Africa (Republic), 2008₈). Ethnographic research in this case was seen as an intervention that could benefit DHA by providing a better understanding and description of the situation that exists so that appropriate corrective actions could be taken.

The goal of ethnographic research is to describe, analyse, and interpret the culture of a group in terms of the group's shared beliefs, behaviours, language, and culture. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2009: 404), culture in this context refers to the set of attitudes, values, concepts, beliefs and practices shared by members of a group. Furthermore, the authors also state that a unique type of understanding can be gained via ethnographic research as it focuses on everyday behaviour, which is often taken-for-granted, and the research is not about "proving" that a particular intervention "solves" a particular problem, but rather to understand what is going on in a particular setting.

The culture or group being described in this research was that of the chosen Department of Public Administration, namely, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the participants in the study were the staff at DHA. The ethnographic study was also able to provide a description of the reality of the situation at DHA. An understanding of the development of ethnography will provide more light on why this method was appropriate for this study.

3.4.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography comes from social and cultural anthropology and it means, "describing a culture and understanding another way of life from the native point of view," (Neuman, 2003: 366). Furthermore, it is believed that people display their culture through behaviour in specific social contexts. However, this behaviour does not provide meaning, rather meaning is inferred or the ethnographer has to figure out meaning. Here, the researcher is required to spend a significant amount of time in the field. Anthropologists usually lived and studied among a group that was a small, intact, self-sufficient social unit, and these groups were unknown to the researcher. The ethnographer has the responsibility to learn about, record, and ultimately portray the culture of that group in order to deepen the understanding about the different ways human beings have resolved the problems created by being human in the first place (Wolcott, 1997).

Researchers suggest that, historically, ethnography has been thought of as both a product of research and a research process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁; Agar, 1996). The product can be an interpretative story, reconstruction, or a narrative about a group of people. The content of this product can, and usually does, address the following: beliefs; attitudes; perceptions; emotions; verbal and non-verbal means of communication; social networks; behaviours of the group of individuals; use of tools and technology; manufacture of materials and artefacts; and the patterned use of space and time.

The ethnographic research process involves longer term face-to-face interaction with people in the community being researched and using tools of data collection (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999₁: 4).

Van Donge (2006: 180) suggests that ethnography emerged in the period of European expansion to denote the observation of exotic peoples. Thus, from its origin, ethnography has been closely associated with the confrontation of different cultures. However, LeCompte & Schensul (1999₁: 5) suggest that contemporary ethnographers are more focussed on a particular aspect or dimension of culture, simply because it is no longer possible for most researchers to spend years in a single site. Furthermore, these researchers tend to be problem-oriented, addressing specific issues or problems in a community context, which also serves to narrow and focus the research endeavour.

Present day researchers conduct ethnographic research in organisations and communities of all kinds such as, educational, public health, rural and urban development, and consumers and consumer goods (Genzok, 2003). Some examples of such research are the study of the Career Intern Program (study of school dropouts); the use of Drugs in specific communities; and Aids research in rural areas (cited in Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Ethnographic research was found to be most suitable to deal with the sensitivity and seriousness of the issues being studied in an ethical and compassionate manner. The various types of ethnographic research will now be discussed.

3.4.3 TYPES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Many types of research have been identified by researchers for conducting ethnographic research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁; Myers, 1999; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). These have been reflected in Figure 3.2.

However, Gay, Mills & Airasian (2006: 444-445) identified three of the most commonly used types of ethnographic research and only these will be discussed as follows:

- Critical ethnography – highly politicised form of ethnography with the aim of advocacy. These ethnographies address issues such as power, authority, emancipation, oppression and inequality.
- Realist ethnography – written with an objective style and are used mainly by cultural and educational anthropologists who study the culture of schools.
- Ethnographic case study – a case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process. Focus is on a single unit for investigation such as a single institution or program, an individual, or specific clinical studies, and they differ from other case studies because they always include the culture of the group or entity under study.

The ethnographic case study was cited as the most suitable type of research for this study since the minimal condition for its uses were, “a population, process, problem, context or phenomenon whose parameters and outcomes are unclear, unknown or unexplored and it has an identified community and target population,” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 83). This was used to investigate a single institution, namely, the Department of Home Affairs. The case study was also able to assist the researcher to determine the factors and relationships among the factors that have resulted in the current behaviour and status of Public Service delivery at the Department of Home affairs.

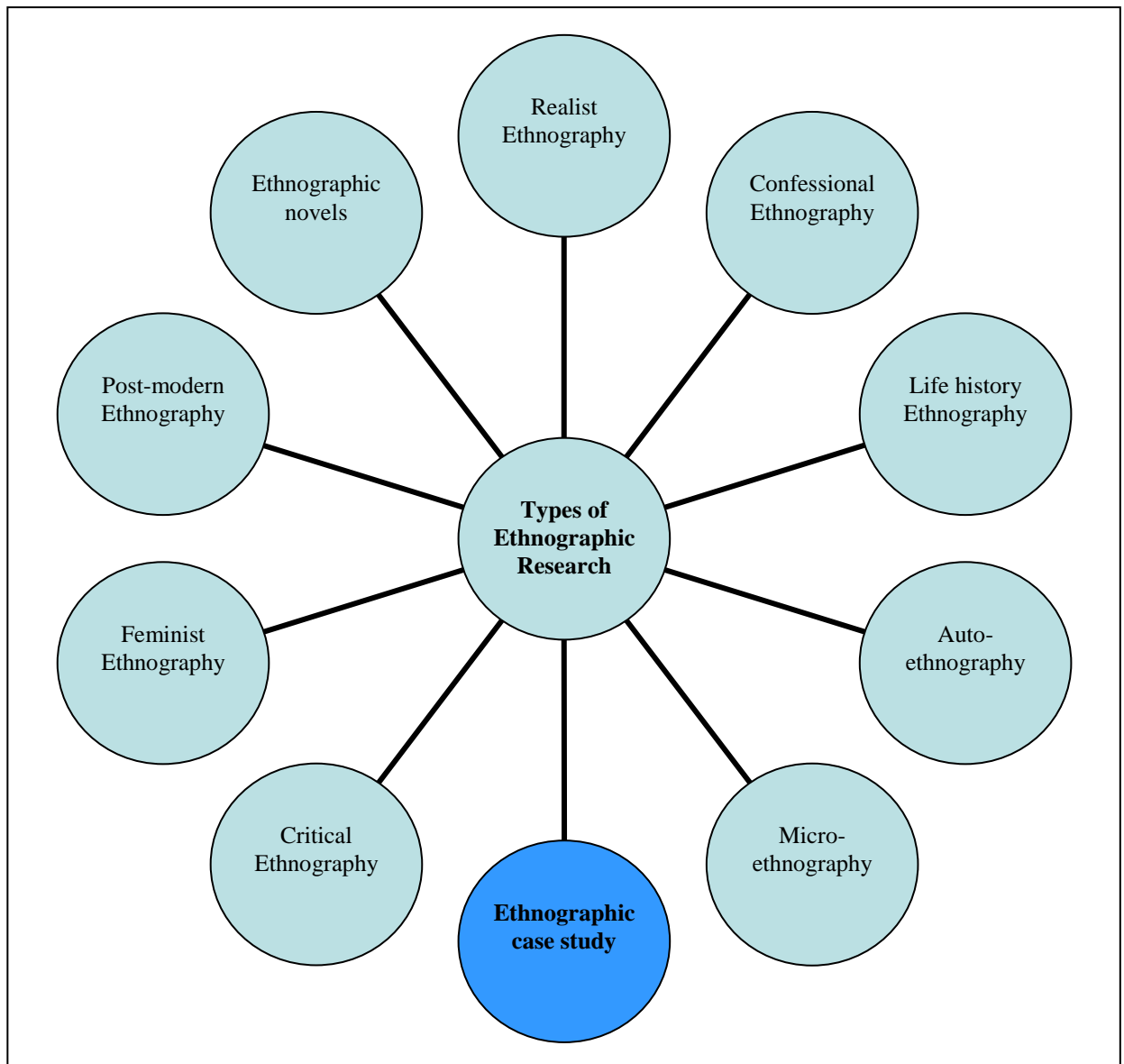


Figure 3.2 Types of ethnographic research.

3.4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

It is important for a researcher to be able to recognise what ethnographic research studies entail, and from this be able to determine if this approach is the most suitable for the problem or situation being studied. Several authors have identified the key characteristics of ethnographic research (Maxwell, 2005; Van Donge, 2006; Babbie, 2007; Forsythe, 1999; Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999; Hammersley, 1998; Van Maanen, 1995; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006; Agar, 1996). Gay, Mills & Airasian (2006: 445) best encapsulate what all the authors

describe, hence the following characteristics cited by them can be regarded as the most distinctive characteristics of ethnographic research:

- It is carried out in a natural setting and not in a laboratory
- It involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants
- It presents an accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and behaviours
- It uses inductive, interactive, and repetitious collection of "unstructured" data and analytic strategies to build local cultural theories
- Data is primarily collected through fieldwork experiences
- It typically uses multiple methods of data collection, including conducting interviews and observations, and reviewing documents, artifacts, and visual materials
- It frames all human behaviour and belief within a socio-political and historical context
- It uses the concept of culture as a lens through which to interpret results
- It places an emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them
- It investigates a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail
- It uses data analysis procedures that involve the explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions. Interpretations occur within the context or group setting and are presented through the description of themes
- It requires that researchers be reflective about their impact on the research site and the cultural group
- It offers interpretations of people's actions and behaviours that must be uncovered through an investigation of what people actually do and their reasons for doing it
- It offers a representation of a person's life and behaviour that is neither the researcher's nor the person's. Instead, it is built upon points of understanding and misunderstanding that occur between researcher and participant
- It cannot provide an exhaustive, absolute description of anything. Rather, ethnographic descriptions are necessarily partial, bound by what can be handled within a certain time, under specific circumstances, and from a particular perspective.

From these characteristics, it had become evident that ethnographic research was the best fit for the research environment of this study and it would also provide the researcher the flexibility to adjust and / or include other aspects into the research while it was in progress. This would ensure that no important details were either overlooked or missed out entirely and that DHA could benefit from this form of research.

3.4.5 BENEFITS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The most important value of ethnographic research is the depth that is covered in a specific area of investigation. Since the researchers spend a significant and extended period of time in the field, they are able to see for themselves what goes on in that environment and gain an in-depth understanding of the people, the organisation and the broader context within which they work (Myers, 1999). This knowledge gained from the field can also challenge the assumptions of the researcher and assist them to 'not take things for granted' without questioning their assumptions. Furthermore, the methods used in ethnographic research produce a picture of the cultures and social groups from the perspective of their members and not from the researcher's point of view (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 27). It tries to understand a community or organisation from the inside (Van Donge, 2006: 185).

Ethnographic research methods and tools are designed for discovery and the researcher learns through systematic observations in the field and asking questions about what they see and hear (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 2). This allows them to assign meaning to situations or problems. Not only does ethnographic research benefit the solving of human related problems, as it provides the researcher with a better understanding of the socio-cultural problems in communities and organisations, but the results of these studies can also be used to solve these problems or bring about some form of positive change in the communities or organisations.

The flexible and unobtrusive nature of this form of research allows the researcher to adopt, or create and use, appropriate aids and data collection tools that are effective and align well with the situation under study. It also enables them to detect consistent

patterns of thought and practice and to investigate the relationship between them (Forsythe, 1999: 128). Observation is usually an important tool in this form of research and it allows the researcher to correct preconceived ideas that they may have held and, since it is more of an open approach, it also avoids the framing of a research situation beforehand. This allows the researcher to deal with actual practices in the real world and to develop frameworks which can be used by practitioners and researchers (Harvey & Myers, 1995).

Another important benefit of ethnographic research is that it provides a kind of testbed against which to compare particular findings, to evaluate general theories about human behaviour, and to produce in-depth understanding of real-world social processes (Forsythe, 1999: 129).

Ethnographic research methods can, therefore, be seen as an inspiration to researchers who intend to develop new ways of studying and understanding what is happening in communities and organisations. However, it was essential for the researcher to also take into account the challenges and limitations of this method of research.

3.4.6 LIMITATIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Several authors have reported on the limitations of ethnographic research (Harvey & Myers, 1995: 23; Myers, 1999: 6; Forsythe, 1999: 133; Wolcott, 1997: 334). These limitations have been summarised as follows:

- It leads to in-depth knowledge only of particular contexts and situations
- Doing ethnography takes a great deal of time. A major limitation of ethnographic research is that it takes a lot longer than other kinds of research because of the writing up and analysis of the large amount of data that is collected by several methods
- The process can be overwhelming to new researchers as they cannot enter the situation with fixed frameworks and prepared questions
- There are ethical issues that must be considered due to the in-depth and holistic nature of the discoveries which emerge

- The publication of results can be challenging, because it is more of a story-telling approach
- There is a problem of gaining entry and maintaining rapport with the participants and this requires expertise and understanding of how ethnography should be carried out
- Analysing a social situation entails much more than just having familiarity with that situation
- Ethnographic research does not have much breadth, and it is impossible to develop more general models from just one ethnographic study.

It should be noted that all methods of research, especially within the specific environment of this study (namely the study of human beings and a very contentious Department of Home Affairs) were bound to have limitations in some form. It was important that these limitations were taken into consideration at the outset, and that appropriate actions were in place to minimise the limitations' effects on the quality of the study. Furthermore, the researcher believes that most of the limitations cited cannot be regarded as serious limitations per se, but merely products of the fact that this method is not commonly used within this discipline. Throughout this study into enhancing service delivery in the DHA, the DHA was seen as an environment that has its own culture. The fact that such a diversity of individuals work in this environment, suggested that ethnographic research methods were the most suitable in order to capture the dynamics of this environment. The goal of ethnographic research differs from other forms of qualitative field based research such as participatory research.

3.4.7 ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH vs. PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

It is essential that the “participatory” aspect of the ethnographic research and the participation of the researcher in the study are not confused with another form of social research, which also focuses on the relationships linking the researcher to the subjects being researched, known as participatory research.

Several forms of participatory research have been identified by Willis, Jost & Nilakanta (2007: 232). Two of which are participatory action research and participatory instructional research. All forms of the research share the common element of involving those who are being studied, or affected in the research process, as colleagues and partners.

Furthermore, participatory research takes a participatory approach to learning as a central part of the research process and research is conducted, not just to generate facts, but also to help the participants to develop an understanding of themselves and their context. There is no off-the-shelf method or “correct” way to do any participatory research. It should be regarded as a set of principles and a process of engagement in the inquiry (Sohng, 2005). The role of the researcher in this process is to act as a facilitator of the learning process, setting up situations to allow the people to discover for themselves what they already knew and to discover new knowledge in the process.

Sohng (2005) states that participatory research methods challenge practices that separate the researcher from the researched, and promote a partnership between the researcher and the people being studied. According to Sohng (2005) this collaboration is regarded as empowering because it:

- Brings people together around common problems and needs
- Validates their experiences and the foundation for understanding and critical reflection
- Presents the knowledge and experiences of the researchers as additional information upon which to critically reflect
- Contextualises issues that have previously felt like “personal”, individual problems or weakness
- Links such personal experiences to political realities.

The above activities can all be translated into action that can benefit the individual, community or situation. Barr (2005: 55) found that there is a general trend for participatory research methods to focus on more immediate requirements of practice that address community issues.

According to the *Glossary of Research Terms* (2005), participatory research can also be referred to as action research, research in practice, field research, community-based research, reflective research, teacher research, practitioner research, program-based research or practitioner inquiry. It is further referred to as an inquiry-based research conducted by practitioner for the purpose of making change.

Participatory research remains a primary methodology for the practice of organisational or community development and is regarded as the ideal post-positivist social scientific research method. It involves two stages: First, the diagnostic stage, which involves the collaborative analysis of the social situation by the researcher and the subjects of the research. Then, the second stage involves collaborative change experiments and, it is in this stage that changes are introduced and the effects are studied (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 2002).

Ethnographic research differs from participatory research as it commences with the selection of a problem or topic of interest. This problem then guides the entire research endeavour. For the purpose of this study, the main research problem, as identified in Chapter 1, will guide the research endeavour. Table 3.2 serves as a summary that compared and contrasted ethnographic and participatory research methods.

Table 3.2 Comparison of ethnographic & participatory research methods (adapted from Mouton (2001: 148-151))

	Ethnographic research	Participatory research
Description	Studies that are usually qualitative in nature which aim to provide an in-depth description of a group or community. Such descriptions are embedded in the life-worlds of the actors being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices.	Studies that involve subjects of research (research participants) as an integral part of the design. This form of research mainly uses qualitative methods to gain understanding and insight into the life-worlds of the research participants. Most types of participatory research have an explicit (political) commitment to the empowerment of participants and to change the social conditions of the participants.
Typical applications	Ethnographic studies of communities or cultures. Field studies in natural settings.	Education action research in classrooms and schools.
Conceptualisation	Inductive; a-theoretical. Usually no hypothesis- guiding ideas or expectations.	More inductive than deductive; emphasis on participants and their world-views; reluctance to impose any pre-set theory or explanation.
Selection of cases/samples	Theoretical or judgement sampling.	Non-probability selection principles.
Mode of observation/ sources of data	Participant observation; semi-structured interviewing (Individual focus group); use of documentary sources.	Participant observation; semi-structured interviewing; using documents; constructing stories and narratives.
Strengths	High construct validity; in-depth insights; establishing rapport with research subjects.	Involves participation and involvement on the part of the subjects, which enhances the chance of high construct validity, low refusal rates and “ownership” of findings.
Limitations	Lack of generalisability of results; non-standardisation of measurement; data collection and analysis can be very time consuming.	The small number of cases and low degree of control affect overall generalisability and possibility of strong casual and structural explanations.

3.4.8 ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

It has come to the attention of researchers such as McNabb (2002), Ospina & Dodge (2005), Perry (2000), Sandfort (2000), Mosse (2004) and Rhodes (2005) that ethnographic research methods can provide great quantities of important information in public administration. Furthermore, this form of research has the ability to produce powerful narratives that provide in-depth insight into the needs of society.

McNabb (2002: 320) motivates that the use of detailed description means that ethnographic research can be an excellent design choice when the study objective is to provide deep background information for the formation of long-term, strategic public policy. He further suggests that ethnographic research is one of several important approaches for the study of culture and the act of governance, the formation of public policy, and the administration of diverse agencies and functions of government. Furthermore, research conducted in these disciplines has often had great influence on public policy.

Ospina & Dodge (2005: 144) found that public administration and related fields such as policy, planning, and public management, have taken a narrative or ethnographic turn to interpret and experience situations from the perspective of the researcher as well as the people they study. This has contributed to the theoretical and methodological development in public administration by encouraging researchers to explore and highlight the multidimensional aspects of public institutions and their administrative and policy problems.

Ethnographic research methods in public administration have been part of the broader paradigm shift that is taking place in the arts, humanities and the natural and social sciences. Within this context, public administration is experiencing rapid changes that force these departments to re-orientate themselves, develop new goals and adopt new processes (Sandfort, 2000). Furthermore, public managers are cautioned that they will need new skills to navigate complex organisational networks, respond to increasing environmental demands, increase efficiency, and operate and accomplish their mandate within restricted budgets and timeframes.

Perry (2000: 486) also identified the important contribution that ethnographic research methods can have on the theory of Public Service motivation when linking theory, socio-historical phenomena and organisational behaviour. Furthermore, these methods are used for analysing and diagnosing the culture and operating climate of organisations and, in this instance, the ethnographic research is usually used to improve the practice of administration in the public sector by acquiring information to make the desired improvements (McNabb, 2002).

Two principles of ethnographic research as a source of data in public administration have been identified by Rhodes (2005: 20) as follows:

- It gets below and behind the surface of official accounts by providing texture, depth, and nuance, so the story of the department has richness as well as context
- It lets interviewees explain the meaning of their actions, providing an authenticity that can only come from the main character involved in the story.

The author also suggests that this form of research is fruitful, progressive and open, and it has the ability to open a wide range of new areas and styles of research about the beliefs, preferences and practices in public administration. This can also be noticed in the study by Mosse (2004) which reflects the contribution of development ethnography to aid policy and practice.

Therefore, it can be deduced that ethnographic research methods have become very valuable tools for gathering information about behaviours embedded in, and specific to, cultures and subcultures. It is also often used to identify administration options for decision making or matters of public policy. The design of the research process is essential if value is to be obtained from the research.

3.5 DESIGNING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROCESS

This section presents the design of the ethnographic research and it will serve as a blueprint that will assist the researcher to conceptualise how each process will be carried out in order to achieve the main purpose of this study, which is to ascertain whether Competitive Intelligence tools and techniques can be implemented in the Public Service departments in South Africa to enhance the delivery of service.

The process of conducting ethnographic research reveals a close parallel between the steps of the process and the outline for writing a qualitative research proposal. The following steps have been identified as the most important to conduct an ethnographic study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006: 442):

- Identify the purpose of the research study

- Frame the study as a larger theoretical, policy, or practical problem
- Pose initial ethnographic research questions
- Describe the overall approach and rationale for the study
- Describe the site and sample selection
- Describe the researcher's role (entry to the research site, reciprocity, and ethics)
- Describe data collection methods
- Describe appropriate strategies for the analysis and interpretation of data
- Write the ethnographic account.

The researcher's entry into this study environment was negotiated through senior management from the Department of Home Affairs, and their input and suggestions for participants was encouraged. After consent had been received from the relevant parties, the researcher commenced the study as a participant observer.

The researcher entered into the research setting and refrained from asking questions until some initial observation of the setting and the participants had been established. This was followed by some start-up questions to get a better understanding of the operation of the department. Thereafter, participants were prompted to tell *who, what, where, when or how* and based on these responses, new questions emerged.

As identified in the literature review, Public Service delivery is a practical problem among Public Service departments and, more importantly, in the Department of Home Affairs. Hence, the overall approach of this study was ethnographic and the rationale for the study was based on government and the citizen's need to improve the delivery of service in Public Service departments. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the Department of Home Affairs has been dogged with a bad reputation for service delivery and the fact that several attempts have been made in the past to remedy this situation to no avail, the researcher has chosen this as an appropriate Public Service delivery department in which to conduct this investigation.

Most research designs begin with the most important problem that has been identified and the subsequent questions that the researcher intends to answer. These have

already been highlighted in Chapter 1. Fieldwork is also an important element of ethnographic research design and it is exploratory in nature. Information was gathered inductively and the researcher was able to generate hypotheses as the research progressed.

Fetterman (1998: 10) indicated that while most ethnographic research requires that the researcher spends an extended period of time in the field, this is not always possible in many applied settings. What is more important is for the researcher to ensure that enough time has been devoted to work in the field to see patterns emerge. Once specific patterns begin to emerge over and over again, the researcher can move out of the field. Furthermore, in cases where it is clear that ethnography is the most appropriate design, modifications have been made to traditional ethnography to accommodate time lines and similar structures, (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁).

For this study, the researcher has spent over four months in the chosen field. This period of stay in the environment was seen as being adequate as the researcher was already familiar with the field settings and culture and the repetitive nature of the activities in the chosen environment did not warrant a longer period in the field. Also suitable data collection techniques were chosen to ensure that sufficient data was collected and triangulation of these data sources was used to ensure accuracy and validity of the data.

3.5.1 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In ethnographic research, the researcher uses a variety of methods and techniques to ensure the integrity of the data. Furthermore, these methods and techniques also objectify and standardise the researcher's perceptions of the problem being investigated and, in most cases, the identified methods and techniques will have to be adapted to fit in with the environment or problem (Fetterman, 1998: 32).

The researcher in ethnographic research can be regarded as the human instrument for measuring field data and relies on all their senses, thoughts, feelings and perceptions to gather data and portray an holistic view of 'what is going on' within the

environment. This implies that the researcher needs to be alert and sensitive to what is happening in the field and disciplined about recording data. Social relationships and personal feelings need to be taken into consideration as they cannot be totally excluded from the study (Fetterman, 1998; Neuman, 2003).

From a study of the literature, the researcher was cautioned against relying on a single source of data. Therefore, before discussing data collection techniques that were used for this study, the importance of triangulation in ethnographic research will be discussed.

3.5.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is the collection of data using a variety of methods (Maxwell, 2005). LeCompte & Schensul (1999: 131) further define triangulation as, “confirming or cross-checking the accuracy of data obtained from one source with data collected from other, different sources.” Fetterman (1998), states that triangulation is basic in ethnographic research and it is at the heart of ethnographic validity. During this process, the researcher compares information sources to test the quality of the information and the person sharing it, to more completely understand the contributions made by the individuals, and to ultimately place the entire situation into perspective. This strategy for data collection reduces the risk of findings being biased and provides the researcher with a more secure understanding of the situation being studied.

The four types of triangulation as cited by Neuman (2003: 138) will be used for this study:

- Triangulation of measures – Here multiple measures of the same phenomenon are taken to see all aspects of it. These include interviews, focus groups, document analysis and the researcher’s personal observations
- Triangulation of observers – combining data from a variety of observers to obtain a more accurate idea of the situation, e.g. Focus group interviews of several observers of the same situation

- Triangulation of theory – Several theories will be used to explain the implementation and value of CI in organisations
- Triangulation of methods – this will be achieved through the use of a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, observation, document analysis, artefacts and the triangulation of the different data sources.

3.5.1.2 Data collection

For the purpose of this study, data was collected from multiple sources (interviews with focus groups and participants) and in multiple ways from subjects (observation, interviews, document analysis). Different kinds of data were also collected in multiple ways from multiple subjects on the same theme (content analysis of policies and practices, focus group interviews with strategic managers and observation of strategic managers). This method helped to guide the researcher through this process, enhance the validity and reliability of the research, ensure the accuracy of the interpretations and confirm that data collected was not due to chance or circumstances.

The primary data collection techniques for this study were, therefore:

- Observation – participant observation, field notes
- Ethnographic interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Content/document analysis
- Workshops – attendance and presentation.

Each of these techniques can be regarded as a qualitative data collection technique and are explored further below.

Observation

According to Genzuk (2003), participant observation can be regarded as a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. Here the researcher shares as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the people in the observed setting with the purpose of developing an insider's view of what is taking

place. This form of participation not only allows the researcher to see what is happening but also provides the opportunity to “feel” what it is like to be part of the group.

The purpose of observation or as it is sometimes referred to: participant observation is to observe and record activities, people and physical aspects of a situation as they happen. The researcher becomes fully immersed in the research setting and is able to see how participants in the study carry out their daily activities. Furthermore, it provides the researcher with an opportunity to establish what is meaningful to participants and for what reasons (Gay, Airasian & Mills, 2006). Observation can be done at three varying degrees depending on the nature of the problem and the opportunities available to the researcher. According to Gay, Airasian & Mills (2006: 447), these degrees of observation are:

- Active participant observer – active engagement in the field
- Privileged, active observer – engaged in more active, privileged manner such as teaching a lesson or providing a workshop
- Passive observer – little engagement – just to see what is going on in the environment.

The researcher for this study played the role of both privileged, active observer (Focus group and workshop facilitation) and active observer (working alongside participants). The procedures for data collection via observation were, therefore: written field notes; written records of informal interviews and conversations; photographs and maps (only where these were permitted); and artifacts such as videoconferencing materials and photographs. Field notes captured the observations of the researcher and these were usually done either while an activity or event was taking place, or very soon after.

During the observation, the researcher targeted the activities; events and sequences; settings and participation structures; the behaviour of people and groups; and the conversations and interactions that took place. This data was then able to depict what the physical settings at the DHA are, activities that took place in the normal work

environment, Acts and policies that impact on the operations, interaction patterns among staff, and the meanings, beliefs and emotions of the participants.

Ethnographic interviews

According to several authors (Fetterman, 1998; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Maxwell, 2005 & Kvale, 1996), unstructured, informal interviews are useful throughout an ethnographic study, as they help the researcher to determine what people think and how one person's beliefs and perceptions compare with another person's. The interview is focused and discursive allowing the researcher and the participant to explore an issue. It also allows the researcher to probe deeper into certain identified areas, to validate what has been observed and to provide direction for future observations or questioning. This also serves to ensure the accuracy of the data that is collected and can also challenge the researcher to create new hypotheses or change the existing ones. The responses of these interviews will be written up as soon as possible after they have taken place to make certain that no important information is lost.

It is further suggested by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, et al. (2005: 298) that the ethnographic interview is used mainly to obtain cultural data, and the most important questions here are:

- Descriptive questions that allow the researcher to collect a sample of the participant's language
- Structural questions that will provide information concerning the culture of the department
- Contrast questions that are able to provide the meanings of various terms that the participant's use.

These interviews are also not always pre-arranged, instead they rely on asking questions about events, activities or interactions immediately after these occur. In this way the participant's perceptions are cross-checked against that of the researcher, and clarity is obtained immediately on certain issues. Darlington & Scott (2002) stated that these in-depth interviews are particularly useful when the phenomenon being investigated cannot be observed directly. This would be beneficial to the researcher as

ethnographic research tries to explain and explore the culture of a situation or problem under study and valuable information will be obtained via this method to present a comprehensive explanation of the current situation with regards to service delivery.

The purposes of the ethnographic interviews in this study were to obtain in-depth information on specific topics. They also provided personal histories, cultural knowledge and beliefs, as well as description of practices within the target department. The target population for the interviews was a representative group of individuals from senior management and key informants who are responsible for certain task and policy decisions at the DHA. The interviews were unstructured, informal interviews. These types of interviews are also referred to as in-depth interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, et al., 2005).

Focus group discussions

Focus groups are another form of qualitative data collection in ethnographic research. This method can also be referred to as group interviewing or group discussions and it is based on structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews that allow the researcher to question several individuals systematically and simultaneously (Babbie, 2007: 308).

The focus group is, thus, a carefully planned discussion that is designed to obtain the perceptions of a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The subjects for the focus groups are chosen on their basis of relevance to the topic and these will include individuals from top management and those involved in decision making and strategic planning of the DHA.

Data is collected through group interaction. Such interaction can be very useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are required on a specific topic ((De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, et al., 2005). Focus group topics for this study included public attitudes to service delivery; personal behaviours of staff in DHA; new products or processes initiated to improve service delivery; and challenges experienced in terms of service delivery.

Neuman (2003) warns about the group composition and suggests that a homogenous group should be used. This view is supported by Babbie (2007: 309), who also

suggests that all members of the group should be aware of the phenomenon being studied and the researcher should encourage everyone to participate in the interview/discussion.

Focus groups were particularly useful to this study as they allowed the researcher to explore and discover new aspects of the topic, provide context and depth for the information obtained about the problem under investigation and allowed for a better interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, the researcher used these interviews to fulfil a number of primary functions: orientation to the study environment; generation of hypotheses based on the insights of the participants; development of questions for the ethnographic interview; obtaining participants' interpretations of the current state of service delivery; and becoming acquainted with the language, terminologies and culture that exists in the DHA.

The use of this method meant that the researcher was also able to generate data on group views, beliefs and reasons for collective action. This data generation is essential to the particular organisation being studied, given the already tainted reputation that it has with regard to service delivery. Using this method to gather information meant that the participants felt empowered as they were able to find strength in numbers and felt in control of the research process, by expressing their views with no fear of being singled out or other prejudices. Focus group interviews were more accessible to all staff in this organisation and were well accepted by those that were not familiar with surveys and other forms of data collection.

While this method can be used as a stand-alone research technique, for the purpose of this study, focus groups were used as part of a multi-method approach to ethnography. This is acknowledged by the views of Schensul (1999) and Babbie (2007) who recognise that that focus groups are, generally, used for exploration or project development purposes or to compliment other forms of ethnographic data collection.

For the focus group to add value to this study, it was essential that the researcher use purposive sampling and create the conditions for easy, productive conversations whilst also ensuring that while the conversations were taking place, the participants

were also serving the researcher's goals. Challenges posed by focus groups were taken into consideration before these focus group interviews commenced.

Content/document analysis

Content analysis or document study as it is also referred to, is a data collection method that allows the researcher to examine information and content in written, or symbolic material (such as pictures, movies, artefacts) on a specific topic (Neuman, 2003: 36). The purpose of content analysis is to elicit themes or content in the body of written or visual media that relate to the situation or topic being investigated and this form of analysis can assist the researcher in the evaluation and selection of theories, hypotheses, assumptions and previous studies and data on the topic.

The procedure for such data collection involves repeated observations, the development of analytic categories, coding and enumeration of the content (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₁: 129). Furthermore, Strydom & Delpont (2005: 325) indicated that document study enables the researcher to investigate people, events and systems in depth, by analysing authentic written material. Hence, a variety of sources can be used.

For this study, the documents that were targeted for content analysis included personal and official documents; non-personal documents such as reports, office memos, agendas, minutes of meetings; and mass media documents such as books, newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters, electronic material, artefacts and archival material.

Workshops

Workshops provide an active learning opportunity with great face validity because participants can witness the implementation as well as the results of a recommended management practice, policy or change that affects them. Useful data can be obtained from workshops in organisations as this is usually the forum where staff get together to learn, discuss and share their experiences of certain issues that are of importance to everybody that attends.

Workshops can be regarded as interactive learning processes that are especially useful for the implementation of new programmes and where the participants' opinions, understanding, and acceptance of these programmes can be established.

Although it was found that not much was written about workshops as a data collection technique in ethnographic research, the researcher was able to use these forums successfully to obtain valuable data for this study that was not available in any other form or source. Hence, data was collected from workshop attendance and presentation. Interaction with participants at the workshop provided valuable information about the management processes and procedures, communication channels, interaction patterns, organisation culture and politics in the environment as well as the staff's feelings and attitudes and changes that were taking place in their work environment at DHA.

3.5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data had been collected, it was analysed according to themes that emerged. This helped to increase the researcher's understanding of what is going on and what the current state of service delivery is. This provided a guideline to document the findings. It also included a description of the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Analysis of the data allowed the researcher to make sense of what has been learned. As indicated by several authors (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₂; Fetterman, 1998; Myers, 1999), what is especially exciting and satisfying about ethnographic data analysis is that the process is recursive or iterative and interpretation begins as soon as the researcher enters the field and continues until a fully developed and well-supported interpretation emerges.

According to Patton (1987), data analysis does three things, in that it:

- Brings order to the piles of data that an ethnographer has accumulated throughout the study

- Transforms the piles of raw data into smaller, manageable forms of crunched or summarised data
- Permits the ethnographer to discover patterns and themes in the data and to link them to other patterns and themes.

The results of analysis provide critical steps for intervention or action in the specific situation.

This research needed to be oriented towards the needs of the end user, which, in this case, were the citizens of the country, since they would benefit from better Public Services, and the government, as they will then be able to achieve their goal of providing efficient and effective Public Services. The analysis of the data then became a very important aspect of the study. It was vital that it was useful, relevant and accurate.

Ethnographic research involves several different data collection methods, as already discussed, and this meant that different data sets were collected for analysis. Analysis was inductive in nature where themes began to emerge as soon as the data was collected, thereby affording the researcher the chance to identify and add new themes to the study well in advance.

Data analysis in this study was a twofold approach. The first analysis began as soon as the researcher commenced the collection of the data and during the data collection, and the second analysis was conducted away from the site after the data was collected. Analysis did not occur in a linear fashion, but instead it occurred simultaneously and repeatedly. The researcher summarised, indexed and classified the data according to themes. These themes were derived from the main research focus as outlined in Chapter 1. At the start of the study the researcher identified seven broad themes according to which data was collected. However, once the data collection was completed, the researcher found that these seven themes had to be increased to nine in order to incorporate additional data that was not anticipated at the start of the study. These themes are represented in chapter 4.

Theme analysis was useful for analysing the opinions, values, beliefs and attitudes of the participants, and these themes also focused on activities in relation to service delivery. Data from the interviews, focus group discussions and field notes from observations were also categorised according to themes and then coded. This can be referred to as open coding, and the researcher was able to identify and name the categories into which the phenomena observed would be grouped. Words, phrases or events that appeared to be similar were grouped into the same category (Hoepfl, 1997).

The next stage of the analysis involved a re-examination of the categories identified to determine how they were linked. This can be referred to as “axial coding”. The purpose of coding in this research was not only to describe but also to acquire new understanding of the phenomenon therefore, it was important to explore casual events contributing to the phenomenon, as well as descriptive details and ramifications of the phenomenon. This process helped the researcher to determine if sufficient data exists to support interpretations (Hoepfl, 1997).

In-depth content analysis also occurred simultaneously on all the different types of data that was collected. In the final stage of data analysis, the researcher synthesised all the data in order to obtain an overall idea of the situation and to validate or invalidate the findings of the study.

3.5.3 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The value of scientific research is partially dependent on the ability of the researcher to demonstrate the credibility of their research findings regardless of the discipline or method used for data collection and analysis. Therefore, reliability and validity of the findings are important (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982: 31).

According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2009: 154), if the researchers’ interpretations of the data collected are to be valuable then the measuring instruments used to collect the data must be both valid and reliable. Hence the validity and reliability of the ethnography research will be discussed.

3.5.3.1 Validity of the ethnographic study

Validity can be regarded as the degree to which the qualitative data can accurately gauge what the researcher is trying to measure (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009: 375). Furthermore, two ways of assessing the validity of research are to establish the trustworthiness and understanding of the study. This can be done by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study and its findings.

In ethnographic research, triangulation is at the heart of ethnographic validity (Fetterman, 1998: 93) as discussed in 3.5.1 above. Furthermore, since triangulation works with any topic, in any setting and on any level, it has been effective in this study and has been able to assist in improving the quality of the data and the accuracy of the findings by clearing up misunderstandings that may have arisen, confirming findings and correcting incorrect interpretations that may have been made.

3.5.3.2 Reliability of the ethnographic study

Reliability refers to the degree to which study data consistently measure whatever they are supposed to measure (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009: 378). This can also refer to the reliability of the techniques used to gather the data. The researcher should, when examining the results of the study, consider whether the data would have been collected consistently if the same techniques were utilised over a period of time.

In the ethnographic study, patterns of thought and behaviour are sought, and these patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability (Fetterman, 1998: 96) The researcher looked for patterns in the analysis of the data and this assisted in grouping similar patterns that appear in the data together thereby confirming a finding. Furthermore, in this study, data was analysed according to themes and this served to confirm the reliability of the findings especially when the themes began to repeat themselves several times in the data collected. Reliability was also established by systematically identifying and examining all casual and consequential factors in DHA, as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.6 RESEARCH REPORT WRITING AND LEGEND USED

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:138), the final report for ethnography is rarely written in the impersonal style that is usually required for many other forms of research. Instead it is often a personal, literary narrative designed to engage the reader's attention and interest.

This view is supported by Neuman (2003: 478) where he states that field research reports are less objective and formal, and more personal hence they may be written in the first person (i.e. using the pronoun "I") because the researcher was directly involved in the setting, interacted with the people studied and was the measurement instrument. The decisions, feelings, reactions and personal experiences of the researcher are part of the research process.

Furthermore, research participants in ethnographic research are given a voice and this is why it is suggested that the participants' actual words be used as evidence and to convey their sense of realism of the situation.

In light of the above explanation, Chapters 4 and 5, which provide the findings of the ethnographic research, have been written in the first person. This is to ensure that the researcher is not distanced from the actual study and to show evidence that the researcher was actually present and participated of the discussions and events transpiring.

Ethnographic writings are often organised around themes that have emerged at the start when the topic was decided on, during the analysis, or through the researcher's participation in activities and their experiences (Hammersley, 1998 :21). For this study, themes were used to structure and organise the data so that the main research question could be answered. Literature on ethnographic research (Fetterman, 1998; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999₂; Myers, 1999; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009) raises caution over the overwhelming amount of data that can be collected. This would cause information overload within the study and could easily cause the researcher to lose focus of the main aims of the study. In order to avoid this scenario, the researcher was careful to identify relevant themes before the study commenced. These themes

were identified on the basis that they were the most necessary focus areas that would be able to help the researcher limit and focus the study and findings in such a manner that the main objectives were achieved. This also made it easier for categorising and analysing the data.

The following legend was used in the writing up of this report to refer directly to the data that was collected by the data collection techniques that were used, in that:

- Data collected from observations was abbreviated to “FN” to denote field notes and this was followed by the date of this observation (e.g. FN 20/06/08)
- Data collected from ethnographic interviews was abbreviated to “EI” to denote ethnographic interviews and that was followed by the date (e.g. EI 25/05/08)
- Data collected from focus group discussions was abbreviated to “FG” to denote focus groups and this followed by the date of the focus group discussion (e.g. FG 14/05/08)
- Data collected from workshops was abbreviated to “WS” to denote workshop and followed by the date of the workshop (e.g. WS 30/05/08).

3.7 ETHICS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

In conducting ethnographic research, the researcher does not work in isolation, but rather with several other people. Furthermore, researchers often pry into the innermost secrets, achievements, failures, beliefs and attitudes of these people. Hence, ethnographic researchers subscribe to a code of ethics that preserves the participant’s rights, facilitates communication in the field, and leaves the door open for further research (Fetterman, 1998: 129).

The researcher is also, to a certain extent, dependent on the enthusiasm and cooperation of the respondents in ethnographic research. Therefore, ethical issues are practically as well as morally central to the research process (Desai & Potter, 2006: 123). Considerable thought and effort was, therefore, given as to how the design of this research would benefit the respondents.

In the case of this study, the researcher has taken these aspects into consideration and, therefore, conducted the research whilst ensuring that:

- No harm was suffered by people being studied or the community at large
- The feelings of individuals were not ‘trampled on’ and what their cultures hold to be sacred was not desecrated. This respect for the social environment will ensure the rights of the individuals; the integrity of the data; and a productive, enduring relationship between the individuals and the researcher
- Professionalism, respect, admiration and appreciation for the individuals’ way of life was observed
- Research goals have been made clear to the individuals when the study was undertaken
- Informed consent was obtained from the respective parties involved prior to the research
- Research results would be made available to the individuals who would like to read it
- The research does not exploit or harm those among whom the research is done (Genzük, 2003).

3.8 SUMMARY

Research is mainly concerned with the investigation of problems or situations in fresh ways, and it involves searching and re-searching the same situation or problem to see it from all perspectives and in different lights. In this chapter, several aspects with regard to the research methodology have been discussed. These included a description and purpose the chosen method of research, namely, ethnographic research. Since this is not a very common type of research used in this discipline, the researcher has described the historical development, paradigms for thinking and characteristics of ethnographic research.

Like most forms of research, ethnographic research also has certain benefits and challenges that needed to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, a discussion of the

use of ethnographic research in public administration served to provide some idea of its value and positive contributions in this area in recent times.

In order to have a clear understanding of the process for this study, the research design that was followed, was established. An indication as to how the data was collected was outlined, and this was followed by the description of the analysis process of all the different sets of data that were collected via the multi-method of data collection.

It was also important to explain the validity and reliability of the data that was collected. The writing up of the ethnographic report differs from other forms of research and this was discussed together with the legend that was used to refer to data collected via the data collection techniques. Since ethnographic research involves working with human beings for a significant period of time, it was essential to take into account the ethical issues involved in this type of study. This also ensures that that the findings of the study are not harmful to the individuals or the organisation under study and that the findings that are finally presented are reliable and accurate.

The next chapter will discuss Public Services and the current state of Public Service delivery at the Department of Home Affairs after the data had been collected and analysed, as discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC SERVICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of two chapters that focus on the findings of the ethnographic study as outlined in Chapter 3. Data was collected via ethnographic interviews, focus group discussions, observations (field notes), workshop attendance and presentation and document analysis. This data has been analysed according to themes such as organisational structure and flow of information, activities that take place in the specific environment, interaction patterns in the chosen organisation, language and communication codes used, organisational culture, internal policies and procedures, strategic planning tools and techniques used, and the current state of service delivery. Each of these themes have aspects that have an impact on efficient service delivery and can also be regarded as a form of internal competition that the DHA faces in terms of achieving its mandate.

This chapter will also provide a discussion of the structure of government in South Africa, especially Public Services and administration, and, in particular, the Department of Home Affairs as the chosen Public Services department in which the study was conducted. Since government departments are rather complex entities to understand, it is necessary to first investigate the structure of government in South Africa. It is hoped that this understanding will provide context within which each department fits into.

4.2 STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The government in South Africa refers to body that is responsible for governing South Africa and is usually referred to as the political executive, namely the President and his Cabinet, at the national level, and Premiers and Executive Councils at the

provincial level. Therefore, the government can be regarded as any part of the State and public administration apparatus (South Africa (Republic), 2003₂: 11).

A government has structures that enable it to function properly and each component of these structures within a government contributes towards its overall functioning.

The government of the Republic of South Africa is divided into three spheres:

- National Government – led by an executive consisting of the President, the Deputy President and the Cabinet Ministers. It is responsible for policy formulation and making, developing national standards and norms, and rules and regulation
- Provincial Government – led by the Premier and his/her executive council. It focuses on functional areas such as provincial planning, provincial cultural matters, provincial roads and traffic, and abattoirs
- Local government – led by the Municipal managers and municipal councils with legislative and executive authority. This level concentrates on local amenities and local municipality matters related to their respective communities (South Africa (Republic), 2003₂: 15). The local government level is closest to the people because it operates at community level. Furthermore, municipalities can also be regarded as units within the local spheres of government that have several districts within their jurisdiction.

The national government is further made up of thirty nine national departments and each department is headed by a political component (headed by a Cabinet Minister) and an administrative component (headed by Director-Generals). Various other councils and committees are present that inter-relate the different spheres. The Department of Public Services and Administration (DPSA) is one of the key departments through which government can realise its commitment to improving the quality of life of all its citizens in South Africa (South Africa (Republic), 2003₂: 16).

4.3 PUBLIC SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATION

In order for the government (at all levels) to achieve its goals and objectives, it is obliged to supply and deliver public goods and services to their respective communities. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in South Africa leads the delivery of Public Services by assisting government departments to implement their management policies, systems and structural solutions within a generally applicable framework of norms and standards in order to improve service delivery (South Africa (Republic), 2008₁: 309). The DPSA is often referred to as the Public Service department and is expected to function and be structured in terms of national legislation, and it must execute the lawful policies of the government of the day.

According to Gildenhuis & Knipe (2000: 57-60), for any service to qualify as a public service, it should comply with the following requirements in that it must:

- Be non-apportionable. This means that the service cannot be divided into consumption units and cannot, therefore, be supplied per unit according to market demand, or be sold at a price determined by the supply and demand in the market
- Be non-exclusive where members of the public cannot be excluded from utilising such services irrespective of whether they are paying for them or not
- Be inexhaustible and cannot become depleted in the process of utilisation
- Have no direct quid pro quo. These services are financed by taxation due to the fact that a price per unit cannot be charged and the taxpayers receive no direct commensurate value in return for the value of the tax they pay. Some taxpayers pay more tax than others but they have the same access to Public Services. The tax systems of public authorities operate separately from the rendering of Public Services
- Be monopolistic in nature where the government maintains monopoly on these services and they cannot be obtained from any other organisation.

The above characteristics are also outlined in detail in the legislation governing public service delivery in South Africa.

The *Public Services Act, Act 103 of 1994* (South Africa (Republic), 1994) serves as a legal and guiding document for the functioning and the structure of DPSA. Section 7 of the Act states that for the purpose of administration of the Public Services, there shall be national departments and provincial administrations as well as other organisational components created.

The Department of Home Affairs is one of the national departments as identified in the *Public Services Act, Act 103 of 1994* (South Africa (Republic), 1994) with specific services that it delivers to the citizens.

4.4 DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS (DHA) AS A CHOSEN PUBLIC SERVICE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is an important part of national government in South Africa. All citizens of the country, visitors and immigrants will have to make use of the services of this department on many different occasions during the course of their lives. Since DHA provides the documents that entitle people access to housing, education, health care, social grants, pensions, jobs, financial services and to exercise their most fundamental right to elect the government of their choice, this department is absolutely critical to the South African government's programme to create a better life for all (South Africa (Republic), 2004₂: 6).

DHA is also responsible for protecting the territorial integrity of South Africa by deciding who may visit the country, by issuing the necessary travel documents to them. The government also acknowledged that, "DHA is the window through which our people and our guests see government and the country. The frustrations of the foreign visitors and South Africans standing in queues at home affairs offices, being exposed to often dilapidated and badly equipped offices and receiving poor service," (South Africa (Republic), 2004₂: 7).

The perceptions of government service delivery can also be based on the experiences of citizens of and visitors to South Africa. Moreover, the performance of other government departments and agencies such as social services, education and health

care services who rely heavily on DHA for the enablement of their own service delivery, is as a consequence, also detrimentally affected by the performance of DHA. Therefore, DHA was selected from all the other government departments for this study.

Furthermore, not much attention is given to the good work and achievements of DHA as compared to the other national departments who consistently report activities from their departments. This is evident in the regular media coverage of mainly negative aspects of service delivery by DHA. For example, the newspaper, 'Daily Sun' has a special section called 'Home Affairs Horrors' or, more affectionately, 'Horror Affairs.' It reports mainly on this department's inability to serve the customers (EI 23/06/08; Daily Sun, 2008). Several websites also refer to Home Affairs as 'Horror Affairs' (e.g., www.kickoff.com; www.nmgroupp.co.za; www.blacksash.org.za) simply due to the 'horrific' experience that individuals experience when trying to use the services of this department.

Many individuals and colleagues that I have spoken to have rolled their eyes and expressed their disgust at the mere mention of 'Home Affairs' simply due to the tainted reputation that this department already has, and also perhaps of their personal experiences in service delivery by this department. I also observed people looking very sceptical and taken aback when they learned of this being the chosen public service department for this study.

A review conducted by the Democratic Alliance (opposition party to the government) of the 2006/7 audit outcomes (2007: 7) has identified the DHA as being among the worst performing government departments for the past six years in terms of its financial management. This record has impacted on its service delivery tremendously. The findings of the Democratic Alliance have been confirmed through a study conducted by Research Surveys (2005: 1). Research Surveys looked at the reactions to and perceptions of service delivery by South African government departments in terms of customer service, service delivery orientation, speed and competence, complaints handling, access, integrity and corruption, funds mismanagement, innovation, manner and level of admiration and whether they are felt to be good places to work. A representative sample of South Africans were surveyed and the

results indicated that, “Home Affairs did not get things right.” Respondents also identified the department as being, “slow and cumbersome, most likely to be corrupt or to mismanage their funds,” (Research Surveys, 2005: 3). The final finding of the study was that service delivery was one of the biggest challenges that government departments, and in particular the DHA, faced.

In the recent years, DHA has been severely hampered in its attempt to deliver world class services to its customers. This has been claimed to be as a result of its lack of capacity to deliver on its mandate (South Africa (Republic), 2007₁: 13).

It is for these reasons that I have chosen DHA for this study. The problem with regards to service delivery at the DHA is well known to most individuals and it poses a challenge that needs attention and new interventions to try to resolve them. Various aspects about DHA could have led to its poor performance according to its mandate, and these factors were investigated in order to establish their impact on strategic planning, appropriate decision making and service delivery.

4.4.1 THE VISION, MISSION, AND STRATEGIC INTENT OF DHA

My investigation into the strategic planning that is done at DHA has revealed a shift in mindset staff at management level in the department that has resulted in a review and adjustment to the vision, mission and strategic objectives. These aspects will now be discussed in detail.

4.4.1.1 Vision of DHA

The vision of DHA is, “*to build a department that provides modern, efficient, cost-effective services that are responsive to the needs of South African citizens, residents and visitors to our country,*” (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 10).

This vision was agreed upon by the management team of DHA at a strategic planning workshop in 2008 and appears in its latest strategic planning document ((South Africa (Republic), 2008₂).

During the ethnographic study, I found that while many of the activities and operations (such as immigration, civic services, support services) within the department are designed with the aim of achieving this vision, there is still a lot that needs to be done before this can become a common vision embraced by staff at all levels in the organisation. Staff at different management levels do not seem to have a clear understanding of the vision statement and this is resulting in delays in strategic decision making and is also becoming a barrier to strategy implementation efforts. I spoke to several staff at management level and asked them what they believed the vision of the organisation was. Most staff avoided answering the question or merely stated that, “it was to provide a service to the citizens and visitors.” Most managers also expressed the vision of their own departments and not that of DHA as a whole. Those managers responsible for contributing information to decision making are not complying, causing unnecessary delays in the implementation of decisions and so delaying achieving the vision of the organisation. This is evident in the statement, “staff have no respect for deadlines and when asked to provide information for strategic planning purposes, they do not respond with any urgency,” (EI 7/05/08; EI 12/05/08; EI 15 /05/08; EI 24/06/08).

Ehlers & Lazenby (2004: 50) suggest that it is as important to communicate the vision to the entire workforce as it is to developing it. They further suggest that it be communicated in such a manner that it clarifies the purpose of the organisation to all its stakeholders. Staff at DHA need to become familiar with the vision and all its activities should be designed to meet this vision. I found that very few staff could repeat the vision of the organisation without consulting the strategic plan or the intranet. These were the means used to communicate the vision of DHA to its staff (FN 15/05/08). Furthermore, it was stated that, “I am not sure if staff at lower levels are aware of what is expected of them, not sure what they are working towards or to achieve as this is not filtered to them especially now when changes have been made,” EI 20/05/08).

The vision is also meant to focus on the future direction of the organisation and look at doing something better in the long term (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 54). This vision seems to respond to the current operations of DHA and it could lose its value to

motivate the staff to work towards achieving this vision. Vision statements may also form the foundation for mission statements and long term strategic objectives.

4.4.1.2 Mission statement of DHA

The mission statement of DHA is *“to assure the status of persons and manage migration according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution pursuant to national development goals and fulfilment of international conventions to which South Africa has acceded,”* ((South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 10).

Mission statements are usually derived from the vision of the organisation and comprise several components that strive to address and include the interests of all the organisation’s stakeholders. Therefore, a mission statement can be seen as a statement that indicates the organisation’s reason for existence or its purpose (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 51). The mission statement should also reflect the present situation in an organisation or the reality of its actions and behaviour at that specific time (Botten & McManus, 1999: 149). The mission statement of DHA is far too broad and while it may allude to these issues, it is, “not clearly stated and this may cause problems in interpretation from its stakeholders and proper execution of activities,” to achieve this mission (EI 11/06/08).

Ehlers & Lazenby (2004: 51) identified four focus areas that are typically found in mission statements. Firstly, purpose, which addresses the reason for the organisation’s existence. Secondly, a mission statement identifies the organisation’s strategy in terms of the nature of its business. Thirdly, the statement refers to the organisation’s behaviour standards and culture in terms of the way it operates and the fourth focus area is about the values, beliefs and moral principles that support the behavioural standards. These focus areas are not clearly identifiable or obvious in the mission statement of DHA. The mission statement requires that one be familiar with the Constitution and the international conventions to which South Africa has acceded, before the essence of DHA’s mission statement can be understood. This can lead to the lack of support from stakeholders and the lack of a shared theme that guides the activities throughout the organisation.

Furthermore, mission statements also form part of the strategic management process and can be seen as the foundation for the development of long-term objectives and the selection of appropriate strategies. Hence, a clear mission statement is needed in order for it to impact strategy formulation. This is, once again, a problem with DHA's mission statement as it is not clear and understandable enough to all levels of staff. This was evident in the ethnographic observations and discussions with several members of staff. Staff indicated that, "the mission is too complicated to understand what DHA intends to do," (EI 15/05/08). Also, it was commented that there is a "lack of clear mission, I am not sure what is expected of me and my department," (EI 23/06/08).

I also found that staff working on the key performance indicators for staff at various senior levels, struggled to accomplish these indicators as the mission and vision statements were far too broad and could not provide adequate direction for the performance of the staff (EI 11/06/08). These statements have also been changed several times and this has led to confusion, as noticed in the statement, "vision and mission statements have not been settled on and the key performance indicators cannot be identified from the complicated mission statement," (EI 11/06/08).

The creation of effective leadership systems in Public Services starts with the forging of sound mission and vision statements. This is critical since the public sector is usually dependent on independent stakeholder groups such as donors, consultants, board members, and volunteers, to carry out the objectives of the organisation. The lack of a strong sense of purpose (mission), or a clear vision for the future, makes it extremely difficult for the public sector to build the "critical mass" necessary for success (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006: 114)

DHA's mission statement also presupposes that its stakeholders know and remember the details of the Constitution and the national development goals. If this is not the case, then it runs the risk of its stakeholders not taking ownership of the mission and, hence, not diverting their actions and competencies towards realising it. It will also be difficult to identify and set appropriate strategic intents for the organisation.

4.4.1.3 Strategic intent of DHA

According to Hamel & Prahalad (1994: 129) strategic intent has been defined as, “an ambitious and compelling dream that energizes a company and provides the emotional and intellectual energy to point the way to the future for the company.” If strategic architecture (a high-level blueprint for the deployment of new functionalities, the acquisition of new competencies or the migration of existing competencies, and the reconfiguration of the interface with customers (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994: 108)), is the brain, then strategic intent is the heart. Strategic intent conveys a sense of stretch for the organisation - current capabilities and resources are not sufficient for the task. Furthermore, the attributes of strategic intent can be identified as a sense of direction, discovery and destiny. The strategic intent outlined for DHA is to:

- Provide secure, efficient and accessible civic and related services and products to citizens and legitimate residents within specified timeframes
- Manage migration effectively by enabling the movement of skilled workers into the country and efficiently and securely facilitating the entry, stay and exit of visitors
- Determine the status of asylum seekers and manage refugee affairs in accordance with international treaties and the bill of rights as enshrined in the constitution
- Foster domestic, regional, and international co-operation towards improved economic growth and development, including events with strategic importance to the country, such as the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup
- Deliver the Department’s mandate effectively by implementing a new organisational model that is characterised by caring officials who serve with professionalism and by effective governance and operational control
- Create an enabling environment by putting in place support services that are effective, efficient, integrated and that prevent corruption (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 10).

For these strategic intents to be achieved, it will require the commitment and personal effort of the entire workforce of DHA. They will also have to believe passionately in its products and outcomes. This was not evident in the morale and level of de-

motivation that I observed during my participation in the DHA work environment. Staff, both at the senior management level and at the lower operational levels, did not pay enough attention to the finer details of their tasks and made many mistakes in the process. Some could not even explain the correct procedures to me and I found some staff asleep at their work posts without any concern of being caught by managers or supervisors.

Strategic planning also serves as a framework for designing the structure of the organisation and this will now be discussed.

4.4.2 ORGANISATION STRUCTURE AND FLOW OF INFORMATION

Organisational structures have an impact on the flow of information and knowledge that is needed for effective decision making and service delivery. The familiar organisational chart is a suitable description of structure. Structure involves the reporting relationships within a firm as well as the division and integration of tasks. The choice of structure involves a myriad of tradeoffs. For example a firm's structure may be centralises vs. decentralised, hierarchical vs. flattened, specialised vs. integrated, etc.

An important aspect to be considered when examining the structure of the organisation has been highlighted in behaviour theory which states that “the basic features of organisational structure and function derive from the characteristics of rational human choice. Because of the limits of human intellective capacity in comparison with the complexities of the problems that individuals and organisations face, rational behaviour calls for simplified models that capture the main features of a problem without capturing all of its complexities” March & Simon (1958:51).

The structure of DHA will be discussed, highlighting the flow of information for decision making.

4.4.2.1 Organisational structure of DHA

According to Gildenhuis & Knipe (2000: 56), “all government organisations are living organisms that consist of people. The environment in which they operate changes continually, as do the demands for, and nature of, their functions. They are, therefore, regarded as being in a situation of constant flux. Therefore, it is essential for their organisational structures to be constantly adapted to keep pace with the changing demands.” Effective organisations will have to constantly review their hierarchical structures and personnel components, working procedures and work methods.

Figure 4.1, below, reflects the latest organisational structure of the DHA that was approved by DPSA.

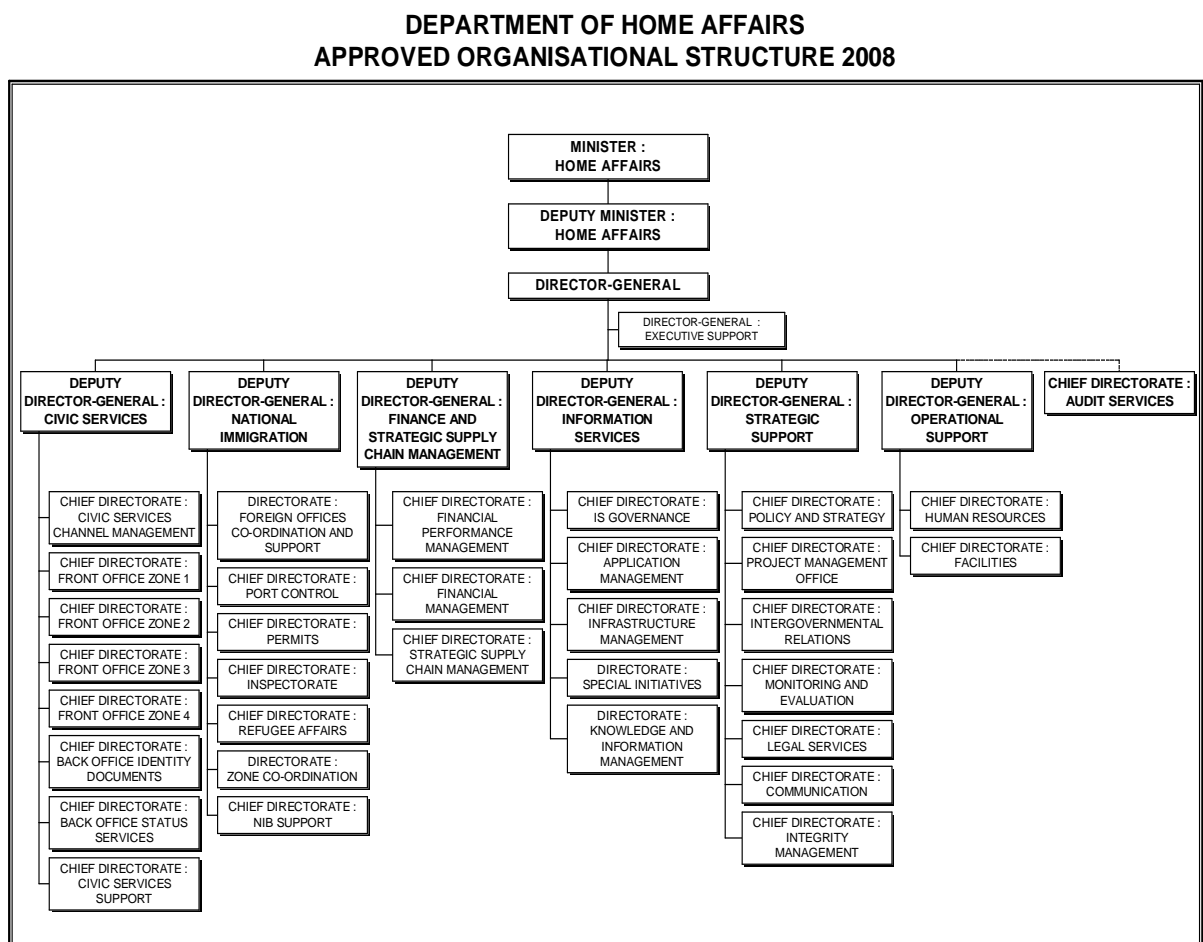


Figure 4.1: Department of Home Affairs Organisational Structure (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 32).

The *State of the Public Services Report* (South Africa (Republic), 2005: 38) identified the need for Public Service departments to be more egalitarian, flatter structures as well as adopting more modern, team-based work methods for producing better results, as well as being departments that focus more on the needs of the customers. At a glance, it is evident that the organisation structure of DHA nevertheless, is still based on a clear hierarchical order where the concentration of power is still among senior officials. It is a formal structure depicting strict rule and regulations, limited channels of communication, confined openness to innovation and change, and focuses more on the functions rather than the processes. This aspect is true for most public administration departments as established by Vigoda-Gadot (2004₂: 32) when he states that most bureaucracies embody a firm hierarchy of roles and duties, a vertical flow of orders and reports, accountability to highly ranked officers and lack of sufficient accountability dynamics.

These aspects are also the issues that seem to lead to the lack of motivation and commitment from staff, especially at the lower levels; those that do not feature in the structure shown in Figure 4.1. “Operations are done at the lower levels, decisions are made at the higher levels in the organisations. We at the lower levels do not have access to meetings and decisions taken about our positions in the organisation,” (EI 12/05/08; EI 15/05/08). Furthermore, staff reported that they became de-motivated and frustrated when they were, “placed in positions that they were not skilled in or had no experience in,” (EI 12/05/08). This is a situation prevalent from the higher levels in DHA to the lower positions, and it has been claimed that this has, “led to high staff turnovers in the department,” (FG 03/06/08).

The results of studies that were commissioned by the South African government to investigate the ability of the Public Services to deliver on its mandate revealed that government departments were faced with capacity limitations with regards to organisational structuring (Pienaar, 2007: 81). The findings of these investigations are no different from what I managed to discover in this study, with regards to organisational structuring at the DHA. At a *Workshop on the new DHA operating model and structure* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₃) that was held to discuss the new structure with top management of DHA, I was able to identify the issues

discussed below that were similar to those issues found in the commissioned government study.

Firstly, organisation structure development focuses on the creation of posts with little attention paid to the purpose and functions of the department. Service delivery was not a focus of the discussions, instead more emphasis was placed on individual business units rather than on the entire functioning of DHA, and managers from business units were only interested in their specific business units. The sole purpose of the redesign should be to improve customer service, for effective coordination and decision making in this regard. It should also try to devolve responsibility and accountability to lower levels in the organisation. However, this structure merely places more checks in place and increases the number of reporting levels that staff at the lower levels have to go through before decisions can be made.

Secondly, there is insufficient consideration of the workload and interrelatedness of work in designing structures. The duplication of roles was evident when the structure in Figure 4.1 was discussed at the workshop. Service delivery needs to be integrated between the different departments and in order for DHA to provide an integrated and seamless service, the structure will need to reflect more interdepartmental teams. This is not evident. Instead, independent, silo-functioning business units are present that do not allow for much flexibility. Responding to changes in the environment may be slow and involve more of crisis management, due to the inflexible nature of the design. Little or no interaction and integration is envisaged and multi-skilling, career opportunities and promotion of staff will be hampered, as staff will only be able to advance within the same functional unit. Instead, this structure can lead to rivalry and conflict between functional units and also empire building in each division. Staff are also, “expected to do restructuring at DHA over and above the other duties” assigned to them (EI 29/05/08). At the workshop I found this was also clearly evident with only fifty percent of the invited staff present at the workshop and apologies tended for most of the others citing other urgent work responsibilities. Many of those that were present spent most of their time on their laptops doing other work and some left the workshop early due to other work-related commitments. Adequate input was also not received from key staff during the planning and design of the new structure and staff were not

certain how certain operations would function in the new structure. Hence, this could result in resistance to the new structure thereby impacting service delivery.

The third issue is that the span of control deviates substantially between departments, with some department managers having very few posts and people under their supervision while other departments have several staff and posts. This inequality in work division is also clearly visible in Figure 4.1, above. ‘Ivory towers’ are created within each department and people fear losing control of these structures even though they are not efficient. Ivory towers can be defined “as a state of seclusion or separation from the ordinary world and the harsh realities of life,” (Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1995: 724). Scott & Hawkins (2008) refer to these ivory towers as knowledge silos, organisational silos or functional barriers. These silos are also reported to hinder the sharing of knowledge and while a specific division or department may appear to be functioning effectively, the performance of the organisation as a whole may be affected by these silos (Scott & Hawkins, 2008: 309). In DHA small divisions isolate themselves from the rest of the organisation and continue to function as they please and not as is expected of them. My study also revealed that, “performance evaluation of staff is focussed on how many staff are under the control of an individual, so managers surround themselves with as many staff as possible as this makes them feel safe and powerful,” (EI 12/05/08 ; EI 26/05/08; EI 28/05/08). Furthermore, they are able to claim higher budgets and more resources for their departments and their performance bonuses are based on the number of staff under their control.

Fourthly, there is a tendency to have senior posts at headquarters with few senior posts at ‘the coalface’ (frontline operations) of service delivery. The majority of the senior positions reflected on the structure in Figure 4.1 are staff working at Head Office and very few positions reflect those that work in the public offices where the daily interaction with the customers or citizens take place. Furthermore, the structure should enable empowerment of these frontline staff by devolving responsibility, accountability and authority to make decisions at these levels. Instead, the current structure requires frontline staff to consult managers at Head Office for authorisation or decision making, and this has resulted in a delay in provision of services.

Fifth and finally, organisational structures are mainly designed to cater for individuals rather than the interests of service delivery. Comments from top management and questions at the workshop indicated that most of the staff at DHA were more concerned with where they were to be placed within the structure and expressed their dissatisfaction when they were not happy with their possible positions in the new structure. The management of DHA, needs to demonstrate, via its structure, their beliefs and desire to be a more evidence-based organisation in all aspects such as strategic planning, service delivery, and performance evaluations. Service delivery is not the function of a specific business unit but it is the sole function of DHA and this is not evident in the structure of the organisation. The organisational structure will have to direct the functioning of officials towards the service to the public as opposed to them focussing on their own posts and interests.

Having discovered the alarming lack of capacity for organisational restructuring in government departments, DPSA was mandated to develop a “*Guide on how to design, implement and maintain organisational structures in the public sector,*” (South Africa (Republic), 2008₄). This guide serves as a common framework for organisational structures in the public sector and it provides a step-by-step description of each phase in the organisational structuring process. It provides guidance and tools that could be used at each stage. Furthermore, the guide is extremely comprehensive and includes over 80 tools and templates that allow practioners to choose the tools that best suit their circumstances. It also includes valuable information to assist practioners to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework appropriate for their revised structures (Pienaar, 2007: 83).

The executive summary was made available in 2007, and this was to assist all government departments with decision making about their own department’s structures and the full Guide has been available since March 2008. However, this guide was not consulted at DHA during the planning, design and development of the structure as indicated in Figure 4.1. I found that all the staff (from the strategic planning division) who were responsible for the structure were also not aware of the existence of this guide (EI 4/06/08; EI 9/06/08).

The *Guide on how to Design, Implement and Maintain Organisational Structures in the Public Sector* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₄: 2-3), identifies the need for effective organisational structures in order to:

- Implement the strategic plan of the department. If the structure is not aligned with the strategic plan of the department, the department is not likely to achieve its objectives
- Ensure effective service delivery. Structures are the vehicle through which services are delivered
- Assist with efficiency and the optimal use of resources. The structure influences how financial and human resources are allocated and used. Duplication of roles and work, delays in decision making, unequal workloads and under-budgeting for activities are a result from poor structures and these issues as discussed earlier, are exactly what is evident from the structure of DHA
- Assist in enhancing staff morale. The way in which the organisation is structured will influence the morale, energy, and enthusiasm of the employees
- Assist in fostering the appropriate organisational culture for delivering on the mandate and strategic priorities
- Provide employees with a clear definition of their roles in the organisation and where they fit into the organisation
- Help employees and teams working together to organise their work and achieve their goals
- Provide employees with clarity on decision making structures and processes in the organisation
- Direct employees towards the kind of behaviour expected of them in the organisation. If there are no team structures, people will behave as individuals and keep all information to themselves. The hierarchy will slow down the flow of information
- Enhance internal and external communication and encourage information sharing and knowledge management.

Functional structures like the DHA do contribute to the transfer of ideas, contacts, and specialised knowledge, promote specialisation, and develop functional expertise.

According to Ehlers & Lazebby (2004: 208) such structures can also have many disadvantages for DHA, for example:

- Barriers between the functional areas could suppress cross-functional processes
- A strong focus on the various functional areas, instead of focussing on the organisation as a whole, could lead to the existence of various “silos” where there is little communication between and integration of the different functional areas as is currently the case at DHA
- Rivalry and power-play between the different functional areas could cause the organisation to place priority on a specific functional area instead of focussing on the organisation’s operations as a whole. This is prevalent in DHA and has resulted in the duplication of several activities and the wastage of resources and effort
- Even though the functional structure allows for the development of specialised managers and skills, these employees have limited exposure to the other areas of the organisation and, therefore, the development of general managers is limited. This can mean that transfers and job rotations can be a problem, especially in areas where there are skills shortages.

The use of the *Guide on how to Design, Implement and Maintain Organisational Structures in the Public Sector* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₄) would have potentially been valuable for DHA, in that it would have helped them to develop a structure that is far more responsive to all the role-players and one that facilitates the easy flow and communication of information and knowledge that is required for decision making.

4.4.2.2 Flow of information in DHA

Information is the key to effective decision making, and in order for managers to make decisions about what needs to be done, where, how, and by whom, they must have information on the amount of resources available, the quality of these resources, and the alternatives for deploying them (Minnaar & Bekker, 2005: 97). Furthermore, organisational decision making and the functioning of the organisation in general, is

impacted by the manner in which power and authority is manifest within the organisation and this is evident in the structure of the organisation.

In bureaucratic, hierarchical structures such as DHA, organisational power focuses on subordination and it promotes loyalty to the “boss” rather than the specific goals and outcomes of the organisation. The activities and functioning of the individuals in these structures are related to rules and regulations of the organisation and not necessarily to the goals and objectives. Several staff members who I interviewed in this study also confirmed this situation and stating that, “they had to comply with the regulations.” In most cases, this hampered effective flow of information required either for decision making, or to enhance the functioning of interrelated departments (EI 12/05/08; EI 14/05/08; EI 15/05/08; EI 20/05/08; EI 17/06/08).

I found that the organisational structure, as identified in Figure 4.1 and each department’s individual structure, do not seem to make room for adequate liaison positions, cross-unit committees, integrator roles and formal structures for coordination between subunits in the organisation. These are the instances when information that is required can be transmitted easily within the organisation. Even in instances where these structures are available, they do not seem to work because employees feel that they have power as long as they are in possession of some information that others do not have. This was made evident in the statement, “Knowledge is power,” (EI 12/05/08). I also found many documents marked ‘confidential’ were kept in the offices of managers with nobody else having access to them. The contents of these documents were not of a sensitive or secret in nature, and I was able to use these documents for my study, but internal staff had no access to them.

The flow of information in DHA is further complicated by the lack of a sharing culture in the organisation, and inadequate communication channel. During my interviews with staff it became evident that a, “hoarding culture of staff, lack of sharing and little interaction,” (EI 20/05/08) was prevalent. Staff also indicated that the “filtering of information is not carried through to lower levels of staff by supervisors,” (EI 20/05/08). Staff relied on their supervisors to pass on valuable information but they were, “kept in the dark of what was happening in the

organisation,” (FN 29/05/08). This seemed to be confirmed in an interview with management staff, where I was informed that, a “management information system was required as a matter of urgency as we cannot find information to respond to important issues. There are also no records or databases to retrieve such information. It takes very long to locate the required information from interrelated departments as no formal communication channel is available to speed up the process,” (EI 17/06/08).

Senior staff also reported that, “the flow of information is fragmented at present,” and they wanted to know, “how can we make the flow of information less fragmented within the existing structure?” at DHA (EI 22/05/08). It was also interesting to note that senior staff acknowledged that, “too many hierarchical levels in the DHA were causing communication problems, inefficiencies, delayed decision-making and bureaucracy,” (EI 19/05/08). Minnaar & Bekker (2005) suggest that it is the nature of bureaucracies to suppress the willing sharing of information because it provides the individual manager with a sense of power and control over this information. I found that this statement held true for the situation at DHA.

The flow of information in an organisation can have an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of its activities and operations.

4.4.3 ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT

The DHA executes its core functions and activities in keeping with its mandate. The core functions are that of Civic Services and Immigration and in the department’s quest for excellence in serving its customers, these services are delivered in accordance with specific standards set by the department (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 17). DHA has a network of offices in all provinces and mobile offices or unit services are arranged on a regular basis where the establishment of fixed offices is not warranted (South Africa (Republic), 2008₁: 320). Each of its core functions comprises of several services and these are the major activities that take place in this environment.

4.4.3.1 Civic Services

The activities that Civic Services are responsible for are as follows:

- Maintaining the National Population Register (NPR) – recording and updating the personal particulars of individuals in the NPR so that identification documents can be issued. Information in this system is used for various purposes including identity validation. The NPR forms the core of the citizenry information systems at DHA
- Management of records – these records include details of the status of the persons, such as births, marriage and deaths, addresses
- Citizenship – South African citizenship is regulated by the *South African Citizenship Act, Act 88 of 1995* (South Africa (Republic), 1995) and DHA grants citizenship to those that request it after following a set procedure
- Travel documents and passports – These include documents for people entering or departing South Africa. DHA provides processes the requests for these documents and produced the appropriate travel document
- Identification documents – These are issued to citizens of the country and all applications are handled by civic services
- Identification – this is by means of fingerprints and photographs (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 17; South Africa (Republic), 2008₁: 320).

Civic services are the first core activities that DHA performs to achieve its objectives to the citizens. It focuses mainly on their needs while Immigration Services focus more on the needs of visitors and non-residents of the country.

4.4.3.2 Immigration Services

The activities that Immigration is responsible for include:

- Admissions – control over the admission of foreigners for residence in and departure from South Africa such as visa applications, temporary residence permits and immigration permits
- Inspectorate – to reduce the size and annual growth of illegal migration. This includes identifying and removing illegal migrants, disrupting organised

smuggling operations, taking steps to deal with fraud and other document abuses, and preventing employers from having access to unauthorised workers (South Africa (Republic), 2007₁: 25)

- Refugee affairs- focus on the management of refugee services in South Africa. It deals with asylum seekers and applications from these people for refugee status and the issuing of refugee identity document which allows these asylum seekers to have access to the basic services in South Africa such as healthcare, education and employment
- Information coordination – manages information in the National Immigration Branch to facilitate regional and national operations
- Policy directives – advises refugee reception offices on policy related matters and on background information of an applicant’s country of origin
- Counter-xenophobia – strategy for this has been developed and adopted and the department intervenes to foster peace and tolerance among its citizens and refugees (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 17; South Africa (Republic), 2008₁: 321).

In order for these activities to function smoothly, support is required from other functions and services in DHA.

4.4.3.3 Support services

Apart from the core services, DHA performs several support functions in order for the organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. These services include:

- Strategic support – ensures the effective and efficient strategic support services in the department
- Information services – provides strategic input and direction into the department’s information services
- Finance and supply chain management – ensures effective and efficient integration of financial services and supply chain management systems
- Audit services – provides objective audit assurance and consulting service to the department

- Operation support – provides leadership and management of the operational support functions in the department (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 18).

These functions shed light on the complex and varied nature of the activities that take place in DHA. With such complexity in existence in the organisation, it is important to identify and understand the interaction patterns that exist.

4.4.4 INTERACTION PATTERNS IN DHA

Face-to-face interaction is usually seen as an important form of communication that is prevalent in most organisations. It has been discovered that most managers in Public Services spend a large portion of their day giving and receiving information, and that most of this giving and receiving takes place in face-to-face interactions (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006: 339). I found this to be true in the case of DHA where, “most of their senior staff spend up to sixty percent of their day in meetings,” (EI 19/05/08). A major part of the managers’ day is spent responding to requests for information within these environments, hence they are seen as being reactive and more time is spent responding to these information requests than actually initiating requests.

These interaction patterns can be extremely diverse and are often informal rather than official (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006: 339). At DHA, I was able to establish that staff rarely try to make sense of situations or problems, they merely react to them (FN 19/05/08). Informal socialisation between departments is also not common practice and the silo-functioning departments, “do not promote interaction. This leads to problems and lack of competition between departments or business units. Hence, there is no motivation to enhance performance internally,” (EI 24/06/08). The lack of interaction between staff and departments, “makes it very difficult for effective skills transfer and sharing of organisational insights and ideas,” (EI 20/05/08). This situation is further compounded by the vague and complicated reporting lines that I noticed within departments (FN 27/05/08).

According to Gupta & Govindarajan (1991: 779), interaction by means of socialisation can be a very useful means for an individual to learn what behaviours

and perspectives are customary and desirable in the organisation's work environment. It can also be helpful for building a sense of identification and commitment to the organisation as a whole and not just focussing on a specific sub-unit in which one is operating. Such forms of socialising are created through job rotations, staff development programs and management development programs. Such programs would include participants from all service units attending the program so that their values and norms become closely aligned with those of the entire organisation rather than just that of their individual subunit. At DHA staff at the branches and the remote locations have a "head office mentality," and "expect staff at head office to sort out all problems and issues that they cannot deal with. Hence become reliant of others doing the work and consequently do not take responsibility for their activities," (EI 24/06/08).

Furthermore, much of the interaction and communication patterns are that of lateral interaction, where managers interact with managers on the same rank. The interaction of senior managers with lower level staff and staff from different departments or business units was not noticed at DHA during my ethnographic study. The reason for this can be claimed to be, "because senior staff feel that they are capable of doing everything without the assistance from other departments that have the skills and competencies," (FN 12 /05/08). Discussions with senior staff revealed that, "staff are internally focused, territorial and fear job losses therefore they do not interact, and share ideas and information with other staff and other departments," (EI 20/05/08).

Effective interpersonal communication and interaction is essential in a service delivery environment, as this is the means via which staff can correctly interpret and confirm the messages and needs of the customers and also the processes and activities that are needed to be performed in the department. A lack of interpersonal interaction/communication skills can mean that staff would be insensitive to the problems, information requests and enquiries that they receive from their customers, which would result in them not listening properly to what exactly is being said (Bryson, 2006: 199).

At DHA the interaction with customers is not one of effective service motivation or delivery. Staff are more focused on the processes and procedures that have to be

followed rather than the customer and their needs, and legitimate rights to the services that they offer. This lack of customer orientation has resulted in the customer being viewed as “guilty until proven innocent” and this is what produces irate and dissatisfied customers (EI 24/06/08). Proper communication and interpretation of each customer’s needs is essential to overcome this situation.

The way in which customers interact with DHA has also changed. More self help, menu-driven systems are now being used, where the customers do not have to interact with the staff directly or by telephone (www.dha.gov.za). Such systems allow for the checking of marital status, obtaining applications forms, tracking-and-tracing the process of documents, and immigration applications. These can now be done online and it is essential to ensure that these online facilities are user friendly, easy to use and constantly in operation as this can lead to customers being discouraged from using such means of interaction, thereby defeating the purpose of such facilities. Security on these means of interaction has to also be very stringent in order to ensure that no fraudulent activities transpire. It is important to note that while technology cannot completely replace service delivery, it can serve as a tool for interaction and communication in organisation.

4.4.5 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION CODES IN DHA

According to Lyles & Dhanaraj (2004: 94), communication among members of staff in organisations provides a way of resolving problems, sharing information and creating new knowledge and ideas. Furthermore, common schemata and language use helps them to communicate ideas and knowledge that cannot be easily articulated. In the DHA, and in most other public service organisations, one has to be fairly acquainted with the different internally created acronyms and abbreviations used in order to understand the processes and activities. During my stay at DHA, I had to constantly consult their list of abbreviation and acronyms in order to make sense of their documents and to understand the conversations (FN 16/05/08).

While English is the official language of communication orally and in printed and electronic sources, “staff at DHA usually communicates with each other in their

respective mother tongue languages,” (EI 20/05/08). Bureaucratic-type structures create situations where procedures and regulations are followed and communicated in much more formal channels than informal communication channels (Bryson, 2006: 245). I found this to be the case at DHA and most communication to staff is via staff meetings, workshops, reports, appraisal interviews, intranet, emails and letters.

The effectiveness of the use of the above mentioned channels to communicate with staff at DHA is doubtful as no communication audit has ever been conducted at DHA (EI 23/06/08). I also found that, “many staff, especially at the lower levels are not well trained in the use of technology and, therefore, they do not use the electronic means of communicating with each other and cannot even locate important information communicated to them via these means. Also, there is no formal communication structure from senior management to lower levels so in many instances important, work related information, is not filtered to these staff,” (EI 15/05/08).

The existing public internet and internal intranet of DHA was found to be poorly maintained and information on it was very outdated. Staff claimed that “new information is posted very late,” (EI 20/05/08) and in some cases staff usually misses the information or event being communicated to them. Many staff that I spoke with stated that they “do not bother to consult their intranet,” for these reasons (EI 19/05/08; EI 27 /05/08; EI 23/06/08).

Influencing and getting things done in an organisation requires good interpersonal communication and networking with all levels of people in the organisation and outside. Managers can enhance their interpersonal communication skills by being good communicators in the first place, or by having traits that are associated with good communication. Interpersonal skills can be ‘raised’ and further developed in organisations, by having managers be accessible, by defining each individual’s or team’s areas of responsibility and by developing effective listening skills (Bryson, 2006:198-9). Most managers who I experienced at DHA do not have an open-door policy for communication, and are not directly accessible to staff. All communication is first through the managers’ secretaries and only later through an appointment with the manager. These secretaries are not highly skilled in taking messages and in communicating them correctly to the managers and the staff. I personally had several

experiences where the managers had not received my messages and also some instances where the incorrect details were communicated to them. I also found that it usually took a long time before an appointment was granted to the staff member, and by that time the reason for the meeting was either forgotten or no longer important. I noticed that staff felt they were, “disturbing the manager when they tried to secure appointments for important discussions with them,” hence, most staff indicated that they “did not bother to meet with the manager and just let things be the way they are,” (FN 13/05/08; EI 13/05/08).

People with effective listening skills are often able to elicit invaluable information from others as they create an atmosphere of understanding and respect. This can lead to higher levels of productivity, increased motivation and a willingness to cooperate (Bryson, 2006: 200). The researcher has observed that DHA has a very powerful informal communication channel, the “grapevine”. However, managers do not listen to what is being said and there is no evidence of utilising this channel to extract valuable employee related information (FN 15/05/08; FG 3/06/08). Nicoll (1994: 25) states that the grapevine “should not be overlooked, as this is the channel most likely to reflect the underlying culture and values of the workforce itself.” It should also be noted that while the grapevine is not suitable for the provision of information of immediate operational and strategic importance, at DHA it can be used to enhance the socialising of employees. This can, in turn, enhance the corporate culture, encourage more interaction, and, probably, encourage sharing between individuals. Furthermore, strong and reliable grapevines can assist DHA to increase the flow of good information and feedback through the organisation and this will lead to a reduction in cynicism, thereby increasing allegiances to corporate goals.

According to Burke & Wise (2003: 73), “a grapevine can be a large asset to companies that have inadequate formal communication channels, or when employees do not receive important information on a timely basis. It can be a useful tool to help workers to make sense of the organisational environment and give them some advance adjustment time before impending changes are implemented.” This can be advantageous for DHA as it does not have an adequate communication channel to deliver information to its staff and it is also undergoing several large changes in terms of the restructuring and redesigning of its operations. In my interaction with staff at

DHA, they often stated that they “heard via the grapevine” of some activities and planned changes (FN 15/05/08).

Information that is needed by staff to do their jobs efficiently and effectively is not easily available at DHA due the various security classifications used on most documents for example: ‘confidential’, ‘secret’, and ‘top secret’. These classification schemes are used because most documents such as project reports, annual reports, research findings, have to be signed off by the relevant authority before they can be distributed and this delays the rapid transmission of information (FN 19/05/08). While classification and security is essential for defining the parameters of access and use of information in DHA, many managers appear to use this information to gain power over other departments and staff and, therefore, do not communicate or share this information (FN 12/05/08; FN 19/05/08).

Effective communication is essential for DHA to be able to understand and provide for the needs of the customers and hence enhance service delivery. It also has an impact on, and is impacted by the culture of the organisation.

4.4.6 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF DHA

Organisational culture or corporate culture as it is also referred to (Bryson, 2006: 111), consists of the behaviours, beliefs, norms, attitudes, social arrangements and forms of expression that form a describable pattern in the lives of members of an organisation. Ethnographic research is also informed by the concept of culture as it focuses on the study of the people (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Fetterman, 1998). The culture of the organisation has an impact on the way individuals interact and communicate with each other and also their performance.

According to Ehlers & Lazenby (2004), organisational culture refers to a set of important, often unstated, assumptions, beliefs, behavioural norms and values the members of an organisation share and it can be regarded as the personality of the organisation. These authors go on to describe organisational culture as being manifested in stories, legends and traditions, its ways of approaching problems and

making decisions, its values and its do's and don'ts. Organisational culture can also be noticed in the organisation's belief systems, behaviour, thought patterns, its philosophy about how business ought to be conducted, its policies, in its stakeholder relationships and in its approach to corporate governance and ethics (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 185).

Most organisations do not have a single homogeneous culture and different hierarchical levels and functional departments and subunits will have a different culture especially in large organisations such as DHA. Ehlers & Lazenby (2004: 185) divide organisational culture into four broad categories and these are reflected in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Categories of organisational culture (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 185).

Organisational cultures	Elements
Strong organisational cultures	Values, norms and beliefs are deeply ingrained and difficult to eliminate and it is an added advantage to have a tight fit between the chosen strategy and the strong culture if the organisation is to achieve its objectives. This culture also has the ability to translate the cultural values at the organisational level into behaviours at the individual level (Bryson, 2006).
Weak organisational cultures	Fragmented culture where few traditions, values and beliefs are shared. Subcultures do exist and the employees do not have a sense of corporate identity and this type of a culture does not assist in strategy implementation.
Unhealthy organisational culture	A politicised internal environment is present where influential managers operate in autonomous "kingdoms". Here there is a hostile resistance to change and to people who advocate new ways of doing things. Innovation and creativity is not rewarded in such a culture and the organisation clings to the belief that it has all the solutions and answers.

Adaptive organisational culture	Members share a feeling of confidence in the organisation and this organisation is characterised by receptiveness to risk-taking, innovation and experimentation. A proactive approach to strategic change is evident and strategies are changed whenever necessary.
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I was able to ascertain that the organisational culture of DHA leans more towards being a weak and unhealthy organisational culture (as indicated in Table 4.1) and this has an impact on decision-making and influences the attitudes of the staff. A strong, dominant corporate culture does not exist and employees do not have a shared meaning or understanding of their core business (EI 15/05/08; EI 21/05/08).

Leaders care about their employees, even if they are located in distant locations or far away from the head office, as is the situation at DHA. Bryson (2006), states that strong cultures come from within the organisation and are built by the founders and individual leaders and not consultants. During my study I found that most core functions at DHA are left to consultants to accomplish and staff have very little or no input into these activities. They are usually left in the dark and are given tasks to perform that they do not have much (if any) commitment towards. Once the consultants leave the organisation, there is no sustainability of these functions as no skills transfer transpires due to their independent functioning (EI 15/05/08; EI 19/06/08). While this is partly due to lack of skills and competencies, it has resulted in a lack of a sustainable organisational culture.

The most important manifestations of culture are found in the assumptions, values and beliefs of top management, hence leadership and organisational culture are closely related and it is important for managers to establish a tight fit between the organisation's strategy and its culture if it intends to deliver on its mandate (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004). At DHA there is a lack of sustainability of managers at top and middle-management levels due to high staff turnover in these areas in recent years. This has led to a lack of trust, support and commitment from staff at lower levels. "An organisational culture cannot be sustained in this environment. This usually leaves staff confused, and frustrated. As soon as they get used to one leader or Director

General and his style of leadership, values, norms and behaviour, the leader leaves and staff have to start over again getting used to a new leader,” (EI 2/05/08). This is perhaps the reason why DHA has not been able to succeed in its service delivery over the past years and no strong organisational culture has been developed.

The hierarchical structure of DHA, with its bureaucratic rules and regulations, results in creating a culture where staff are not encouraged to be innovative, creative or forward-looking (EI 19/05/08). Furthermore, I noticed that procedures are designed in rigid, formal and standardised ways so as to ensure that rules and regulations are not violated, and managers make sure that staff comply with these rigid controls and practices. The performance of the manager is also based on his ability to make certain that these strict controls are enforced by all staff (EI 20/05/08). These observations can also be confirmed by behavioural theorist (March & Simon, 1958; Cyert & March, 1963) who suggested that organisations’ rules, duties, rights and roles define acts as either being appropriate or inappropriate. These rules of appropriateness and standard operating procedures in routine situations have an impact the behaviour of the individuals in the organisation as was noticed as DHA.

According to Cassar & Bezzina (2005), such public administrators / managers believe that their sole capacity to take the organisation forward is by sticking to a mechanistic view of management that undervalues and, as a result undermines, the contribution of others. Hence, there is a strong reliance by staff on established norms and practices determined by the managers. Cassar & Bezzina (2005: 210) indicate that a “static culture guarantees the survival of the typical public administrator and this ensures that the status quo is always maintained.” However, this does not provide the organisation with the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

The behaviour and attitudes towards working relationships from managers help to nurture a dependency culture where subordinates do not see themselves as partners in the process but rather wait for their supervisors to do all the thinking and decision making (Cassar & Bezzina, 2005: 210). This is indicative of the situation at DHA and I found that in most cases the actual laws and legislations are used as work manuals or policy documents for accomplishing tasks (EI 20/05 08; EI 21/05/08; EI 20/06/08).

Furthermore, the attitudes of staff are also, to a large extent, determined by the supervisors who rely on these rules and regulations that are determined by the external policy making bodies. Any new initiatives taken by staff or creative ideas expressed are seen as a threat and are punished. In some instances, showing any initiative or new competence has resulted in staff being “overloaded with work that they cannot cope with.” Thus, staff “no longer feel it worth while trying to be the best you can be as it is not rewarded or appreciated and they fear work overload,” (EI 15/05/08). Staff talent is suppressed and in time some of these skilled and useful staff are, or feel as though they are, forced to leave the organisation (EI 19/05/08; EI 20/05/08).

The growth in DHA’s human capital has declined because of the lack of an information and knowledge sharing culture. Instead, a hoarding culture exists where individuals feel that having information and knowledge makes them powerful and, therefore, they do not share the information they have. Their lack of desire to share information and knowledge is also hampered by a lack of trust within the organisation. Liebowitz (2006: 10) suggests that an organisation can retain knowledge and information and its human capital if its culture supports sharing and development. This sharing culture is usually determined in the levels of trust that staff have in the organisation, and is reflected in a shared sense on purpose. In the case of DHA, it has already been established that sharing does not exist as there have been inconsistencies in top management, leaving staff confused, disillusioned and afraid to trust in management, uncertain about their futures and de-motivated.

DHA functions within a broader environment that is evolving and constantly changing, and like most organisations in developing countries, it will have to confront these environmental changes by changing its original functions and actions to fit the new environment. For DHA to deal with this situation it will need to depend on people who are able to cope with change and greater flexibility. Initiative taking will be required (Umeh & Andranovich, 2005). The unhealthy culture that exists in DHA makes it more difficult for it to deal with change. It is also reported that staff are “not opposed to change but they are against the way in which it was imposed upon them without sufficient consultation,” (South Africa (Republic), 2008₃).

The political environment of public organisations can also restrict its professional flexibility and capability to appropriately respond to the citizens' demands (Vigada-Gadot, 2004: 211). Most of the bureaucratic activities of such organisations are directed towards the realisation of political goals rather than the achievement of the organisations objectives and there is a tendency for individuals in power to focus more on their own personal gains rather than the public's interests. Hence, status and status relationships are the prime motivating factors, rather than goal achievement (Umeh & Andranovich, 2005). This became visible during my study at DHA, where several senior staff adopted a behaviour of being status-conscious and did not really concern themselves with the operation and functioning of the organisation (FN 1/05/08; EI 12/05/08).

A culture of nepotism and favouritism also exists in this environment and top level officials select people for employment whose loyalty they trust: often meaning family and close friends. Such considerations greatly influence promotions, assignments, dismissals, and other personnel actions (Umeh & Andranovich, 2005: 41; Mafunisa, 2003: 89). Staff who I interviewed in this study confirmed that this culture is prevalent in DHA. It was claimed that "competent people were not considered for positions despite having acted in positions for years, instead people are promoted based on their affiliation to senior officials," (EI 21/05/08). Political decisions are also made, in certain instances, for staff appointments and promotions (FN 21/05/08) and such political considerations can potentially outweigh competence and merit-bases for decisions.

Culture is also reflected in the dress code of individuals in the organisation (Liebowitz, 2006). At DHA there is a dress code where staff are not allowed to come to work casually dressed. However, this is not followed by most of the staff and they are usually very relaxed in their dressing (FN 09/05/08). This casual attitude in dress code extends to their work too. Staff come to work "just to have something to do or somewhere to go to for the day," (EI 15/05/08). Many staff act as though they do not have any commitment to their work and most of them are involved in personal activities during work hours (playing games on the computer, reading the paper, or engaged in selling items through the internet (FN 15/05/08). There is usually a festive atmosphere in the departments on Fridays and it would appear as though the weekend

starts on a Friday morning at DHA. Most staff are very casually dressed and spend a lot of time in the corridors, chatting, in the canteen or on the telephone.

Time management is very lax and staff do not keep to strict working hours. Many staff were observed coming in early and then also leaving early. This situation is compounded by the fact that managers are usually not present to notice these activities that lead to poor performance (FN 09/05/08; EI 23/05/08).

The value statement of DHA states that “in the spirit of *Batho Pele*, we shall be guided by the following principles: ethical conduct, accountability, transparency, flexibility and professionalism,” (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 10). The value statement is an important tool for the organisation to convey its expectations and behaviours of the individuals towards each other and to the customers (Bryson, 2006). From the above, it is evident that the values that should determine the organisational culture of DHA are not adequately being practiced. Management actions through policies and procedures are essential in this regard.

4.4.7 INTERNAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND THEIR IMPACT ON OPERATIONS AT DHA

The mandates of DHA are embedded in legislation as well as several other policy documents as outlined in its Strategic Plan (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 16). Some of these legislation and policy documents have already been discussed in this study, and will not, therefore, be repeated in this section. The aim of this section is to provide an indication of how the policies and procedures are implemented in DHA and how they impact operation in the organisation.

Policies are the specific guidelines, methods, procedures, rules, forms, and administrative practices that direct the thinking, decisions and actions of managers and employees in strategy implementation. Furthermore, policies inform employees of what is expected of them and clarify what can and cannot be done in their pursuit of the objectives of the organisation. Policies also help the organisation to standardise routine decisions, thereby reducing the time it takes to make decisions and provide a

basis for control. They promote coordination and consistency across the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 220). Alongside all this, they should also assist the organisation in creating a strong corporate culture.

During the transformation in South Africa, the democratisation of public policy replaced the authoritarian mode of policy making. This new policy-making approach created opportunities for a more active role for civil societies and organisations in governance, and this led to government departments being given the responsibility to create policies and procedures relevant for the functioning of their specific departments (Muthien, Khosa & Magubane, 2000).

Policies are usually developed under the guidance of functional managers. However, at DHA I observed that they are still reliant mainly on the legislation and policies provided by DPSA (EI 11/06/08). While these are very sound world class policies, it is the implementation that poses a major problem in DHA as these policies were not specifically written for the unique operations of DHA activities. In other words, like any other world-class standards, they need to be adapted. I was also informed during my interviews that staff are also, “not skilled and competent enough to implement these policies and to link them to the organisation’s strategies and objectives,” (EI 20/05/08). It is further noted that managers do not write policies specific to their operational units and, in such instances, legislation is used as policy and as a procedures manual for certain operations. For example, the core function of immigration does not have specific in-house policies and procedures and this unit uses the *Immigration Act, Act No 13 of 2002* (South Africa (Republic), 2002) as its procedures manual for its operations (EI 19/06/08).

DHA has undergone many changes and transformations in the recent years in an attempt to reposition itself as a successful service delivery organisation. This has resulted in changes to its strategies, objectives, goals and operations. However, the department has not systematically looked at the policies that it has in place to see if they are still relevant and appropriate in the changed environment or to understand the impact that the policies have on the operations (EI 21/05/08; EI 19/06/08). Many of these policies are outdated and are from the previous dispensation and instead of assisting the organisation in moving forward, they appear to become a barrier to strategic change and implementation.

Policies should also support the chosen strategies of the organisation, and any changes in the strategies may require changes in the policies and procedures. At DHA, policies are not used effectively and even though some policies are very useful, they are not working as well as they should. This was made evident in a recent article in the media where a woman without arms was told that she could not get an identity document because she could not provide fingerprints (The Star, 2008). The article further claimed that, “DHA had failed to put in place a system that will help people with disabilities to get identity documents,” (The Star, 2008: 3). I was told that, “the correct procedure in this case was available, except the staff members attending to the customer were not aware of it,” (EI 18/06/08). The *State of Public Service Report* (South Africa (Republic), 2005) identified that internal policies and procedures are rarely in place to supplement legislation and procedures tend to be known by a few people, rather than being clearly documented and accessible to all.

Frontline employees become the contact point between the organisation and the customers, and in order to ensure a high standard of customer service it is necessary to empower these frontline employees to make decisions or to fulfil customer needs. Ehlers & Lazenby (2004: 220), state that the one way of empowering staff is through policies and for organisations to support customer-focussed strategies, it must change its policies accordingly. Several staff at DHA indicated that the policies (legislation) are far too prescriptive, do not take operations into account when they are written and, to a large extent, dictate operations that restrict service delivery (EI 21/05/08; EI 17/06/08). Some policies and procedures are more focussed on the requirements of the department and do not consider the citizens. Vigoda-Gadot (2004₃: 267) suggests that when policy agrees with the public demands, citizens are more willing to accept administrative actions as being responsive to their needs and show more support in the entire democratic process.

I was also able to identify that far too much ‘red tape’ existed in the department and that “this has led to a lack of service delivery,” (EI 12/05/08; EI 21/05/08; EI 18/06/08; EI 23/06/08). ‘Red tape’ refers to the “excessive bureaucracy or adherence to formalities, especially in public businesses (seen from the red or pink tape used to secure official documents),” (Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English, 1995:

1152). DHA has several role-players when it comes to policy issues and approvals. These include DPSA, the unions, portfolio committees and executive committees. These role-players, firstly, have to give approval before anything can happen in the organisation and this slows down operations (EI 21/05/08).

Among other things, policies are also intended to protect the rights of individuals and the organisation from any misuse or fraudulent activities. This is especially important for DHA as it can be regarded as an information organisation and it deals with large volumes of information, mainly citizens' confidential personal information. The misuse of information has, in recent times, been reported to be used in several fraudulent activities such as, people being married off to foreigners without their consent, identity theft, and fraudulent selling of ID's, (Joseph, 2009: 2) However, DHA does not have specific policies, guidelines, standardised procedures and processes in place to protect staff from these forms of misuse (EI 12/05/08; EI 14/05/08; EI 20/05/08; EI 20/06/08; EI 23/06/08). A lack of the following policies in DHA is cause for concern:

- Information policy – This policy can be used to protect the intellectual capital of the organisation (EI 19/05/08)
- E-mail policy – There is no e-mail policy at DHA. This could lead to the misuse of the organisation's information and facilities or for staff spending a considerable amount of time using the e-mail for non-work related activities (EI 19/05/08).
- Internet policy - At the moment, unlimited access to the internet is present without proper audit of who uses what specific information. This can lead to fraudulent activities (EI 19/05/08)
- Financial and audit policy – DHA relies on DPSA policy for this and no department policy for budgeting and auditing of expenses exists, hence, the organisation has under-spent its budget in the past (EI 20/06/08)
- HR policy - This policy is not very sound. The Human Resource component of the organisation is meant to provide strategic support to core business by developing and implementing human resource processes, methods, systems and procedures that are needed to attract, develop, retain, reward and manage human capital towards the attainment of the organisational goals (South

Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 57). However, I found that this is not the situation at DHA. There are very few formal HR training and development opportunities and practices present in the department and most departments eventually “end up doing their own training and staff development without HR departments knowledge and support,” (EI 14/05/08). Recruitment of new employees is slow, made evident through the many vacant posts. The department operates under a bureaucratic style that leads to most of its human-related problems such as staff de-motivation, lack of trust, and poor staff attitudes, (EI 12/05/08)

- Recruitment and selection policy - DHA once again relies on DPSA policy and no internal policy for this exists. This has resulted in “staff with inappropriate skills being appointed in some position,” (EI 12/05/08)
- Communication policy – Staff in the communications department reported that they are often “not certain what we are expected to do in terms of communication both internally and externally,” (EI 23/06/08).

DHA is also not able to comply with certain legislation such as the *Promotion of Access to Information Act, Act 2 of 2000* (South Africa (Republic), 2000₁). It takes “much longer than 21 days to respond to requests for information in DHA,” (EI 20/05/08). This is due to a lack of a proper archive and document management systems. Most policy-related issues are referred to the Counter Corruption and Security Division for attention, and they are not always able to assist adequately as it is not their core function and DHA is not fully resourced in the policy development process (EI 1/05/08). Policy development requires sufficient time to investigate and present different options. However, there is often the need for a quick decision to be made on a policy issue, and this limits the level of consultation with relevant stakeholders (Bryson, 2006).

Policy development is currently fitted in with other existing responsibilities such as strategic planning as there is no dedicated unit or section responsible for registering and managing policies and guidelines for DHA. Policies are then considered over and above other priority areas in strategic planning and this department is already

constrained by a lack of staff and all work is considered “urgent and due yesterday,” (EI 31/06/08).

As a result, policy solutions at DHA can be regarded as being limited in input from relevant individuals, relevant expertise, innovation and strategy. An understanding of the strategic planning tools and techniques used at DHA will be able to put this situation into perspective.

4.4.8 STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED AT PRESENT IN DHA

Strategic planning helps an organisation to match its objectives and capabilities to the anticipated demands of the environment in order to produce a plan of action that will ensure achievement of objectives (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006: 32). These authors further suggest that strategic planning in the public sector is a process that must involve many individuals from different levels, and that it should be a highly participatory process as it allows the organisations to:

- Give clarity and direction to the organisation
- Choose from among competing goals and activities
- Cope with expected shifts in the environment
- Bring together the thoughts and ideas of all participants in the work environment of the organisation.

At the DHA, the strategic planning process is conducted each year mainly via workshops with top management. Planning is based on the strategic guidelines issued by the Executive Authority of the Department, Cabinet Lekgotla decisions, the President’s State of the Nation Address, and the budget speech of the Minister of Finance. This ensures that DHA’s strategic planning is aligned with the broader objectives of government and is in accord with prescribed requirements (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 34). However, Botten & McManus (1999) indicate that strategy is not only created by people at the top levels of the organisation or in its planning department, instead it needs the wealth of information and knowledge possessed by

people to make it happen. In particular, they stress the input from people who are continually dealing with customers, technologies, competitive factors, and suppliers.

Bryson (2006: 32) concurs with this view, and states that sound strategic planning benefits the communication and decision making process in the organisation and if people participate in the planning process from inception, especially with reference to their areas of responsibility, they will readily understand the purpose and objectives of the strategic planning and effectively support its implementation. DHA has a serious problem in this regard as staff ‘at the coalface’ of operations usually have to function within the strategic plans decided upon by individuals who are not involved in those specific operations. This has led to lack of cooperation from staff in terms of achieving the desired outcomes (FN 11/06/08; FN 01/07/08).

According to Bryson (2006), the strategic planning process will fail if inadequate time and resources are dedicated to it or if there is a lack of commitment to the process. I observed that very few staff members, in fact just four in total, are available to assist in strategic planning and to conduct the research that is necessary for strategic planning. Feedback from senior staff that is necessary for the planning process is also not easily forthcoming and staff doing the strategic plans have to usually, “chase after these staff,” in order to get the required information (EI 15/05/08; EI 31/07/08; FN 07/07/08).

Botten & McManus (1999: 187) indicate that, “while a rigorous, comprehensive strategy diagnosis and analysis process does not wholly guarantee an effective strategy, there is definitely a greater degree of probability of generating successful strategic options when the systems and methodologies that produce them are sound and complete.” Furthermore, they suggest that the organisation’s strategy be assessed for its quality and totality of the process and to determine whether all the appropriate personnel within the organisation were consulted. Beyond that, they suggest that the experiences of the participants be evaluated, as well as the accuracy and reliability of the techniques and methods that were used to prepare the analysis and forecasts on which the strategy is based.

DHA does not use reliable techniques and methods when conducting its strategic planning. Many of the strategic planning tools and techniques, such as environmental analysis to determine its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) (Fleisher & Bensoussan, 2003: 92-103), are not conducted and I was able to establish that the last SWOT analysis was conducted in 2006, showing that this is not a regular activity at DHA (EI 15/05/08, EI 27/05/08). Staff lack the competencies, skills and experience to regularly assist in strategic planning and so this has to be left to consultants, who do not always understand the internal operation of DHA (EI 15/05/08; EI 21/05/08). While attempts have been made to get the input from senior staff at workshops to assist in strategic planning, the entire strategic planning process and strategic plan for DHA is still largely a “consolidation exercise of putting together pieces of information received from each business unit,” (EI 15/05/08). Hence the strategic plan that results appears to be based on ‘gut feel’ and is not evidence-based with sufficient findings from research and statistics. Therefore, the existing strategic plan for DHA does not address the future desires of the organisation and can be regarded as a plan to address the immediate issues of the organisation only (EI 11/06/08). As such, the plan is not truly ‘strategic’ but more ‘operational’ or ‘tactical’ in nature, lacking the capability of helping the organisation align itself with its environment properly over longer-term periods.

It is also noted that when the output of an organisation is services or products that cannot be objectively measured, in these instances, it is more difficult to apply proper strategic management, hence the reason why many service organisations fail to use strategic management (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004). Furthermore, the fact that revenue is obtained from government and taxes collected from the citizens and not by selling a product of service, make it easy for service organisations such as DHA to neglect sound strategic management and their focus is more on the input side and not on the output which is the service rendered and this is difficult to measure (EI 11/06/08).

As a result of lack of proper strategic management tools and techniques used by DHA to conduct its strategic planning and the development of clear strategies, the organisation is experiencing the following problems, as identified by Botten & McManus (1999: 191) in trying to implement its strategies and changes:

- Insufficient time is available for implementation of strategies leading to delays in achieving its targets
- Unanticipated major problems have arisen that have to be dealt with by crisis management
- Ineffective coordination of activities exists in the organisation that leads to duplication of efforts in most cases
- Crises that distract attention away from implementation of strategies
- Insufficient capabilities of the involved employees
- Inadequate training and instruction of lower level employees
- Uncontrollable external environmental factors, such as the recent xenophobic problems in the country and the illegal migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa due to the unrest in that country
- Inadequate leadership and direction by departmental managers
- Poor definition of key implementation tasks and activities
- Inadequate monitoring of activities by the information system.

DHA is in a situation where it has to deal with a future that is accompanied by uncertainty, as a result of the major changes taking place both internally and in the external environment. These are changes like the National Government elections that take place in 2009, and the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. The department will, therefore, have to prepare for these uncertainties and this means planning and strategising to respond to the situations.

Both strategic planning management and thinking, can assist DHA to reduce its levels of uncertainty, and can act as a proactive technique that can help the organisation to achieve its desired results. Good strategic plans will also include new activities that will allow DHA to meet the changing needs of its stakeholders rather than adjust or respond to aspects that are imposed upon it (Bryson, 2006). I found that DHA has had to “make certain strategies fit into its structure and the structure seems to be completed before the strategic planning was done,” (EI 11/06/08). Botten & McManus (1999) emphasise that managers should change the formal organisation structure to implement the new behaviours appropriate to a new strategy. Hence, changes in the strategy lead to changes in the structure. In other words, the structure

of the organisation should be designed to facilitate the strategic pursuits of the organisation and, therefore, should follow strategy.

The above understanding of the strategic planning process at DHA provides a basis for the identification of the current state of service delivery.

4.4.9 CURRENT STATE OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN DHA

The above discussion has, to a large extent, alluded to the current state of service delivery at DHA. During the study, several themes repeated themselves repeatedly. It is for this reason, and in an attempt to avoid repetition, that the researcher has decided to focus the discussion on the current state of service delivery to the nine prescribed Constitutional basic values and principles for public administration and service delivery. These are outlined in section 195(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996* (South Africa (Republic), 1996) and discussed in chapter 1.2. These basic values and principles are reflected in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Constitutional basic values and principles for Public Administration and service delivery.

No.	Values and principles
1	A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
2	Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
3	Public administration must be development-oriented.
4	Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
5	People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.
6	Public administration must be accountable.
7	Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
8	Good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated.
9	Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

Each of these values and principles shown in Table 4.2 will be discussed in terms of service delivery at DHA and will provide an indication of the current state of service delivery by this department.

4.4.9.1 A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained

According to the *State of Public Service Report 2008* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅), it is expected that the Public Service will serve as exemplars and promote and maintain a high standard of professional ethics. In order to achieve this standard, a strong ethics infrastructure is needed that is supported by enabling policies and commitment from staff to implement them. This is essential in the current context of service delivery where reports suggest that the public confidence in the country's institutions and leaders has dropped (South Africa (Republic), 2007₃). While efforts are being made on the part of government to promote ethical administration, for example, the promulgation of the *Prevention and Combating of Corruption Activities Act, Act 12 of 2004*, the public still believe that the standard of ethics is deteriorating instead of improving (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅).

This is also the perception of the public as communicated through the media with regards to the services offered by DHA evidenced through the recent press and media coverage of incidents pertaining to the services offered by them and “the public go directly to the media with their problems as they lack confidence in DHA,” (EI 18/06/08).

Recent corruption charges brought against employees at DHA reveal that at least some staff do not comply with the ethics and standards. These charges involve, firstly, an employee being arrested after he was found to be in possession of ten identity documents taken from the Department's ID factory and, secondly, another who was found selling blank South African passports to a Nigerian citizen (South Africa (Republic), 2008₆). This non-compliance will have an impact on service delivery. Furthermore, there is a tendency by the media to sensationalise aspects of the problem of ethics and corruption, and this is largely due to the lack of continued research and information on ethics management. DHA continues to suffer the consequences of bad publicity, as noted through the incident of the woman without arms. The media found

this story sensational (“no arm, no ID”) and covered it extensively, but this study found that there is a procedure in place to deal with such situations. (The Star, 2008: 3; EI 18/06/08).

Public servants at DHA can/may be tempted to behave in corrupt and fraudulent ways as a result of their de-motivation in their work and the poor incentive/salary that they receive. They are tempted to receive bribes for processing documents unofficially as this supplements their income. Also, many documents do go missing internally from the department and several study respondents suggest that very few instances of corrective action are taken against staff found guilty of such activities (EI 2/06/08). Much effort still needs to be done in order to improve the moral fibre of society so that public servants are less vulnerable to being corrupted by the public (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅).

DHA lacks the capacity and specialised skills that are needed to deal with cases of alleged corruption and this compromises the effectiveness of the department (FN 9/05/08; EI 15/05/08). This has meant that effective partnerships are essential for DHA to fight corruption and, hence, it requires cooperation from other stakeholders and role players in the fight against corruption. This situation is further compounded by a lack of a national integrity system that can help facilitate better collaboration between different anti-corruption agencies of government and to obviate a duplication of efforts and to promote efficiency and effectiveness. The more traditional means of investigating corruption are complicated and takes a very long time before any action is taken on the perpetrators.

The conduct and sense of professionalism displayed by senior management staff at DHA has tainted the image of this department and caused severe damage to the operations of the organisation and the effective delivery of services. In 2007 alone, the Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Director General: Civic Services and the Director: Procurement, were suspended from their duties for serious misconduct and fraudulent activities (South Africa (Republic), 2007₁). Furthermore, it has also been identified that many senior managers fail to report and disclose their financial interests, as is expected of them in terms of the Financial Disclosure Framework (South Africa (Republic), 2007₁). With some cases of alleged corruption still unresolved (South

Africa (Republic), 2008₆) the perceptions of a corrupt Public Services, and DHA in particular, will remain. This does have an impact on the economic and effective use of resources at DHA.

4.4.9.2 Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted

Public Services are usually faced with limited resources that have to be spent or utilised in ways that achieve maximum value for money. Products and services offered by DHA are complex and, in delivering its services to the citizens, DHA has to also pursue certain social objectives such as equity. However, it is not always possible to establish the cost-benefit analysis from these services offered. This complexity tends to be perceived by the public as a form of inefficiency in service delivery while, in essence, it tries to redress the past inequalities (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅). Furthermore, the real benefits of service delivery are not always immediately noticed and only reveal their benefits long after the service was delivered.

In order for services to be delivered in an efficient, economic and effective way, DHA will need to ensure proper alignment of planning, expenditure, and reporting as this facilitates a monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness by linking the planned outputs and outcomes to achievements. DHA does not have a proper monitoring and evaluation structure in place for its financial management. The “auditing of its finances seems to be a mere paper exercise with no checks and balances in place and it is not an investigation of value for money or cost benefits thereby paving the way for corruption and misuse of funds,” (EI 20/06/08). My discussion with the Acting Financial Officer also revealed that, “Finance does not have skilled staff to plan and strategise for the spending of the budget,” (EI 20/06/08). Furthermore, I also noted that staff do not have to justify their expenditure, “if budgeted for, it can be freely used for that purpose without any monitoring of value for money, etc.”

The *Public Service Commission* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅), also found that a tighter alignment of objectives, strategy and performance reports can facilitate a better understanding of how the spending patterns of the department impacts the achievement of its key service delivery goals. This, unfortunately, has not happened at

DHA which has resulted in an under-spending of the budget in the last financial year (South Africa (Republic), 2007₁). This under spending may suggest that it is not the lack of funds and resources that is preventing the delivery of services but rather the lack of appropriate capacity to use the resources effectively and efficiently (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅). DHA has had to suspend its Chief Financial Officer, as discussed in 4.4.9.1 above, and this has correspondingly left the department constrained in terms of its financial capacity, while an acting person has been appointed in the interim. It will take a while before he can adjust to the new environment and budget, along with the financial procedures of government (FN 2/06/08). For DHA to be more development-oriented, it will have to ensure that it utilises its resources appropriately in the delivery of its services.

4.4.9.3 Public administration must be development-oriented

According to the *Public Service Commission* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅), the principle of development-orientation requires public service institutions to ensure that they prioritise in their programmes and policies the creation of a better life for the people. This means that Public Service departments, such as DHA, have to use all their resources in such a manner that they help to invigorate the implementation of programmes that promote growth and development and assist in the reduction of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life of all people within their Constitutional jurisdiction. .

While many efforts have been made to achieve this principle, some published evidence reveals that DHA is failing in its delivery of services to citizens. Citizens are becoming frustrated and have taken to drastic measures to get service from this department. For example, a man waiting for almost two years for his identity book eventually lost his patience and cool and resorted to taking an official hostage with a toy gun (Eliseev, Mashego & Gifford, 2005). Without an identity document, the man was unable to apply for a job, study at any educational institution, travel within and outside the country, purchase any assets, obtain social service grants, and obtain medical health in hospitals. The fact that the processes at DHA take far too long to deliver appropriate documentation to individuals means that the quality of life of these individuals is being impacted in a negative way. The man had just finished

researching a business venture and could not go ahead with his dream to start his own business because he did not have an identity document. Many people sympathised and backed the sentiments of the hostage taker as they have also experienced similar frustrations from DHA. Along these lines, one person indicated that “Everybody knows how bad things are. We are frustrated with the attitude of staff at the department,” (Eliseev, Mashego & Gifford, 2005).

In order for DHA to achieve a development-oriented organization, it will need greater coordination of efforts, planning and the generation of appropriate services in a fair and equitable manner.

4.4.9.4 Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias

The *State of the Public Service Report* (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅: 44), indicates that, “there is a growing awareness by the citizens of South Africa of their rights to hold government accountable for service delivery and this has been evident in recent service delivery protests and demands that public institutions apply a very informed and grounded approach to fairness, equity and impartiality.” The *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, Act 3 of 2000* (South Africa (Republic), 2000₂) provides the framework, and acts as a benchmark, for impartiality, fairness, equity and non-biasness.

However, the implementation of this Act, and other similar initiatives such as *Batho Pele Principles* (South Africa (Republic), 1997), requires competent, trained staff and resource capacity. At DHA this seems to be a major problem because of inadequate and inappropriately skilled staff, at present, and staff acting in positions without being appointed to them permanently, making them unsure of the roles and responsibilities that will allow them to act decisively (EI 12/05/08; EI 15/05/08; EI 20/05/08; EI 01/07/08). I also observed that several posts are vacant and need to be filled, and this is probably the reason why services are not dealt with effectively (FN 26/05/08; FN 01/07/08).

Vigoda-Gadot (2004₁: 217) found that customers expect public service officials to be skilled and professional in their jobs. The same customers expected to feel more

comfortable and less stressed and strained following conversations / confrontations with public officials. He further noted that non-qualified, non-skilled, passionless and apathetic public officials are more likely to treat customers insensitively and, thus, encourage reactions of dissatisfaction, helplessness or even anger towards the Public Service system as a whole. There is evidence that will suggest that this describes the climate that has been created at DHA. De-motivation of staff has led to a lack of a service-delivery ethic or customer service culture. Staff do not consistently display any '*Batho Pele*' principles when dealing with customers (EI 23/06/08). They often do not treat the customer with care and respect and do not have a sense of urgency when responding to enquiries or people's needs.

Some DHA staff members regularly show a disinterest towards the public they are serving (EI 24/06/08). A culture of tolerance and understanding needs to be developed as Public Services delivery cannot be an ad hoc function of DHA since this is the sole reason for its existence (EI 17/06/08). In many instances, staff are impatient to the needs of customers and are not tolerant to the mistakes of customers (e.g. incorrect filling in of forms). These attitudes lead to a lack of prompt service delivery. Staff often feel that they are "doing the customer a favour by assisting them," and do not realise that this is actually their mandate (EI 20/05/08).

Furthermore, DHA has embarked on bringing services closer to the people, and in this regard has launched several mobile units that have been fully equipped to function in the same manner as ordinary DHA offices do. These mobile units are located mainly in rural areas where no proper offices are present and they are also used for special events such as rallies, or campaigns. However, during my ethnographic study, I noticed that these mobile units are no longer functioning as they were intended to and now stand all day at the DHA head office. This situation is largely due to a lack of skilled staff to operate these facilities and lack of policies and procedures to ensure the efficient operation of these units (FN 18/06/08). These units have now become 'white elephants' at Home Affairs, and have not contributed significantly to service delivery.

DHA does not implement the service standards set out by the organisation. This is most noticeable when citizens challenge the department or try to hold them

accountable for certain aspects. Staff handle complaints inadequately and they do not have sound redress mechanisms in place to deal with such situations, hence it has been found that the citizens prefer to go directly to the media with their problems because DHA then responds very promptly to these complaints. Additionally, many fear being victimised and do not complain at all even though they are dissatisfied with the services provided (EI 18/06/08; EI 25/06/08).

Once DHA is able to ensure that an impartial, fair and equitable service is offered without bias to the citizens, it will be able to respond to the needs of the people more readily and they will be able to gain the confidence and support from the citizens.

4.4.9.5 People’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.

In order to address this principle, a consultative and participatory culture is required to ensure that the services delivered match the needs and expectations of the people. In an effort to enhance participatory governance, formal policies and clear procedures will be necessary. These are not as yet available at DHA and many activities are conducted on an ad-hoc basis (EI 23/06/08).

While other public service departments use *Izimbizos*¹ as a forum for interacting with communities and getting them to participate in decision making that affects them, DHA has not used these regularly; consequently, citizens are not informed of new strategies to be implemented by DHA. As a result, they resist these initiatives at a later stage. This was evident with the recent xenophobic attacks on people in several communities and the refugee resistance to register for the new smart cards provided by DHA (Johnston, 2008). Lack of consultation and interaction with the communities led to these incidents reaching seriously dangerous levels. Potentially, these incidents could have been minimised or lessened if more participation and involvement was present between these communities and DHA.

¹ *Izimbizo* is derived from a word in isiZulu, meaning “a gathering or meeting” (Buccus, et al., 2008:5)

Furthermore, community forums and community liaison is not used by the communications division of DHA. Some respondents from this group reported that they usually go to a specific community, despite the fact that they do not have a proper understanding of the culture of that community. This creates additional challenges in their attempts to provide a constructive service to the people of that community (EI 23/06/08).

Therefore, active participation and decision making from the citizens will improve DHA's service delivery to these people and will also assist them in becoming more accountable to the citizens.

4.4.9.6 Public administration must be accountable

Accountability involves an obligation on the part of public service officials to be answerable for what they deliver and how they deliver it. In other words, it is not enough to only account for performance, but rather there should be accountability for how this performance takes place (South Africa (Republic). 2008₅: 60). A key instrument for accountability in Public Services is the system of performance management and development. However, at DHA I observed that most staff do not take responsibility for their activities and performance. "Staff at the branch offices have the head office mentality, expecting things to be done at the head office and it is not their responsibility. They also use the head office as an excuse for delays and poor service delivery, the blame is shifted to the head office and not themselves," (EI 24/06/08).

The performance of staff should be evaluated every quarter by supervisors. However, this does not happen because, "supervisors are not around enough to really evaluate the performance of staff and because they do not want to be seen as being incompetent, performance appraisals are signed off without much consideration and it has become a mere paper exercise," (EI 15/05/08; EI 11/06/08; FG 03/06/08). Staff development needs should be identified jointly between supervisors and staff. However, because most supervisors lack proper management skills, this does not happen. Also, "when staff attend training and development courses, no follow up or evaluation of performance is conducted to establish if the training has had an impact

on the performance of the individual,” (EI 20/05/08; EI 21/05/08). In many instances the performance of staff is poor simply because there is a lack of clarity of what is expected from the staff, “no clear job descriptions and performance indicators are in place,” (EI 29/05/08; EI 11/06/08; FG 03/06/08).

Effective accountability needs to be supported by a strong monitoring and evaluation base that ensures that appropriate performance information is collected regularly, analysed and reported on. Achieving this could help to improve public confidence in the department (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅). During the study, I found that senior managers and supervisors responsible for service units, do not show enough commitment to this and often send in reports too late or after deadlines have passed (EI 15/05/08; WS 30/05/08).

The effective and timely presentation of evidence to show the accountability of DHA to the provision of service to the people will also be able to provide the citizens with a transparent view of the department.

4.4.9.7 Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.

The transparent sharing of information enables the public to participate in policy-making and implementation from an informed perspective, and most government departments struggle to strike a balance between transparency and the provision of information, which for some reason, should be protected (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅). The capacity of DHA to provide information is a major challenge especially if this information is very specific, is requested by individuals and does not fall into the general category of reports or legislation. DHA does not have a central repository where it stores all its information. A lot of its archive information is not documented on an electronic document management system, so anyone looking for something specific has to sift through several shelves of boxes to find the desired information (EI 15/05/08; EI 19/05/08; EI 21/05/08; FN 09/05/08).

The lack of a central document management system means that documents cannot be easily retrieved or located when needed, a fact which is further complicated because

each department keeps its own documents. It usually takes staff “a long time to locate the information,” (EI 19/05/08). Even information required by other service units for work related purposes and for decision making, cannot be located easily. “This means that effective and efficient services cannot be delivered,” (EI 17/06/08).

The resource centre and the records-keeping processes are also not adequate at DHA and not enough emphasis is given to these activities by senior management, although I was able to meet with skilled and competent staff in this area who are available to do these tasks. Despite this, “the furniture and equipment for the resource centre is already purchased and stored in a room. Staff are awaiting the decision of management so that they can set up the resource centre.” (EI 28/05/08; FN 28/05/08 2008; South Africa (Republic), 2008₆). It appears that all initiatives are focused on information technology and only a little emphasis is given to the process of capturing, storing and retrieving information (EI 01/07/08; EI 08/07/08).

Many documents at DHA are also “classified as confidential and usually this information is kept away from the public,” (EI 12/05/080). The DHA web page is the interface that most members of the public use to get the information that they require. However, a lot of the information contained on the website is outdated and viewed by the citizens and visitors as being irrelevant (FN 03/06/08; FN 06/06/08; EI 23/06/08). This is mainly due to the lack of capacity and human resources training and development, further negatively impacting service delivery.

4.4.9.8 Good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated

Human resources management refers to the measures that are put in place to ensure that employees are willing and able to implement the programmes of the organisation and career development ensures reward, promotion and advancement of staff. Furthermore, the creation of a work environment where staff have a clear sense of being nurtured and supported, promotes productivity and creates a positive dynamic that enhances service delivery (South Africa (Republic), 2005). Almost every individual interview conducted for this study during the four month period indicated

that DHA had a major problem in terms of their human capacity and this is one of the primary reasons why service delivery has failed.

The following human resources challenges are also identified in the latest strategic plan document for DHA (South Africa (Republic), 2008₂: 58):

- Resource capacity levels: The current employees' capacity in terms of numbers, competencies and utilisation are not at the levels required to meet service delivery demands. The Department is also not able to attract and retain the critical skills it requires. Thus, it is important to be proactive in planning for future resources in line with service delivery requirements
- Organisation design: The critical elements of the structure that are required to optimise employee performance are not in place; the job families are not clearly defined; there are no flexible career path; and the majority of the jobs are neither profiled nor evaluated
- Competency framework: The Department has not implemented a comprehensive competency framework against which employees can manage their careers and performance. There is a need to assess the competency gaps of employees in order to appropriately address them
- Limited development of appropriate skills: Learning and development interventions are not aligned to the business requirements: there is a need for a comprehensive workplace skills plan that will facilitate targeted learning and development of employees
- Leadership and management capacity: The Department is experiencing changes in leadership, and a majority of management positions have remained vacant for a long time. Over and above this, there is a gap in terms of management capability to manage and discipline employees
- Employee well-being: The Department is currently experiencing the effects of the HIV/ AIDS and other pandemic diseases through increased absenteeism; higher sick leave; temporary/permanent disability; lower levels of utilisation; and an increased rate of mortality. Other critical challenges in this area are the employees' attitudes towards clients, teamwork and morale
- HR systems: The current Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures are outdated and do not facilitate the alignment of HR practices with DHA

strategy. The current HR structure is centralized with limited IT support, which results in HR being inaccessible to managers and employees and hinders efficient service delivery

- Decentralisation of the HR function: Although the Chief Directorate: Human Resources is responsible for the management thereof, it is the responsibility of all managers to take on responsibility for human capital management. In support of the Departmental direction to decentralize the HR function, the Chief Directorate: Human Resources will need to provide the necessary support to line managers, taking particular caution to ensure control but not stifle service delivery. Delegation of the HR function is aimed at speeding up service delivery and managing the decentralization through appropriate HR controls and delegations.

The effective utilization of human resources requires sound monitoring of how individuals are recruited, deployed, managed and developed (South Africa (Republic), 2008₅). It was perceived by several respondents that, “staff in senior posts at DHA do not possess the required skills and competencies that are necessary to accomplish the tasks,” (EI 15/05/08; FN 26/05/08). This perception was confirmed by DHA’s Director General when he revealed the findings of a competency test on all the senior managers of DHA. The results of the test indicated that, “more than seventy percent of senior managers at DHA did not have the necessary skills to perform their jobs,” (Msimang, 2008). He reported that the majority of the managers could not pass a competency test evaluating their capabilities. “As long as we have people who are not efficient, things will just collapse (Msimang, 2008). Furthermore, staff turnover at senior levels has been very rapid. This has left the department with newly appointed, unskilled staff who seek to solutions to problems in text books rather than from experience (EI 19/05/08; FN 26 /05/08).

The advertisements for the senior staff job vacancies at DHA also reflect that DHA does not demand the required skills for the available job often resulting in the acquisition of individuals who cannot perform well. For example, the advertised job descriptions requested a minimum educational level of a three-year bachelors degree (which is no longer regarded as a professional qualification), for people to do professional, high quality operations that demanded innovation, creativity and

integrity allowing them to make informed decisions (Sunday Times, 2008). The problem is further compounded by the fact that DHA does not have a systematic continuing skills development program that can help these individuals to learn more job-specific skills and competencies. The fact is that the last time most of the senior staff ever had any form of education and training was when they were at tertiary education institutions (EI 15/07/08, 2008; FN 17/07/08).

Implementing good human resource management and career development of staff will ensure that service delivery and public administration will be successful and also help to ensure that required local skills are available for service delivery.

4.4.9.9 Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

This principle requires that the Public Services reflect the demographic composition of the country in its workforce and to ensure that their staff are balanced and representative in terms of race, gender, disabilities, and all other similarly disadvantaged groupings. DHA has placed people in senior positions in its attempt to achieve its representative targets. However, some staff have apparently been promoted on the basis of their affiliation to senior officials rather than their skills and competencies (EI 15/07/08). This has created an environment of dissatisfaction, demotivation and lack of trust in senior officials. It has also, at least in part, resulted in poor service delivery and a poor reputation among the customers. The *Presidential Review Commission Report* (South Africa (Republic), 1998₁) also found that many senior public service officials are appointed without any previous experience or formal training and no phasing in or formal hand-over from their predecessors was evident. This has exacerbated the sense of insecurity and incapacitation experienced by Public Services.

Furthermore, several international consultants have been appointed to complete specific projects and activities that cannot be done with the existing capacity. I also observed that these external, international consultations receive more empowerment and support within DHA than the permanent staff and this has led to de-motivation

and lack of performance in terms of service delivery (EI 24/06/08; FN 15/07/08; FG 03/06/08).

Staff claim that, “external consultants also use the idea, innovation and plans of internal staff to make changes or accomplish tasks and they receive the credit for this while staff do all the work,” (EI 24/07/08). While there is a definite skills shortage at DHA specifically in information technology skills and financial skills (EI 12/05/08; EI 14/05/08; EI 20/06/08), there is a tendency for DHA to source these skills from outside South Africa rather than partner with institutional experts locally available to help solve the skills shortage.

4.5 SUMMARY

The discussion in this chapter has focussed on the findings of the ethnographic study conducted at the DHA. The findings of this study were analysed according to the themes covered above and are able to provide an understanding of public service administration in South Africa. I have carefully identified aspects of the public sector that contribute to, or impact on, the delivery of services.

The complex nature of government in South Africa was discussed, in order to establish how Public Services and Administration fits into this environment. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) was the chosen Public Service department for this study and a brief overview of this organisation was provided. This was then followed by a more in-depth look at the vision, mission and strategic intent of the organisation before discussing the themes that impact service delivery.

Aspects such as the structure and flow of information in the organisation have an impact on effective decision making and, hence, efficient service delivery. It has been found that DHA has several challenges in this regard. The complex nature of the activities in DHA requires that it have a structure that is more flexible so as to respond to the diverse requirements of its stakeholders.

The core activities of DHA such as Civic Services, Immigration Services and Support services reveal the importance of this department which is often not acknowledged and appreciated by the citizens. For this organisation to achieve its core functions and meet its service delivery mandate, it requires efficient interaction and communication channels both internally and externally so that the needs of the people can be addressed. The discussion of the language and communication patterns adopted by DHA indicates that they are not assisting the organisation to provide for the needs of the people and that it does also impact the culture of the organisation.

DHA does not have a strong organisational or corporate culture, but instead has a weak and unhealthy organisational culture, that has an impact on decision making and also influences the attitudes of the staff. Furthermore, due to this lack of a strong corporate culture, staff do not have a shared meaning of their core business. This has a negative impact on service delivery as staff do not work towards a common goal.

The development of sound policies and procedures can assist the organisation to complete its operations within specific set standards, however, DHA does not have several policies and practices in place for its operations. Where these policies do exist, the proper implementation of them is hampered due to the lack of skills and capacity.

Strategic planning provides the organisation with a guideline for achieving its objectives, but DHA does not use several important strategic management tools and techniques when it does its strategic planning. Instead this is based on 'gut feel' and is more of a consolidation exercise of pieces of information from the various service units. The strategic plans therefore, focus mainly on the immediate issues and do not adequately take the future of the organisation into consideration.

During the study, several themes repeated themselves over and over again and it is for this reason, and in an attempt to avoid repetition, that the researcher had decided to focus the discussion on the current state of service delivery to the nine prescribed Constitutional basic values and principles for public administration and service delivery. These are outlined in section 195(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996* (South Africa (Republic), 1996). It was found that in DHA's attempt to achieve these principles, there are several areas where DHA has

failed and has not been able to adequately meet the set standards. Hence, there has been an impact on service delivery to the citizens.

The themes covered in the discussion have an impact on service delivery and certainly can be regarded as internal competition that DHA faces in terms of achieving its mandate. The next chapter continues this analysis and reporting of the ethnographic study and focuses more on the new interventions initiated at DHA to improve service delivery. It will also look at the key intelligence needs of the department, the specific forms of competition identified in this work environment ('left-field' competition), and identify any CI-related tools and techniques that are applied in DHA to improve service delivery.