

Chapter 6

Results and interpretations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

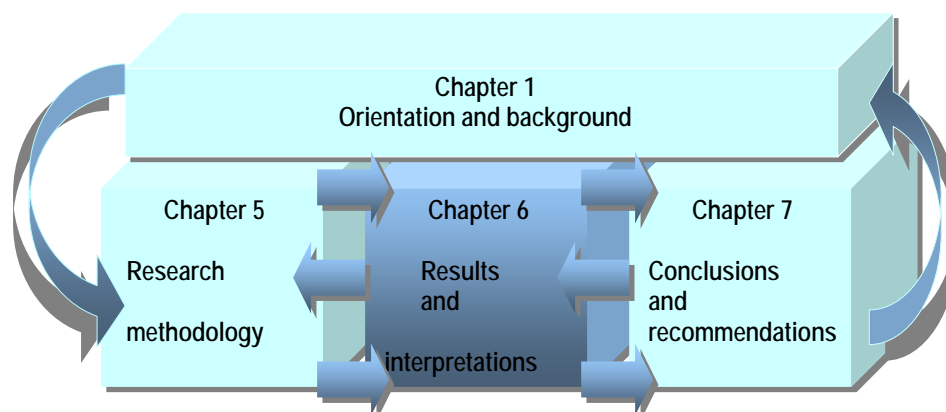
The empirical evidence and interpretation of the evidence regarding the overarching research question is the focal point of this chapter. The results of this study are presented on two levels: **per case study and as a comparative case study report**. Each case study report is structured according to the research objectives described in Chapter 1. The presentation of evidence and simultaneous interpretation in relation to each objective, is based on the methodological principle of re-contextualisation of reality and continuous comparison with theory.

The comparison of case studies relies on the discussion of possible inferences about the evidence per objective. These inferences ultimately serve as precursors for the conclusions about the study that appear in Chapter 7. Pertinent facts about the interviewees and research settings are also incorporated into each case study description.

As was explained in the previous chapter, there is a constant interplay between Chapters 6 and 1, as well as 5 and 7. The positioning of this chapter, in relation to other chapters of the empirical phase of the study, is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 6.1

Chapter 6 in relation to other components of the empirical phase



6.2 RESULTS FOR CASE STUDY 1

6.2.1 Organisational profile

This organisation is an international motor vehicle manufacturer. Activities worldwide are co-ordinated from the corporation's head office in Europe. The organisation has 23 production and assembly plants in seven countries. The South African operation employs almost 3 500 people in two locations, i.e. head office and a manufacturing plant, both situated in Gauteng. About 1 200 employees work on the production floor.

According to the international corporate website, this is "... the only manufacturer of automobiles worldwide that concentrates entirely on premium standards and outstanding quality for all its brands and across all relevant segments". The philosophy that inspires every individual at the organisation is excellence. This is described in the following description from the same website: "It influences the company's structure and it plays a vital role in the decision-making process. Our corporate ethos finds its expression in the uncompromising pursuit of the superlative. The result? Outstanding brands with an unmistakable profile. Automobiles which fascinate people all over the world, and which win legions of new admirers every day."

"With the three brands [this organisation] has its sights set firmly on the premium sector of the international automobile market. To achieve its aims, the company knows how to deploy its strengths with an efficiency that is unmatched in the automotive industry. From research and development to sales and marketing, [organisation] is committed to the very highest in quality for all its products and services. The company's phenomenal success is proof of this strategy's correctness."

6.2.2 Research setting

The researcher had to visit this organisation on four different occasions in order to conduct the evidence collection phase. An initial discussion with the Manager: Corporate Communication (Internal communication) revealed the fact that all employees are referred to as "associates", while the organisation emphasises teamwork and sharing of ideas or knowledge. According to this individual, the corporate culture relies on teamwork. This approach to employees and leadership are also described in a related policy that is also available from the international corporate website.

6.2.2.1 Interviewees

All three interviews were completed, i.e. all questions were answered and inferences could be drawn about the complete case study.

6.2.2.2 Corporate strategy documents

This organisation is currently developing a communication strategy for the management of the Employment Equity process, but had no alternative document(s) available for analysis in relation to this study.

6.2.3 Results for objectives 2 – 11 (except objective 4)

6.2.3.1 Objective 2: Purpose of Affirmative Action

Seven themes emerged in response to Question 1. These themes suggest that AA is perceived as a multi-dimensional phenomenon: This organisation defines AA as part of BEE. It was described as “... redressing the imbalances of the past, advancing blacks and meeting BEE targets that need to be disclosed to the Department of Labour ...” One interviewee argued that their organisational view on the matter is actually beyond the narrow view of “purpose”. This response is influenced by this individual's particular view on the corporate philosophy toward AA as being “... a systemic [phenomenon]”.

When AA measures are put into place in this organisation, it should not be done “... so that we can fix all the ills of Apartheid and create another form of racism”. AA is “... driven by the deep modalities of this company”. Thus the implementation of AA measures reflects the values of the organisation. At least one interviewee directly referred to the principle of equity as an element of organisational sustainability. The vision is EE, but “... this requires that certain [AA] measures be put in place.” Thus AA measures are important in pursuit of the organisational vision.

The fifth theme is the variation of AA measures that are possible in organisations. In this organisation, AA measures include both the measures stipulated in legislation, a graduate training programme and diversity management initiatives. The sixth theme is the potential influence of AA on the management of stakeholders. This organisation emphasised the interdependence between motor manufacturers,

dealerships and suppliers within the context of compliance with the BEEA. In accordance with the BEEA, this organisation monitors equity ownership in its network of dealers and suppliers.

The last theme is the potential impact of AA on the management of external communication. The most senior Communication practitioner emphasised that their pursuit of the BEE is not motivated by " ... [being] driven to keep our noses clean and having a black on the board and x numbers here and there ... ". External communication is not utilised for the sake of merely creating a favourable image in relation to EE matters. The last theme is a recurrent theme in many of the responses by the most senior Communication practitioner.

6.2.3.2 Objective 3: Strategic value of communication

The most senior Communication practitioner mentioned two themes, the most senior Human Resources practitioner three themes, and the most senior EE practitioner also referred to three themes.

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

External communication is very narrowly focused in terms of media coverage and used very selectively: "We don't make hay of anything ... unlike other companies". An example of this approach is the launch of a black-owned dealership. That event was strategically important since the organisation believes that the facts about this BEE initiative needed to be shared with external stakeholders: this is a case where the ownership is truly one hundred percent black as opposed to window-dressing appointments or achievements. The second theme is that of a subtle comparison with the communication efforts and BEE efforts of other organisations: "We could have fudged the communication about a situation where the white management was kept ... or where we could have taken black money from a Cyril Ramaphosa ... but that is not our style to fudge like that". In essence this organisation " ... does not use communication for PR purposes".

□ Most senior Human Resources practitioner

This individual related the implementation of the new five-year EEA Plan to a communication strategy and further illustrated that this plan " ... is in effect a change and transformation plan". This response equates AA with organisational transformation. This individual also refers to communication as a tool to

achieve understanding of the AA process. The statement that “ ... the more you communicate with the right audiences in the right manner, the better you might be at breaking down barriers ... ”, illustrates this theme. One such example is the reaction of white managers when no white candidates are considered during the recruitment and selection process in external appointments.

Several criteria for communication were also described. According to this individual, communication in this transformational context has to be thorough, consistent and systematic in order to achieve the objectives of the EEA Plan.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

The most senior Employment Equity practitioner regards communication as “ ... of absolute vital importance”. Each organisational role player needs communication to effect the process of Employment Equity. Each organisational role player should also comprehend his/her responsibilities regarding this process. Communication efforts should not only focus on the content requirements stipulated by law, but should focus on adding value to an organisation: “If you do not communicate the intent of the Act and the spirit of our plan and the objective of our plan, this will never happen”.

6.2.3.3 Objective 5: Key role players

Eleven themes also emerged from responses to Question 3. Both specific departments and traditional organisational leaders are responsible for the management of communication about AA. The Employment Equity Committee and the Human Resources department, Corporate Planning department and Corporate Affairs department are viewed as central to this process. (The Corporate Planning division is the MD’s office.) But the Human Resources department often initiates communication about EE matters since “ ... we are the driver co-ordinators”.

The credibility of the MD as a figurehead in this process was emphasised by the most senior EE practitioner. This theme could have been explored more, but it is confirmed by responses to later questions. The Corporate Affairs department is responsible for external communication, but would again focus only on events that are strategically important. The motivation for this approach to external communication lies in the fact that this organisation does not attempt to augment its achievements

regarding the EEA or BEE. The EE targets that are set, have to be real, while no reporting about inflated targets takes place according to the most senior Communication practitioner.

Furthermore, information about the EE is packaged in relation to the needs of different internal stakeholders. The three "critical stakeholders" are "... employees in general, target managers and organised labour". The information aimed at the first category would pertain to general policy issues, while information for target managers would "... empower them to manage people in relation to EE". Organised labour's stake in the process of EE further requires that information is also tailor-made for them.

Staff members at the assembly plant are addressed during daily briefings on corporate or relevant topics. When top management wants to communicate a particular message, team leaders at the plant have to disseminate the content: "This is fundamental where you have thousands of people on the factory floor". General managers also discuss pertinent issues with departmental leaders during departmental meetings, while departmental leaders would have to share that information with the staff that report to them.

The EE committee is the main mechanism through which organised labour contributes to the management of EE matters. Furthermore, this committee contributes to the communication process at the level of decision-making and not at actually communicating information to the rest of the organisation. Members of this committee are regarded as ambassadors for the process, but only have a communication responsibility on a micro scale (level).

Different levels of leadership have specific responsibilities within this context. Traditional organisational leaders include the MD (managing director), the senior team of general managers, divisional, departmental and team leaders. This is illustrated by the comment that "... nobody is absolved from taking responsibility for this [process]". This description of the layers of management is based on the premise that communication will flow downwards through the organisation. Internal communication also relies on the principles of information dissemination via "... corporate newsletters, intranet, information sessions that take place regularly ..." and other organisational leaders.

All general and departmental managers have to achieve equity targets: "If there is a general manager in Engineering, he's got the same responsibility for it as the one for Marketing and the one in HR". In

terms of equity targets, the different general managers and departmental leaders need to address the number of vacancies in particular divisions, as well as issues of diversity. The central idea is to “... communicate the intent ... discuss it. And then they cascade the dialogue of communication down to the rest of the teams or divisions or units”. And it is hoped that the new communication strategy will formalise the communication responsibilities of all leaders.

This individual prefers that communication is always focused. The communication between different levels of organisational leadership is currently not formally structured. One implication is that not all departmental leaders are equally committed to the process. But the current development of a communication strategy is deemed as a means to overcome this problem. According to the most senior EE practitioner “... we hope that once this is addressed, the cascading effect would be more successful”. A noteworthy observation is the fact that the most senior Communication practitioner does not favour the notion of “cascading” information.

6.2.3.4 Objective 6: Key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners

Question 4 did not automatically yield reference to communication responsibilities at departmental level, thus such a follow-up question was utilised. Two levels of responsibility were reported, i.e. corporate and departmental:

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

BEE issues, including AA, are regarded as corporate issues. This interviewee would thus approach the management of communication about this matter in the same way as other corporate issues. All communication would be “narrowly focused”. The interviewee describes the latter as “low-key” communication. It has special significance in the context of external communication, best illustrated by the statement “... we don’t crow about things”.

The relationship of product communication and corporate communication was also explained. Product communication is the biggest segment of this organisation’s communication efforts. The motivation for the minimalist to external communication lies in the organisation’s approach to its products, as illustrated by the following statement: “Even that is done in a subtle, sometimes even slightly

humorous, academic and beautiful manner. It is not like communication from a brand in the lower end of the spectrum. Ours is not a mass market."

Separating the corporate and departmental spheres of responsibility seems to be difficult. The response to this question also implied that the staff of the Communication department would fulfil the role of informers to the rest of the organisation.

Firstly, this individual agrees with the notion of communication responsibilities being embedded in this role: "I absolutely have such a responsibility. It is part of that cascading phenomenon". The primary component of that role would be to inform staff about the process. The content to be shared would focus on EE targets and the strategies that will be employed to achieve these.

Staff in this division would have to " ... know what is going on in my head and how I think it should be communicated in the organisation". This comment does not imply that this interviewee is the only person responsible for the management of communication, but focuses on the principle that communication staff should be able to answer questions about the AA process from any possible employee.

The balance and relationship between corporate and product communication is further illustrated by the reference to queries communication staff receive from external media. Such queries are all referred to the most senior Communication practitioner. The logic of such a response is evident from the following statement: "Ideally they should say 'we prefer not to talk about BEE in the context of a car, let me set up a meeting with the head of this division". Such a response to external queries also reflects the "narrowly-focused" approach to communication that was mentioned previously. According to this interviewee, this organisation does not "make hay" out of their progress regarding BEE matters.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioner**

Only **corporate level** responsibilities are reported since the issue of departmental responsibilities were unfortunately not pursued during the interview. Since the Human Resources department is responsible for the overarching target-setting for this organisation, communication is important to ensure that the process is correctly understood throughout the organisation. Communication in this context should

also be directed as the right people and be continuous. In essence “ ... my responsibility is to ensure that communication is does not fall by the wayside”.

Three other aspects are important to the interviewee: This individual and his/her department are responsible for setting and achieving EE targets. In order to enable the organisation to achieve these targets, this individual identifies potential sources from which AA appointments may be made. This component of the process may include her forwarding the CV's of individuals to relevant departments for their future reference. Finally, this interviewee regards it a responsibility to “ ... be a challenger of belief systems in order to meet those targets”. According to this individual, communication is central to all these responsibilities.

□ Most senior Employment Equity practitioner

This individual only has **corporate level** responsibilities, thus the issue of departmental responsibilities was not pursued. Ensuring that communication about various aspects of the process is adequate in terms of the legislative framework. Ensuring that the organisation compiles a communication strategy that reflects the “ ... intent of the EE plan”.

This interviewee leaves the creative interpretation and execution of the strategy to the Communication and Marketing departments. (This communication strategy is currently being compiled and will accompany the new five-year plan that will be implemented as from 1 October this year.)

6.2.3.5 Objective 7: Contribution of the Corporate Communication function

The number of themes that emerged from Question 5 also vary in relation to the three interviewees, i.e. five from the most senior Communication practitioner, three from the most senior Human Resources practitioner and one from the EE practitioner.

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

The management of communication in both the internal and external contexts is governed by the value of this organisation's trademark. When this organisation communicates externally about BEE (also AA), the same rules would apply as for any other issue, namely openness, truthfulness and honesty.

This interviewee also refers to the approach to communication as a dimension of corporate culture, which is summarised by the following: "It's a corporate culture thing: we don't shout from the rooftops at our company".

Thirdly, "the organisation must understand this process as part of the system", as opposed to an initiative from the MD's office or government. According to this individual, employees may view AA as an add-on when not communicated as a process that does not reflect the corporate philosophy.

Fourthly, employees must look at the process itself as something of which they must be a part or which they must live. They have to think " ... this is not something that happens on Mondays and Fridays". Finally, such an understanding of AA " ... will help employees understand that when people are appointed they are the best person for the job". This would be important for the credibility of the process.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioner**

This individual only expects advice from the Communication division since this division is regarded as the experts. The advice would pertain to both a framework for communication and the appropriate techniques to be utilised.

These techniques include various print media, intranet and various meetings. Furthermore, the communication division should be involved in the planning of communication about EE from the start. The reason for the response lies in the multi-faceted nature of this transformational effort: "You would want them to be involved right from the beginning because I don't believe that they could add value if they don't understand what EE is about."

The criterion of understanding the EE process also applies to planning communication in relation to the nature of the workforce and their ability to receive communication about the process. This is best illustrated by the following statements: "They (the communication division) need to be sensitive in their advice ... If they said to me, 'put it all on the intranet' ... well, if they knew that half the people don't have access to the intranets at their workstations, that might be a problem."

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

This individual only expects advice regarding technical dimensions of communicating the contents of the EE plan. Ideally, her own area of expertise should be combined with communication expertise. The goal of such a combined effort is " ... to come up with a communication plan that will best suit the needs of the business".

6.2.3.6 Objective 8: Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders

Several types of responsibilities emerged from the responses to Question 6: The first is that of being the disseminator of information into their different spheres of responsibility, as was explained in the discussion of Objective 5. But, such leaders would not be expected to lead the communication effort in the organisation. The Human Resources department will act as initiator of issues, while individual leaders need to refer sensitive issues to the EE department.

Individual team or departmental leaders also need to give feedback to the EE Committee or EE office on issues that have not yet been communicated properly. The setting (and achievement) of targets is another responsibility. Each department has to achieve these targets and report back on why they perhaps had not achieved these. Responses in this regard highlight the interdependence of the Human Resources and EE departments.

Three tools exist for feedback about the implementation of the organisation's EE efforts. The first is the intranet that accommodates an EE "ask us facility". Any employee can direct an anonymous question to any member of the EE committee. Any employee may consult with the different divisional Human Resources consultants about EE matters. The last platform where EE is addressed, are the divisional meetings where EE targets are discussed.

According to the most senior EE practitioner " ... that is a medium where a lot of concerns and questions are raised at the point of whether a particular division had reached their targets." From these responses the comment that the planned communication strategy should formalise the communication roles and responsibilities, is supported. Many informal measures seem to have either been put in place or have evolved by virtue of the nature (structure) of the organisation.

6.2.3.7 Objective 9: Content for internal stakeholders

The range of responses to Question 7 points to two categories of content, i.e. **current content** that is communicated and content that should **ideally** be communicated. Three themes of **current content** are: External recruitment targets currently forms the first focal point. As was indicated previously, target-setting is central to the responsibility of general and departmental leaders in this organisation. The organisation's commitment to the process is communicated in a manner that underlines the notion of AA as " ... being a systemic thing". The basic message is " ... they will see people of colour around them, above them, beneath them etc. ... we communicate about the fact that when four people apply for a job, the black person will get the job. So we say, be realistic."

Thirdly, traditional misnomers about advancement without merit or development, is dispelled. This is deemed important in relation to the spirit of the EEA. The overarching message related to this goal is " ... the whole concept of EE being one of empowering the workplace". No employee will advance without merit, while merit is earned through development efforts.

One theme was identified in the category of "**ideal content**": Diversity is viewed as the product of a mature appreciation of differences between people and a precursor to equity: "You're willing to have people from different groupings with different views, beliefs, cultures, religions, attitudes that are able to co-exist ... ". If managers are able to facilitate this appreciation for diversity, all individuals will have the same opportunities.

This individual further argues that organisations very often misunderstand diversity. Instead of looking at it from a personality level, it is often coupled with race or gender or religion. Managers are regarded as playing a critical role in managing people in an equitable manner by being objective about issues that are potentially counter-productive to the ideal of equity.

The climate that is created through communication is equally important. This organisation's approach to communication, as reflected in the responses to the main question, seem to reflect the ideal of reassuring all employees of their place or value. In order to manage AA successfully as a systemic process, employees are lead to the point where they have to realise (or make a decision) that " ... if I want to be a part of this company, I have to be a part of this process".

Although this may seem like the ideal transformational change situation, hidden barriers to the process do exist, while the organisation has had some negative experiences with the process of AA. Hidden barriers occur in the form of subtle resistance from managers during the recruitment and appointment phase: " ... people sometimes find all kinds of clever ways of working around the EE policy ... and then we need to say: 'Get with the programme' ".

6.3.3.8 Objective 10: Content for external stakeholders

Two themes emerged from the responses to this question: The organisation's commitment to this process is the first element that is communicated externally. Commitment to the process is interpreted as not merely appointing " ... people of colour in the lowest levels of the organisation ... ", but explaining to all stakeholders that the organisation's philosophy is that of empowering people for the long term.

The organisation prefers to manage different initiatives pertaining to EE and BEE holistically. This includes the alignment of the network of dealerships and suppliers according to the different Acts, as well as corporate social responsibility initiatives. In this regard the MD is also quoted on the website: "Whilst there are many factors that support this progression, EE and the development of individuals is fundamental to the ultimate success, and critically [sic.] the resilience of our economy in an ever increasing competitive world."

The communication approach of this organisation dictates that external communication is limited to those instances when it would be " ... strategically necessary". This approach reflects the corporate philosophy of not seeking publicity, as was mentioned previously.

Once again, the organisation's approach to communication is deemed as different, even superior and representative of their products, when compared to those of other organisations: "We communicate at this low ebb always, unless something is very important. It is cerebral – it makes you think a little. It is even a little mysterious at times." Therefore this organisation refrains from using a constant stream of media releases about achievements in these areas.

AA measures and the EEA Plan are intrinsically linked to BEE programmes and corporate reputation. An external website states that this organisation invests in its employees in order to develop the workforce as a competitive edge.

However, this approach depends on the objectives of this organisation's EE programme. This description confirms the response to the first question. Apart from the legal objectives, as described by the preamble of the EEA, this organisation aims to " ... achieve a diverse culture of equal opportunity for all and to eliminate any form of unfair discrimination".

6.2.3.9 Objective 11: Content analysis of communication strategy

The lack of a communication strategy is the only fact that can be reported in relation to this objective for Case Study 1. However, an inference should not be made that such a strategy is not relevant for this organisation.

6.3 RESULTS FOR CASE STUDY 2

6.3.1 Organisational profile

The second organisation is a municipality in Gauteng. This organisation includes 13 local transitional/representative councils and employs 13 100 people. The two organisational leaders that act as CEO and a deputy, are the Executive Mayor and a City Manager respectively. Furthermore 76 councillors serve on different structures of this organisation.

The Executive Mayor articulated the strategic focus of this organisation during an annual "State of the City" address at the beginning of 2002. This address appears on the municipality's website: "An audit of backlogs was done, and this formed the basis for a programme we appropriately dubbed the Quick and Visible Service Delivery Programme. This programme entailed the identification of critically urgent needs all over the city and satisfying them through sharing human and other resources."

"Human upliftment and job creation were realised through the execution of the Quick and Visible projects. Local contractors were used and they in turn employed people from the communities in which they operated. All this was in synch with our commitment to focus on the visible improvement of our

people's situation. This was followed up with a strategic plan for the city, which was related to the National Department of Development Planning and the Local Government's Interim Integrated Developmental Plan, Action Plan 2002."

"Finally, the strategic budget framework provides a comprehensive list of projects that were prioritised, some of which were implemented during 2001. The most notable of these was the provision of free basic amounts of water and electricity to all the residents of this municipality, resulting in some alleviation of the plight of the poorest among them."

The same website also describes the following values as those that govern this organisation: community orientation, transparency, commitment, business orientation, accountability, integrity, non-racialism and non-sexism.

6.3.2 Research setting

The departmental secretaries of Communication provided invaluable assistance in pointing the researcher in the right direction in terms of the correct designations and contact details for two of the interviews.

The secretary for the most senior Human Resources practitioner went to considerable lengths to ensure that this (the last) interview did eventually take place in order for this case study to be included in this study. The researcher had to visit this organisation on three different occasions in order to conduct the evidence collection phase.

6.3.2.1 Interviewees

Since the most senior Employment Equity practitioner only provided very short responses to all main questions, several follow-up questions were used in an attempt to facilitate a discussion that would resemble a conversation instead of a clinical question and answer situation.

The interview with the most senior Communication practitioner was not completed – the last three questions were not answered due to time constraints. These questions were sent to the interviewee by e-mail, while various follow-up calls were also made in relation to this matter. However, the researcher

did not receive a reply in responses to these queries. The inferences about the case thus do not reflect possible responses to these three questions.

6.3.2.2 Corporate strategy documents

This organisation does not currently rely on a specific communication strategy in relation to the process of managing EE matters. Therefore objective 11 could not be pursued in this case. The inferences under that objective reflect this reality.

6.3.3 Results for objectives 2 –11 (except objective 4)

6.3.3.1 Objective 2: Purpose of Affirmative Action

Three main themes emerged from responses to this question: Interviewees agreed that these measures also focused on “ ... the creation of opportunities for those who were previously deliberately excluded”. Secondly, AA is also viewed as a means of creating “ ... a semblance of normality and sort of stabilising what we had achieved in the post-1994 South Africa”. AA is thus interpreted as having a much broader meaning for society than the legal description provided in the EEA. Transformation must be real or tangible.

AA should address the imbalances of the past, “ ... but not just at the level of window-dressing”. Furthermore, interviewees view this organisation is a microcosm of society and can therefore not be divorced from the realities of its employees: “The work environment must also be reflective of who we are and what our dreams are. And how we define ourselves as a nation.”

The organisation has to take certain actions in relation to its immediate environment in order to implement AA measures successfully. When vacancies must be filled, the organisation will search for suitably skilled employees in its geographical area and this may result in new strategic linkages with higher education training providers.

The third theme, however points to the potential practical barriers to the ideal of firstly exploring the existing pool of expertise: “But looking at our current situation then it becomes difficult. So sometimes we see it as a barrier also, while it was supposed to address the very same discrepancies of the past.”

6.3.3.2 Objective 3: Strategic value of communication

Different issues (themes) are deemed important by the three interviewees:

- **Most senior Communication practitioner**

Five themes can be distinguished in the response to this question: Firstly negative perceptions about AA need to be addressed. Racial reconciliation is necessary in order for employees not to think about AA as " ... a form or reversing Apartheid". When such a perception prevails, the appointment of persons of colour is interpreted as "... you are just giving kickbacks to your own." Secondly, communication is vital in the process of addressing the fears of employees who may think that the whole system will collapse now that other people are given employment opportunities. Information is important in the management of communication about the process.

The manner in which to communicate the effects of AA is equally important and serves as the third theme: The performance of an organisation under the leadership of a non-white individual seems to be a more ideal communication method than a mere announcement on the effects of AA. In the case of this municipality, the Executive Mayor has won a number of awards and the city is regarded as " ... one of the best managed cities in the country". The collective performance is important, while the race of the top achievers is incidental.

The fourth theme is the fact that communication about AA should not single out employees who benefit from these measures. Communication should much rather focus on the inclusion of all employees and the achievements of the organisation.

The issue of how communication about EE is managed was also explored: The management of AA is the responsibility of Human Resources. The Communication department will advise Human Resources from time to time when advice is sought in the recruitment and appointment phases. But collectively, communication focuses on the transformation of the organisation: " ... and from time to time, whether we are talking about internal newsletters or external communication, [we] highlight the things that we've achieved as a municipality, but obviously within that, you have different categories of people" (designated and non-designated groups). This response is congruent with the viewpoint that the race of

achievers is incidental and that the well-being of the organisation is the focus in the strategic positioning of this organisation.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioner**

The main theme that emerged from the response to this question is that of facilitating understanding of the implementation of AA as a transformational change process. This is illustrated by the statement that "...you have to ensure that there is awareness and understanding ... Communication is a central pillar in this process. Transformation is the end goal that needs to be communicated."

Three implications of such an approach were also mentioned: Firstly, communication needs to contribute to the correct understanding of the terminology that is associated with AA: "You deal with questions of resistance ... you demystify the concepts."

The emotional nature of issues related to AA is the second theme: Issues of race, religion or sexual orientation are regarded as "... close to all employees". The role of communication would be to facilitate the buy-in of all employees. The following statement illustrates this viewpoint: "And I think the instrument for doing this is communication. Only when these things are communicated, do people really understand the process".

The manner in which this organisation manages the process of implementing AA measures, serves as the third sub-theme. This organisation followed the example (or practice) of other organisations with the compilation of an EE forum, which is representative of all the groupings within the organisation. An example of the demand for diversity in people or groupings in this forum is the following: Two such groups were highlighted in relation to the forum's ideal of being fully representative, namely same-sex couples (also referred to as "alternative lifestyle") and white males. Same-sex couples are excluded from this forum since there are so few – only ten couples among the almost 13 000 employees.

White males are represented on this forum, but the interviewee explicitly commented that "... they think they are victims". This comment has to be understood against the historical background of AA at this organisation. This municipality was formerly also part of local government and employed predominantly white, Afrikaans males. As the most senior Human Resources practitioner describes it: "When I came here, I was part of 'the problem'."

The description of the EE forum should be compared to the most senior Communication practitioner's response to the question about the structure of communication in this context. These two responses are pivotal to the overarching research question of this study.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

Two themes emerged from this response: This interviewee immediately referred to the Communication department as a source of expertise in this context. Her impression of the Communication department is that they would like to lead the communication process in this context in order to assist other departments.

Secondly, she referred to her role in the management of communication about this process. This role description is repeated in the response to a related question, as will be explained later. According to this individual, the strategic value of communication lies in the potential to link the correct people in different departments with individuals like herself in order to disseminate information. Her designation is central to this process. An example of the dissemination of information is the Know-Net system – this is a broadcasting system that is used to send video recordings of information sessions to different offices of this organisation.

Since the response to the previous question was unusually brief compared to those of other interviewees, this interviewee was asked what she viewed as the inherent value of communication in this context. This organisation's "duty to inform employees" is the only theme that emerged from her response. But this duty is critical in helping employees understand the process.

6.3.3.3 Objective 5: Key role players

Four themes are significant: i.e. departmental level co-operation, managerial responsibility, the involvement of all employees in this process, as well as criteria for communication in this context: Finally, the current conditions in the organisation are compared to the ideal criteria.

On departmental level, the Human Resources, Employment Equity and Communication departments are deemed important as partners in the management of communication. However, the combinations that were mentioned did not include all three simultaneously. The emphasis on the co-operation

between the Human Resources and Employment Equity or the Human Resources and Communication departments, seems to reflect the vantage points of the individuals that were interviewed.

Unfortunately the issue of an integrated effort between these three departments was never further explored. In retrospect, this should have been a main question in the final interview schedule.

The responsibility for the management of the implementation of AA also extends to managerial level in the rest of the organisation. Their managerial responsibility is tied to their key performance areas. But, these are also tied to the organisation's strategic plan: "... their performance is vital in articulating those strategic plans as part of the broader transformational agenda."

The responsibility for AA lies with all employees: both managerial and non-managerial employees. The changes associated with AA should ideally be entrenched in everything all employees do, as illustrated by the following statement: "In the end, this is something that becomes the way we are doing things. It is almost like breathing ..."

Finally, four criteria for communication in this transformational effort form the last theme in relation to the aforementioned question: Communication needs to enable the transformational process in the South African context.

The process of dialogue in the societal context should address racial biases. Communication should ideally be continuous and utilised "... to diffuse the emotive dimension of this whole process". Communication is not yet continuous. According to the most senior Human Resources practitioner many of the opportunities where AA can be discussed, are not utilised.

These opportunities include daily meetings or special events. The organisation cannot achieve its goals without employees taking ownership of this initiative. This theme is illustrated in the following manner: "A human has rituals, beliefs, values ... Understanding people is important to help them play their part in this process."

6.3.3.4 Objective 6: Key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners

Since Question 4 only yielded reference to corporate level responsibilities, a follow-up question was used to explore any possible departmental responsibilities.

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

Firstly the achievements of individuals from the designated groups are celebrated in relation to the broader corporate communication strategy. And secondly all employees, also those from the designated groups, need to be made aware of the organisation's commitment to the service delivery.

Unfortunately the issue of leadership within the Communication department was not explored due to time constraints.

□ Most senior Human Resources practitioner

This individual regards himself as the "custodian" of this process. The primary responsibility of such a custodian is to facilitate understanding throughout the organisation, both the formal leadership and other employees: "I see myself as supporting them in this task to realise their vision for addressing the transformational agenda. ... This is almost like a coach or a mentor to others."

A second theme from this response is the observation that coaching in this context does not yield results overnight. Sometimes " ... you have to leave it to germinate to grow from something small to something bigger". This individual preferred the concept of "leader" and associated it with the responsibility of setting an example in terms of what has to be done in this context at departmental level. The reason for the emphasis on setting an example stems from the belief that it is important " ... for them to see that it can be done, that the road is sometimes bumpy, that it is not easy".

The perceived impact that this approach has on other people further seems to serve as motivating factor: employees need to experience growth in order to support this transformational process. And this, in turn, is based on the premise that employees must experience that the transformation process

also holds something for them: "For my people, sure growth is painful, and it's that type of situation where people see that this is also working for me."

The effect of this approach on traditional reactions to AA is also central to this individual's response: "Then they relax their defensiveness and then they become the forerunners and people who say that we should do this or that".

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

This individual regards her role as that of disseminator of information about the process and policy to the rest of the organisation. The EE forum also plays an important role in this process.

The issue of leadership within the Employment Equity department was not explored since this individual had no staff that reported directly to her.

6.3.3.5 Objective 7: Contribution of the Corporate Communication function

Different views were also expressed about this particular dimension:

□ **Most senior Communication practitioner**

Two main themes are central to this interviewee: The management of perceptions about the whole process of AA is the first theme. The organisation's ties with party politics and more general misunderstandings about AA are cited as complicating factors in the communication process. Communication plays a role in "demystifying" AA as a process in this specific organisation.

The reason for viewing communication from a broader perspective stems for the organisation's nature, i.e. both being a business and being part of government. This also has an impact on the management of communication in general and in this transformational context. Balancing the interests of the bureaucrats and politicians is a potential minefield. This is illustrated by the following statement: "... the tendency is that we are driven politically and therefore the political mandate will to a large extent influence what will happen at administrative level."

The third theme is that of successful race relations in the organisation. But this factor is not isolated from communication or the perceptions about AA *per se*. The logic is that when employees and external parties experience or observe positive race relations, “the perceived monster” of AA is nullified. Communication plays an important role in assuring employees that there is harmony among employees. This view reflects similar sentiments that were shared in the response to the first question.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioner**

Three themes are important in the response to this question: Firstly, the Communication department should be the major disseminator of information to the rest of the organisation. Secondly, communication should be managed according to the principles of “... transparency and the values of the organisation”. This view is further illustrated by the statement that “... those building blocks must be firmly established in terms of how we communicate, to whom we communicate and how often we communicate.”

There also seems to exist a discrepancy between this individual's expectations and the manner in which communication about AA is currently being managed. The Communication department should be responsible for “... say[ing] the same things over and over again that we are aligned with how we define ourselves as an organisation”.

The reason for the aforementioned discrepancy seems to be the pro-active approach to communication by the Human Resources department vs. the reactive approach by the Communication department regarding internal communication on this issue. The Human Resources department initiated the information sessions that were also mentioned by the most senior EE practitioner.

Furthermore, the Communication department is deemed as focusing more on external communication efforts. A reason for this external focus was mentioned: “The communication department is still being established.”

Given the fact that the communication department is young, this interviewee finds it understandable that no big strides had been taken in terms of managing communication about this transformational context. However, he regrets that the Communication department may be missing “a critical

opportunity” by virtue of their focus on external matters. This is his impression of the Communication department.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

This individual would like the Communication department to communicate the details of AA measures within the EEA Plans to the rest of the organisation. She mentioned that departmental communication meetings take place and that these could serve as platform for determining the needs of such departments.

6.3.3.6 Objective 8: Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders

The first theme is the notion that all departments need to articulate their needs regarding specific issues related to the process of AA known. Once these needs have been articulated, they are addressed. An example of such an issue is capacity building. If people from the designated groups have been employed, they need to get the necessary support, i.e. technical or other.

Secondly, departmental leaders need to manage the process of AA according to the key performance areas in their performance management system. Communication is central to this process: “One of the key processes they have to embark on is how they are going to communicate with their respective departments. So they have a huge responsibility in this regard.” Perhaps the emphasis on communication as a vehicle for transformation is best illustrated by the following statement: “You cannot think of another way of managing this process than just through communication.”

6.3.3.7 Objective 9: Content for internal stakeholders

Three aspects are important in this organisation: The first are the details of “AA measures”. Secondly, the rationale and business objectives need to be communicated.

Thirdly, the milieu of the organisation, thus also the context of the AA process, needs to be communicated. This organisation places a high premium on the appreciation of diversity. This appreciation reflects previous views about perceptions of the ability of the organisation to deliver services effectively. This would be the key message in relation to explaining the business imperatives.

Another key message would pertain to the sustainability of this new organisation by means of the new corporate culture. The message is simply: "This is a way of life for the company."

Typical problems in this organisation include appointments. Appointments in some departments don't occur according to the organisation's numerical EEA goals. As was indicated previously, a skills shortage exists in some key service delivery departments of this organisation. The organisation has to address this problem.

6.3.3.8 Objective 10: Content for external stakeholders

Three themes are relevant to this question: Firstly, internal and external stakeholders should get the same information about the process of AA in this organisation. However, reasons for communicating this to different external stakeholders differ. Secondly, customers/clients need to see " ... us as being part and parcel of bigger society and the change, or rather evolution, that is taking place." This reflects the sentiments about appreciating diversity in the organisation.

Finally, the Department of Labour gets information that is required by law and in a cyclical fashion. But, according to the same interviewee, communication with the Department of Labour should be continuous. This government department is also willing to assist organisations with the implementation of the EEA.

6.3.2.9 Objective 11: Content analysis of communication strategy

The lack of a communication strategy is the only fact that can be reported in relation to this objective for Case Study 3. However, an inference should not be made that such a strategy is not relevant for this organisation, as was indicated by the most senior Communication practitioner.

6.4 RESULTS FOR CASE STUDY 3

6.4.1 Organisational profile

The third organisation is also a automobile manufacturer. This organisation is also foreign-owned and has operations in 17 countries across six continents and employs 362 100 people worldwide.

European, U.S. and other international investors own this organisation. Shares for this organisation are traded on all of the world's key stock exchanges, among them New York, Frankfurt and Tokyo.

The international corporate website describes this manufacturer's range of products, as " ... ranging from small cars to sports cars and luxury sedans; and from versatile vans to heavy duty trucks or comfortable coaches". The range of passenger vehicles encompasses six brands, while commercial vehicles are represented by five brands. These products are sold in more than 200 countries.

According to the same website, the international corporate strategy rests on four pillars: global presence, strong brands, broad product range, and technology leadership. And the official language of this organisation is English. South African operations are located in both Gauteng (head office) and the Eastern Cape (manufacturing plant). The local operations employ almost 4 400 people. Finally, the local corporate strategy rests on four values, i.e. customer excellence, ownership, respect and example.

6.4.2 Research setting

The three interviews were also completed at the corporate head office in Gauteng. Since the researcher had no prior knowledge of the structure of this organisation, contact was made with the Human Resources division in an attempt to establish contact with the appropriate individuals.

6.4.2.1 Interviewees

All three interviews were completed at this organisation. The most senior Communication practitioner had perused the project background and interview questions in preparation for the interview. However, since she had to make final arrangements for an extended overseas business trip, she had seconded the Manager of External Communication to participate in this interview on her behalf.

This person was briefed about all details of the project and acted on behalf of the most senior Communication practitioner. To ensure that her responses would represent the views of the most senior Communication practitioner, this aspect was clarified at the beginning of the interview

6.4.2.2 Corporate strategy documents

Of the three organisations that participated in this study, Case Study 3 was the only one that utilised a communication strategy in relation to EE efforts. The original communication strategy document was drawn up as a PowerPoint slide series and the researcher obtained this electronically from the Group Manager: Internal Communication. This document was compared to the Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity communication strategy.

Two other corporate documents, both in poster format, were also shared with the researcher. The first is the corporate strategy document, dated December 2002 and the second a Statement of Intent regarding Employment Equity dated August 2003. These two documents confirmed and complimented some details described in the communication strategy for EE matters.

6.4.3 Results for objective 2-11 (except objective 4)

Results in relation to objectives 2-11 are presented in similar fashion as for the previous two case studies. The same logic for analysis also applies to this case study.

6.4.3.1 Objective 2: Purpose of Affirmative Action

Four themes emerged from responses to Question 1: Firstly, AA is being implemented on the basis of this organisation's corporate consciousness: "It is the right thing to do." This view is central to two of the responses and is best illustrated by the following statement: "We are running a business. We make sure that whoever we bring into the organisation will act as they are required in order to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives."

Secondly, AA is also a business imperative that can be linked to the BEEA. This perspective is best illustrated by the statement that " ... there are so many business opportunities out there, if for instance you want to tender for providing services to organs of state, you are required to be compliant with the BEE legislation".

Thirdly, AA measures will help the organisation to redress imbalances of the past. Two interviewees emphasised the following: " ... to have a diverse workforce that is representative of the economically

active population in South Africa". There is also a viewpoint that the shift in the consumer-base of this organisation further necessitates the implementation of AA and BEE initiatives. The argument relies on the logic that the organisation cannot appear to be different from the profile of its customers.

Finally, the organisation's insistence that AA is "... something we want to do ..." is different from other types of initiatives that had to be implemented as a result of legislation. At least one interviewee said that "... I remember in the older days, when we told line managers you've got to do this or you've got to do that because of legislation, there was a lot of resistance."

6.4.3.2 Objective 3: Strategic value of communication

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

The response can be divided into three themes: Firstly, communication is seen as pivotal in this context. The following statement illustrates this view: "I think it is the most important element in the management of AA. But, communication has been neglected as a strategic priority."

Two reasons were cited to support this diagnosis of communication: The first is the fact that the different traditional communication tools (strategies) are used without much consideration of interpersonal communication (face-to-face) in this context. This view is supported with the following statement: "Those are by their nature the people-to-people phenomenon. And I think that is sometimes where communication falls flat." Secondly, the Human Resources department is seen as a role player that has stepped in to address this void. Some individuals in that department have started to address issues of diversity and tolerance regarding race, culture and religion. This fact confirms that previous comment about the lack of strategic attention to internal communication.

These efforts are applauded, while a previous diagnosis of internal communication in this context was repeated: "And I really take my hat off to them for doing those things. It also goes beyond the empirical discipline ... little blocks that have been created for different functions".

The second theme is that external communication should add value to the organisation in relation to the context of EE and BEE. The organisation has been more successful in external communication about AA than internal communication. Ideally, the gap between external communication and internal

communication efforts in this context should be addressed. Internal communication efforts ought to be managed strategically in similar fashion to external efforts.

Solutions for problems that were previously mentioned, form the third and last theme of this response. A strategic communication approach would form the basis for managing communication that should facilitate the implementation of the EEA. This solution would include the integration of the internal and external communication divisions, as well as the identification of issues.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioner**

Two themes emerged from this individual's response: Apart from viewing communication as playing a functional role, the relationship between EE and BEE was deemed important.

Firstly, communication, by means of a communication strategy pertaining to EE, is important for the success of this initiative, as illustrated by the emphasis that "its is critical". This view pertains to both the internal and external contexts. Secondly, the communication function plays an important role in terms of providing advice about technical aspects of managing communication in this context. This advice comes primarily from Internal Communication and filters through the organisation by means of the EE Forum.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

Three themes were mentioned by this interviewee: The first is the fact that this organisation only uses the term (concept) EE instead of AA. The reason for this is best explained in the following manner: "But once you utilise the concept of EE people tend to look at equity as the motivation: "AA does not gel with most people."

Secondly, since AA is "a transformational issue ... you will be confronted by fears, insecurities and expectations". And the only way to address these issues is through communication. Thirdly, the purpose of communication in this context is to create awareness and facilitate " ... a clear understanding of what the ultimate goals are of AA".

Communication also focuses on three **content aspects** in this context: "Understanding" firstly entails the legal requirements of this process. Transformation requires more understanding than what is

possible through communication “to create awareness”. This is evident from the explanation of details of the process of EE: Communication is central to the notion of “ ... keeping people informed”.

Communication serves the purpose of tying the reasons for this initiative and the technical details of the process to the audience. Secondly the business imperatives need to be communicated. Thirdly, diversity issues need to be addressed through communication. This process depends on communication since people need to learn to appreciate one another’s diversity.

Finally, the manner in which decisions about the organisation’s EE policy are taken, also involves communication. Consultation was the mode for agreeing on this policy.

6.4.3.3 Objective 5: Key role players

Both the role players and their communication responsibilities in this context are at the core of responses to this question. And, similar to the previous cases, these dimensions reflect much of the contextual realities within this organisation. Finally, a number of problems in Internal Communication were described.

Several groupings are regarded as responsible for the management of this process, and therefore also the management of information, i.e. the EE Forum, top management, a combination of Communication and Human Resources, traditional leaders as well as non-managerial employees.

The different roles of each of these groupings can be described in the following manner: Both the Human Resources and Corporate Affairs functions are responsible for communication at a strategic level. This includes the formulation of a communication strategy. The role of Internal Communication is two-fold: advice to different role players and the compilation of a communication strategy. However, the communication strategy was not written without the inputs from the EE and Human Resources departments. External Communication would focus on issues around AA that would have an impact on reputation. This is done through the Media Relations section that “ ... constantly puts out media releases about our progress on these programmes”.

Top management plays an important symbolic role. The emphasis is on external communication. The chairman of this organisation is well-known in the business community and utilises many public platforms to promote BEE issues.

A noteworthy observation is that fact that the chairman refers to both success stories and failures in this organisation during such public speaking opportunities. (The Group Manager: Public Relations wrote the majority of these speeches and is the appropriate person to make the aforementioned statement.)

Team leaders and departmental leaders represent the category of “people responsible for people”. They are obliged to implement to EE policy. The EE Forum, with sub-committees, consults with Internal Communication on content to be distributed. The sub-committee for communication has an obvious role in this respect.

Non-leadership employees must take responsibility for empowering themselves regarding this corporate issue. Empowerment occurs through communication, but “ ... in a responsible manner”. This comment also emphasised an important contextual fact regarding this organisation’s culture. Employees must engage in dialogue about corporate issues based on the set of values reflected in the corporate strategy. This reality is best reflected by the statement that “ ... this means that you don’t shy away from difficult issues – you tackle them responsibly ... In terms of AA, you speak your mind. You communicate about this in a manner that adds value to the organisation.” (These values are also reflected in the South African corporate strategy.)

The first problem for internal communication is that whereas the chairman was (and is still) very visible during external communication efforts in relation to BEE initiatives, this is not true for internal communication. Secondly, the organisation also relies on traditional internal communication strategies (tools) “ ... that are neatly tied up in little ribbons.” Employees are informed, “... but in the classical sense”. This is also the case for internal reporting on BEE issues. And this is not viewed in a favourable manner.

A suggestion was put forward for internal communication to function at a strategic level in relation to issues of EE and transformation. This would entail “ ... getting internal communication outside of its old box to look at things creatively ... ” and to use the top management team.

Finally, one of the interviewees is worried that this organisation has already labelled the process of AA under the “we are okay” banner in terms of communication, while many fears and concerns still exist. This interviewee is aware of such issues from taking part in informal communication networks: she hears many opinions while regularly joining the smokers outside the office. Her concern for the organisation stems from her observation that the emotions about AA have mellowed, but are still central to the way people react to the organisation’s EE policy.

6.4.3.4 Objective 6: Key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners

Two levels of responsibility were reported, i.e. corporate and departmental, in one of the interviews. One of the remaining interviewees has no reporting staff, while the appropriate follow-up question was not posed to the last interviewee.

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

The management of the organisation’s reputation would be the top priority of the most senior Communication practitioner. Reputation would be managed both for the internal and external contexts. However, the emphasis is on the external arena: different strategies are deployed in order to capitalise on opportunities in the media or “various business environments” (public platforms). This arena would also include issues management.

This interviewee describes the organisation’s approach to utilising these opportunities as both proactive and reactive, depending on the situation. Sometimes this organisation will take a deliberate decision to be reactive in relation to issues related to BEE. The issue of responsibilities as a divisional leader was not explored.

□ Most senior Human Resources practitioner

For this individual the emphasis is on ensuring that the correct message about EE reaches the correct employees, i.e. at corporate level. This perspective stems from the understanding that Human Resources are responsible for this change management initiative. This individual communicates in all

the traditional directions: "My role here is that I have to communicate upwards to the board, downwards to my team and sideways to internal communication in terms of trend analysis."

Upward communication occurs during board meetings. And according to the interviewee, this is a bit more complex: She points out risks in terms of the EE numbers, as well as aspects of transformation and corporate culture.

However, such meetings will not help the Human Resources function in getting the correct message across without a champion. The logic of this practice is evident from the following statement: " ... because if HR is always the talker in the boardroom, they associate EE with HR's responsibilities. I made this one guy responsible. He is a fine board member and when he talks, they listen."

This individual also liaises with the EE Forum: "They play a big role in my life because they take ownership and then they drive it." This individual's contact with Internal Communication is based on the need to address critical issues or trends, e.g. statistics for the entire organisation.

Communication would be a line responsibility for this individual since 50 employees report to her, including team leaders. Issues related to EE would be discussed during weekly meetings with team leaders, who in turn would have to share the same information verbally with their respective teams.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioner**

This interviewee has one corporate level communication responsibility that can be broken down into two dimensions: Firstly, he needs to ensure that the entire group of companies is informed of progress and the details of the process of EE. Secondly, he needs to ensure that all those responsible for this process fully understand the technical dimensions which will help the organisation to comply with legislative requirements. This dimension focuses on the dates en schedules the organisation needs to submit to the Department of Labour on an annual basis.

In reaction to a question about whether this individual has any responsibility regarding external communication, the response was: "No, that is Corporate Affairs responsibility". However, this individual works closely with Corporate Affairs and regards himself as an "internal resource" to that division. (The response to Question 5 does reveal the fact that minimal external communication

opportunities do arise, but these should not be misunderstood as “external communication” in the traditional sense.)

The issue of communication responsibilities as a divisional leader was not explored since this individual does not have staff that report to him.

6.4.3.5 Objective 7: Contribution of the Corporate Communication function

□ Most senior Communication practitioner

Nothing different was added to this aspect since the interviewee had explained the complexities of AA, internal vs. external communication and organisational transformation in response to Question 3. Reference was made also to the corporate communication strategy that governs this process, and which was developed by the Corporate Affairs division.

□ Most senior Human Resources practitioner

Again, nothing different was added to this aspect. The response to Question 3, as well as incidental reference to the Internal Communication function points to the need for advice on the management of communication through the correct media. And even though the Human Resources department is a major role player in the EE process, they would refer any communication problems back to their advisor in that department. The issue of communication advice or support in the case of external communication was not explored since the most senior Communication practitioner has mentioned in a previous response that the Human Resources department would never handle external communication.

□ Most senior Employment Equity practitioner

This individual expects the communication department to devise a communication strategy. “Whatever we communicate should fall within the framework of this strategy.” This view was repeated to emphasise the idea of aligning activities with the ideals of the corporate communication strategy. Secondly, the communication function should provide advice regarding communication models the organisation should use in order to reach specific target audiences.

Contrary to the situation with the Human Resources department, the EE department occasionally has contact with external media. But only follows up on “... breakthroughs in areas which would traditionally be dominated by males for instance.” The manager of this department utilises the publications of the Black Management Forum when appropriate.

6.4.3.6 Objective 8: Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders

The responses to this question are divided into three broad themes, i.e. the ideal set of responsibilities; current problems; and possible solutions to some of these problems. Departmental managers are responsible for the implementation of AA measures, therefore they “... must be seen to be committed to this process. And the communication of that commitment is critical”. One interviewee said that “leaders should lead by example”.

Four objectives are also associated with leadership communication within this context: alleviation of expectations; alleviation of insecurities; and the appreciation of diversity. The final objective of communication needs to involve employees in the process of planning the progress in the department in relation to the EE policy.

Employees should realise what the ultimate goal is in terms of this policy. This requirement is articulated in the following manner: “As long as it’s clear what the ultimate goal is, you can let people drive the strategy to achieve the goals”. The style of communication should also compliment the aforementioned objectives: “You need to listen to what other people’s perspectives are as a manager, because AA is not something that you can impose on people.”

Current problems are also described since the current contextual realities are very important for a case study report such as this one: leadership communication seems to work well at board level and the EE Forum. But problems occur at the levels of line and departmental management.

The Human Resources function seems to be the ideal observer of such problems in the organisation since representatives attend monthly meetings of the senior management of the different divisions. From this vantage point it seems that some line managers are not concerned with EE issues, which also means that their departmental leaders or other employees, will not receive such information. This situation contradicts the ideal of leaders that show their commitment, as was previously explained. One

individual suggested that “ ... they are like children: if they are not at risk of being punished, they are not going to worry”.

Solutions that were suggested to remedy the current situation include a return to face-to-face communication between every level of management and the various team members, as well as additional effort during the board meetings to emphasise the importance of EE issues.

The reason for supporting the notion of one-on-one communication, lies in the belief that tolerance for diversity associated with EE may be built more easily in that context. One of the interviewees concluded by saying: “I think that communication in this context would be more honest”. This view is congruent with comments about the level of honesty about emotions that are expressed in informal networks.

6.4.3.7 Objective 9: Content for internal stakeholders

Both focal points for communication content and one criterion for communication in this context are highlighted: The implementation of the EE process was not very successful when only the legislative requirements were communicated. However, this process is now based on the corporate strategy and this makes it possible to communicate the business imperatives of the EE process. This process is also regarded as a key strategic imperative. (This view is confirmed by the document that summarises the corporate strategy and which the researcher received from one of the interviewees.)

Furthermore, policy details are central to the effort of explaining exactly what different teams or departments would have to do in order to achieve the organisation's objectives on an annual basis. The next step in the process of managing communication should to use different levels of leaders more effectively. As was indicated in a previous response, this area is regarded as an “area of concern”.

Whereas the technical details of the process itself are important, at least one interviewee regards communication about the organisation's progress in this area as pivotal in internal communication efforts.

Two further ideas regarding the content are the need to address the traditional fears of white employees, as well as the “ ... sense of entitlement of PDG's” (Previously Disadvantaged Groups). As

was indicated previously, such emotions are still prevalent in the organisation. One interviewee suggested that communication about EE should focus on the business implications in order that "... emotions do not derail the process".

Finally, the criterion for communication about these matters is that it should be continuous: "One has to communicate these things so much that they become part of the thought process of individuals".

6.4.3.7 Objective 10: Content for external stakeholders

Two themes emerged in response to this question: Firstly this organisation focuses on the management of AA as part of EE, which in turn forms a component of BEE. From this organisation's perspective three dimensions are relevant when communicating about BEE, i.e. EE, Social Responsibility and Procurement: "... those three legs together and I would say one is not more important than the other."

Secondly, this organisation is hesitant to communicate too much externally about progress or achievements in the BEE arena since "... we are not leaders in this area". A motivating factor for this approach is that fact that the top management team is currently not demographically representative.

In line with a previous statement that opportunities for external communication should be utilised appropriately, the recent appointment of an individual from the designated groups at senior management level, was shared with external stakeholders. BEE also affects communication with shareholders to the degree that shareholders need to evaluate their commitment to the country and legislation in this environment.

Furthermore, the process of recruitment puts this organisation in a unique position: it focuses on strategic relationships with recruitment agencies that assist them in finding the appropriate talent. This process hinges on explaining the organisation's vision and culture to such agencies. The role of such agencies also becomes clear against the background of the skills shortage in certain specialised areas.

The issue of the impact of EE matters in terms of corporate reputation was explored through follow-up questions: The answer to this question is both "yes" and "no". This organisation regards the developments within the organisation as more than just a process of legal compliance: "... an

opportunity for us to introspect on the progress ... and [to] show to the outside world how committed we are”.

This view is congruent with previous comments about additional effort in generating the same sense of commitment to the process among some of the leadership. This organisation is aware of the fact that its numbers of PDG employees may be impressive at first glance. However, as was indicated previously, the visible senior management team does not reflect the “correct” demographics. The majority of PDG employees also work on the factory floor.

In an attempt to overcome this skills shortage the organisation had embarked on a graduate trainee programme and implement the principles of succession planning. These initiatives were also started in reaction to the phenomenon called “affirmative auction”. This was described in the following manner: “We buy these guys at management levels and they don’t stay long and they leave again for more money”. This phenomenon had become real threat to this organisation’s efforts of implementing the EEA as a business imperative.

6.4.3.9 Objective 11: Content analysis of communication strategy

As was indicated previously, only this organisation made a communication strategy for EE available for analysis in comparison with a theoretical framework. The framework was replicated exactly as it appears in Chapter 4 of this study and divided for use in a checklist format. This checklist and the comments regarding the different elements of this strategy appear in Table 6.1 (on page 186). (As was the case in the previous description of this framework, the table stretches over two pages.)

Where the communication strategy was interpreted as reflecting the category within this framework, “yes” was written in the second column. Where an aspect was just partially represented, a similar comment appeared in the second column. The discussion of the communication strategy follows the structure of the four phases in Thomas and Robertshaw’s (1999) framework:

- **Overall analysis of communication strategy**

The different elements of the communication strategy of this organisation overlap in a number of instances. All the elements that were marked as “yes” do not appear as stand-alone facts (statements).

The structure of this strategy also deserves mention in order to clarify the inferences. The strategy consists of the following components: Introduction; Purpose of communication strategy; Communication principles; Communication levels and focus; Communication tools; Communication objectives; Communication feedback and Next steps. (The labels of these components appear in exactly the same fashion as the actual strategy document.)

□ **Phase 1: Positioning the organisation**

The integration of the EE process with the traditional management functions (including corporate strategy and accountability) must occur as a result of communication. Communication about EE matters must also be integrated with the roll-out of the corporate values. (This fact confirms the relevance of the corporate strategy document.)

The communication strategy does not pertain to external communication and the traditional notions of positioning the organisation, but focuses on internal communication efforts. The internal focus confirms that the rationale for EE needs to be communicated internally. The introduction to this communication strategy explicitly refers to the fact that EE is a transformational process and not a legal burden. EE is also labelled as a business imperative.

The purpose of this communication strategy is formulated as an initiative that should " ... promote a clear understanding and acceptance of EE initiatives in the [organisation] group of companies". "Golden rules" are also described at the outset of the strategy. These rules confirm many of the statements from the interviewees, while also reflecting the ideal criteria for communication in this transformational context. These golden rules include reference to the EE forum's role; the need for continuous communication vs. "knee-jerks"; consistency with key messages; simplicity in communication and the need for dialogue.

□ **Phase 2: Management consensus**

The visibility of senior management in the communication efforts appears as an objective of the strategy. But the statement of intent (which was also mentioned previously) is described as equally important. The commitment of the senior management team is central to the statement of intent.

□ **Phase 3: Communication with employee representatives**

Apart from the four elements from Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework, this strategy also refers to two levels of communication, i.e. active and passive communication. Active communication represents interaction between different employees, while passive communication refers to "support communication", i.e. media or mechanisms like the balanced scorecard. The key requirement that is stated clearly in relation to this strategy, is that of active communication.

The strategy emphasises the need for (and importance of) face-to-face communication in this transformational context. The EE process needs to be explained by means of "face-to-face presentations".

□ **Phase 4: Ongoing communication with employees at programme level**

Although details regarding the logistics of the EE policy do not appear as part of the communication strategy, the need for communication about such details was mentioned in two of the interviews. The Statement of Intent regarding EE also reflects such details. Thus, details about the process are not neglected in this organisation's communication efforts.

The statement of intent regarding EE also described the principle of consultation with specific reference to different roles players, including the EE forum, divisional managers and Human Resources. According to the same document, the role of the organisation's leadership and Board of Management is related to monitoring of this process.

The EE committee is central to the management of the EE process, as illustrated by the numerous references to this structure. Feedback is also important in this strategy, with at least three techniques being mentioned, i.e. question and answer sessions, random e-mail audits and verbal feedback

The scope of the communication strategy adheres to the suggestions from Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework. The EE process is deemed as central to the corporate strategy and values, as suggested by the interviews. Thus the underlying idea of aligning the corporate values with this transformational effort, as suggested by the conceptual framework toward the end of Chapter 4, was also confirmed.

Table 6.1
Content analysis of Case Study 3 communication strategy

Phase 1: Positioning the organisation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication is pivotal	Yes
Content of the communication strategy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rationale for strategies that go beyond legislative requirements, including the moral, legal and business imperatives	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment by top management to Employment Equity	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Logistics of the process, including the development of strategies	Partially
<input type="checkbox"/> Statement of acknowledgement that employees may have concerns about Employment Equity	Partially
<input type="checkbox"/> Statement of acknowledgement that Affirmative Action will create greater diversity and that everyone will have the opportunity to striving toward corporate goals	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Details of how barriers to Employment Equity will be identified and how the culture of the workplace will be addressed to achieve the aforementioned	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Reassurance of the commitment of management to openness and participation in the formulation and implementation of the Employment Equity Policy and Plan	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Reassurance of regular feedback and communication relating to the progress of the Employment Equity initiatives	Yes
Phase 2: Management consensus	
<input type="checkbox"/> CEO and top management's commitment to the process must be visible	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Criteria for communication: The message must come from the top, be consistent, accurate, regular and never just a once-off message that may be perceived as "flavour of the month".	Yes
Phase 3: Communication with employee representatives	
<input type="checkbox"/> Overall goal: To obtain the full support of all members of this group before proceeding any further.	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee structures: Workplace forums, trade unions representatives and other elected bodies of Employees	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Approach to communication: Never present a mere blueprint for the way forward Seek input regarding strategies to achieve Employment Equity within the parameters of the legislative framework.	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Suggested mechanisms: Discussion groups	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Suggested discussion topics: Trade union philosophy and vision of Employment Equity Company philosophy and vision of Employment Equity Developing a shared vision of Employment Equity Legislative requirements Employment Equity Committee, including its roles and responsibilities	Yes

Phase 4: Ongoing communication with employees at programme level	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tactics: One or more senior managers must be present at face to face discussions	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Contents: Key points of legislative requirements Distinctions between the terms "Employment Equity", "Affirmative Action" as well as "Leading" or "Managing" diversity The rationale for Employment Equity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and regional demographics • Business imperatives • The concept of nation building • Legislative requirements 	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Consideration of the target audience: Fully representative of the workforce in terms of race, gender and disability Interpreters should be used if language barriers exist Discussions should be pitched at an appropriate level of complexity in relation to each discussion group	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication climate: Trust: Employees should feel free to raise their fears and questions freely	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication channels: Regular reports from the management board; monthly management reports; regular briefings from the CEO in person; monthly top and line management feedback in person; quarterly feedback from employee representatives; pamphlets on the EEA policy; regular items in internal newsletters; highlighting statistics on and progress made towards EE in all management reports; publication of milestones achieved in special reports; intranet updates; open discussion forums; notice-board updates; hot lines; videos; road shows by senior management to state and demonstrate commitment to EE.	Yes

The responses from the interviews in Case Study 3 confirm that the dimensions which appear in the written strategy, are actually the principles that govern the practice of communication about EE. This in itself does not mean that concerns about the success of the organisation's communication efforts do not exist. Again, such concerns were reported in the preceding section and will be compared to the facts from the other two organisations in the following section.

6.5 COMPARISON OF CASES AND INTERPRETATIONS

The comparison of three cases in this study aims to highlight pertinent similarities and differences in relation to each objective in order that inferences may follow. Some of these similarities and differences are presented in table format. The challenge of providing an interpretation for the evidence lies in proving the validity/plausibility thereof.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002:240) the challenge in qualitative research is the fact that researchers want to “... inspire confidence in readers ...” regarding their interpretation of reality. No single interpretation can thus be regarded as the only correct interpretation. The same authors illustrate this principle by claiming that “... usually, the ones that the researchers choose to develop are those that they find most plausible, insightful, and/or useful.”

Evidential argumentation is appropriate in this exploratory study and is based on the constant comparison of evidence with theory (Mason, 2002:176). Inferences follow from this process. The inferences are aimed at an exploratory description of the research phenomenon, i.e. the management of communication about affirmative action as transformational phenomenon in South African organisations. The findings that form the basis of the overarching description are also presented per objective. Depending on the nature of the objective, findings are compared within cases or across cases (as illustrated in Chapter 5).

6.5.1 Objective 2: The purpose of Affirmative Action (A comparison across cases)

Four central themes emerged across the cases in relation to Question 1, i.e. the preferred terminology used in this transformational context, reasons for implementing AA measures, the re-definition of stakeholders, and implications for the management of communication.

□ Preferred terminology

The concepts “Employment Equity” or “Black Economic Empowerment” are preferred above “affirmative action” when referring to the process of transforming the workplace. The words “Affirmative Action” still evoke emotional reactions, as suggested by De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000). But AA measures are still regarded as the tools through which this transformational process will come to fruition. This conceptualisation confirms the definition of AA as an approach that is embedded in the Black Economic Empowerment approach, as described in Chapter 3.

These facts also confirm that the manner in which employees perceive the process is still a “hidden barrier” and a factor to be considered when planning communication to bring about the successful implementation of EE related policies. The manner in which employees perceive the process is influenced by the efforts of both their employers and sentiments in wider society. This logic was cited

as one of the challenges that South African organisations face in relation this specific transformational effort, towards the end of Chapter 3. The specific terminology used in each case study can be linked to the corporate philosophy about the underlying ideals of this process. These findings confirm the notion of a set of corporate values that influences strategy implementation, such as the Power-Control model (Grunig, 1992:23) and the conceptual framework for managing communication about AA, as described toward the end of Chapter 4.

The negative emotions about the both the terminology and underlying process are still primarily that of fear among whites and entitlement among non-whites. Negative emotions (perceptions) still exist despite the supposed efforts of all three participating organisations' effort to communicate that their EE plans or strategies are not aimed at summarily reducing the number of white employees or exclusively catering for non-whites.

None of the organisations approaches AA as a means to effect reversed racism (or discrimination). The focus is on the broader development of the country's economically active population. These facts were cited as "problems" (complicating factors) by De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000) and earlier research by IDASA (cf. 1995).

□ **Reasons for implementing Affirmative Action measures**

While "reversed discrimination" was not cited as a reason for implementing AA measures within an EE strategy, organisations argue that AA measures should "redress the imbalances of the past and beyond". The emphasis in all three cases is on the development of both employees (directly) and society (indirectly).

Secondly, EE is a business imperative for all three organisations. These views reflect the guidelines within the broader Code for Good Practice for the EEA (1999) and the advice from Thomas and Robertshaw (cf.1999). Slight differences exist in the manner in which interviewees at the three organisations articulated these views, but the collective message reflects the aforementioned ideas. Furthermore, the views that were expressed in each organisation were congruent with the emphasis of a particular corporate philosophy.

- **Re-definition of stakeholders**

AA poses unique challenges to the management of stakeholders, as illustrated by the fact that all three organisations view external stakeholders as important to their commercial success and the management of their reputation. Two organisations view the EE process as important in order to reflect the demographics of their consumer-base. Their understanding of the reasons for implanting AA measures extend beyond the legislative requirements and focuses on the realisation that their commercial success is dependent on their credibility as a “representative employer”.

Secondly, all three organisations expressed the view that the different pieces of “top down” transformational legislation (as was described in Chapter 3) are closely related to one another. And the premise of being a responsible (legally compliant) employer and business, implies that the organisations from the automotive industry have to re-define the status of external stakeholders. One of these organisations treat their dealership network exactly the same as employees (internal stakeholders) in terms of communication about the transformational effort.

These findings confirm the importance of conceptualising a stakeholder map for strategically managed communication (cf. Steyn & Puth, 2000), as well as Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) emphasis on the consideration of stakeholders in the positioning of the organisation by means of the framework for an EE communication strategy. Finally, the concepts of interdependence and disappearance of boundaries are also reflected in these responses, thus supporting the need for a re-definition of stakeholders, as proposed by Post *et al.* (cf. 2002).

The obvious question is whether organisations from different sectors will have to re-define their stakeholders in different ways, in similar fashion to the two organisations from the automotive industry.

- **Broad implications for the management of corporate communication**

Corporate culture is the articulation of the corporate philosophy in all three cases and affects the manner in which the EE strategy details are packaged. The implications for the management of communication are numerous for both external and internal communication.

- **External communication: Recruitment**

Organisations need to recruit from the designated groups and thus need to be seen as creating job opportunities that will benefit wider society. This aspect seems to provide organisations with an enormous challenge.

The promulgation of the EEA or BEEA has not led to the immediate creation of job opportunities that can absorb all the suitable candidates (or candidates that have suitable potential) into the formal sector. Again, the interdependence between organisations and traditional external stakeholders is highlighted, as proposed by the chaos perspective in Chapter 2.

- **Credibility of the process**

One of the most senior Communication practitioners argued that the credibility of the whole process might be jeopardised as a result of the expectations that were created. Organisations implement EE strategies, but can realistically only “transform” the workplace incrementally and not create thousands of new jobs. His argument also highlights the fact that fears and other emotions that are associated with the process of EE appointments extends beyond employees that are already part of organisations.

This perspective points to the fact that negative emotions toward the process also extend beyond whites (non-designated groups). Such negative sentiments should also be considered in relation to the other challenges that organisations face, as described towards the end of Chapter 3. Furthermore, only speculation is possible about the impact of such negative sentiments for Government’s communication and implementation (monitoring) efforts: the long-term credibility and feasibility of the EEA might be questioned.

- **Reputation management**

Another important dimension of external communication is that of corporate reputation management. Competition between organisations in the same sector appears to be rife, thus highlighting the need for the management of external communication about achievements and failures in the arena of EE. One of the organisations cites the development of its workforce as a competitive edge on an external website – a fact that underscores the growing potential for this aspect to contribute to corporate

reputation. From the descriptions in all three cases, it seems that the press agency model as defined by Grunig (cf. 1992) is predominantly utilised for external communication in this transformational context.

□ Criteria for internal communication

Secondly, the criterion for the management of internal communication is sensitivity. The emotive nature of the process and the strategic importance of the process make such a criterion non-negotiable. This criterion can be interpreted as a consideration in the formulation of a communication strategy that focuses on this transformational context. Communication should be utilised to help individuals and groups "... get beyond the emotions ..." and then integrated them into the various business contexts. Communication is thus viewed as instrumental to the sharing of information about the process and business focus of each organisation. These facts support the conceptualisation of communication in a transformational context, as described in both Chapters 2 and 4.

6.5.2 Objective 3: Strategic value of communication (A comparison across cases)

Differences and similarities exist in the way organisations view the strategic value of communication (Question 2). The premise that specific contextual realities will have an impact on the perceptions about or the actual management of communication in this context was confirmed by the responses from the nine interviewees. Secondly, all interviewees did not interpret the concept "strategic value" in the same manner, which may also explain the varied responses. (The reality of different interpretations is also evident in the discussion of Objective 4.) The differences between the collective views per case study are best illustrated by an overview of the key aspects:

□ Case Study 1

This organisation emphasises the fact that communication should be managed in a "narrow" strategic manner, which specifically excludes "PR" or publicity-driven efforts. Communication plays an important role insofar as information needs to be disseminated and reflect the underlying "spirit of the EEA". The criteria for communication that were mentioned are thoroughness and consistency that are based on a systemic approach. All communication activities related to EE also need to reflect the values that are

associated with this organisation's trademark. The need for balance between the interests of different stakeholders is again highlighted by these facts.

These facts again confirm the notion of communication actions that need to be aligned with the organisation's values, as was proposed in the conceptual framework for the management of communication in this context, as described toward the end of Chapter 4. The selective use of external communication opportunities, also confirm the notion of applying the press agency model strategically.

□ Case Study 2

This organisation emphasises the importance of communication in relation to the management of perceptions about the organisation. This is a strategic issue since the organisation was previously managed by white, Afrikaans males and perceptions exist that a "new order" would lead to the collapse of all systems. Perceptions play an important role in the organisation since it is part of local government and is both under pressure from municipal customers and political parties. Communication needs to clarify the intentions and details of AA to employees, while helping them to appreciate diversity.

This organisation's emphasis on external communication, as well as the criticism against the lack of internal communication focus, needs to be interpreted against the background of its unique organisational position as a municipality. Communication of the strategic intent of this organisation is as complex as for the other organisations, while party politics affect the organisation more directly. Conversely, the importance of credibility among consumers was also highlighted since this organisation needs to make commercial sense – something that is arguably impossible without consumer trust.

□ Case Study 3

The last organisation regards communication as pivotal in the internal context. Employees should be informed about the business and moral imperatives of these measures, as well as the technical details of the implementation process.

However, a gap exists between this organisation's internal and external communication efforts in this context. This organisation's approach to the management of external communication is somewhat different from that in Case Study 1: communication opportunities are actively sought, with the chairman

and board members playing an important symbolic role in this context. The practical value of Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) recommendations regarding visible commitment from senior leadership in this context is thus confirmed.

This organisation's approach to external communication is closely associated with the press agency model and aim to manage the reputation of the organisation in this context. The gap between internal and external efforts defies the logic of aligning all communication with the transformational vision, as per the conceptual framework for managing communication in this context (toward the end of Chapter 4). At least one interviewee said that the communication strength of this organisation lies in the external arena, while internal communication needs to be strategically re-invented.

However, the corporate focus on individual empowerment (also through information and communication) and the EE communication strategy seem to provide a vehicle for internal stakeholders to be as informed as external stakeholders. The culture of individual empowerment resembles elements of self-directed leadership within the chaos perspective, as described by Johnson (cf. 1995) and Wheatley (cf. 1999).

6.5.3 Objective 4: Strategic value of communication (A comparison across designations)

The overarching inference about Objective 4 is that differences and similarities do exist in the views the three interviewees have about the strategic value of communication in their respective organisations, but also from the specific vantage points of the interviewees. Both the Human Resources and EE specialists focused on the functionality of communication, while the Communication specialists referred to the strategic value in both the internal and external contexts. One explanation for this difference may lie in the expert knowledge that Communication practitioners have in comparison to the other interviewees. This differentiation reflects the conceptualisation of the advisor and expert prescribed role for a corporate communication manager, as defined by Grunig (cf. 1992).

□ Most senior Communication practitioners

According to the most senior Communication practitioners, communication has strategic value in the transformational context of EE for the management of internal and external stakeholders. The

discussion of similarities and differences between the responses from the most senior Communication practitioners follow after Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Communication practitioners' perspectives on the strategic value of communication

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Nature of external communication	1.	Perceptions about affirmative action	1.	Importance of communication
2.	Comparison with other organisations	2.	Addressing fears	2.	Reasons for lack of strategic focus on communication
		3.	Central message about the process	3.	Communication tools
		4.	Inclusive communication	4.	Leading department
		5.	Structure of communication process	5.	Remedies for situation
				6.	Gap between internal and external communication efforts

o Similarities

Communication is regarded as central to the management of this transformational context. The purpose of communication is to share (disseminate) information, either in the internal or external context, thereby facilitating understanding among different stakeholders. Feedback was mentioned by means various examples and proves that the organisations do not rely on one-way communication only in the internal communication context. Some degree of symmetry appears to govern internal communication of all three organisations. However, since the degree to which different models are applied, was not measured, only theoretical speculation about this aspect is possible. Communication efforts appear to be predominantly two-way asymmetrical as defined by Grunig (cf. 1992).

Only speculation about the predominant model for the management of internal communication (as conceptualised by Grunig (cf.1992) is appropriate. The degree to which each (or all) the organisations facilitate feedback and/or the degree of satisfaction with feedback among different stakeholders, could have contributed to a more definite inference about this matter.

The second similarity is that communication is utilised in the external context. The purpose of external communication regarding this transformational effort is to inform stakeholders about progress and to contribute to corporate reputation. Responses from all three organisations indicate that achievements in the area of BEE or EE are quite important, but also a potential minefield. None of the organisations regard their achievements as exemplary and warn against publicity about “window-dressing” achievements. These facts reflect the sentiments and warnings of De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000) about the lessons that organisations had learnt in prior attempts to implement AA measures. These responses can also be interpreted as representing the corporate philosophies that transformation cannot and should not be based on attempts to get the EE numbers right in terms of legal compliance.

The paradox of external communication about EE and BEE matters seems to confirm the fact that the credibility of both organisations and the societal transformational process are at stake. The importance of a positive reputation in relation to these matters point to two interpretations: reports on the progress in these areas are key elements of the legislative framework while progress has become part of the framework against which organisations are judged in the minds of external stakeholders.

- **Differences**

The management of internal communication was cited as a weakness by two of the organisations. In both instances the Corporate Communication function was criticised for neglecting internal communication to a certain degree. However, such criticism should be interpreted against the background of the complexities (challenges) of external communication. A possible solution for the apparent (or growing) tension between internal and external communication might be found in the alignment of all communication activities, as suggested in the conceptual framework for the management of communication toward the end of Chapter 4.

- **Most senior Human Resources practitioners**

Similarities and differences also exist in the perspectives that the most senior Human Resources practitioners have about the strategic value of communication, as illustrated by Table 6.3 (on the next page) and the subsequent discussions.

Table 6.3

Human Resources practitioners' perspectives on the strategic value of communication

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Affirmative Action as transformational process	1.	Transformational goal	1.	Transformational goal
2.	Communication as a tool	2.	Understanding the process	2.	Understanding the process
3.	Criteria for communication	3.	Emotional nature of process		
		4.	EE forum		

- Similarities

Communication is also regarded as the one element that is central to this transformational process. Apart from being the vehicle through which meaning is shared, the emotions around EE matters are cited as the reason for valuing communication. Emotive issues are addressed by means of communication. Communication serves both a technical and strategic purpose: information about the process needs to be disseminated to internal stakeholders in order to facilitate understanding of the transformational goal (vision). This logic reflects the conceptualisation of "transformational change communication", as described in Chapter 1.

- Differences

One individual from Case Study 2 argued that his work experience has taught him that communication is vital to all dimensions of organisational life, not just this transformational context. This response was different from the responses by the other eight interviewees. This individual's personal philosophy about leadership and the need for communication (information) was the motivation for the responses to Question 3. This individual's responses reflected the ideas by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001) about the transformational leadership, i.e. the "knowing, doing and being" dimensions.

- Most senior EE practitioners

Responses from these interviewees highlight the fact that any individual's vantage point and unique organisational demands influence the contribution they make to the management of this process. As

with a number of other questions, the responses from the most senior EE practitioners to Question 3 were relatively brief. The differences and similarities between the views of the three most senior EE practitioners are also apparent from Table 6.4 and the discussion of the themes. The most senior EE practitioners seem to emphasise the legal requirements (both content and procedural) more than the other groups of interviewees. The strategic value of communication is thus interpreted as the sharing (dissemination) of details about the EE process and/or strategy. And in comparison to the most senior Communication practitioners, this group of interviewees do not mention communication in relation to the management of external stakeholders.

Table 6.4

Employment Equity practitioners' perspectives on the strategic value of communication

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Importance of communication	1.	Communication department	1.	Terminology
2.	Understanding	2.	Own role	2.	Transformational communication
3.	Beyond legislative requirements			3.	Purpose of communication
				4.	Content
				5.	Understanding
		6.	Business imperative		
				7.	Diversity
				8.	Model of communication

o Similarities

Communication is central to the process of sharing meaning, but with specific emphasis on the clarification of the terminology that is associated with EE. This emphasis confirms the fact that confusion still exists about the terminology and also confirms that communication with internal stakeholders about the matter is an organisational responsibility.

Furthermore, communication should be utilised to share more information than just the legal requirements or processes. Aspects that were mentioned in both Case Study 1 and Case Study 3 are the content of the organisation's EE strategies, EE as business imperative and the appreciation of

diversity. These aspects also reflect all dimensions of the framework for an EE communication strategy that was proposed by Thomas and Robertshaw (cf.1999).

- Differences

The responses from the interviewee of Case Study 2 were limited to the role of the Corporate Communication function in this context. Several inferences may be drawn from these responses, as is the case for many of the responses of all interviews. The most plausible inference is that this individual views the Corporate Communication function as experts in the field, thus she would not have to get directly involved in the management of communication. A response to related question confirms the aforementioned interpretation.

6.5.4 Objective 5: Key role players (A comparison across cases)

- Departmental co-operation

The departments that are responsible for the management of the EE process are Human Resources, Corporate Planning, EE and Corporate Communication. The combination of efforts between these departments depends on the unique needs of every organisation. The objective of co-operation between these departments is the effective implementation of EE strategies and policies, as well as the transformation of corporate values.

The co-operation between the aforementioned departments suggest that the theoretical notion of integrated communication (between all organisational divisions) is perhaps not too unrealistic.

But it is important to note that integration also seems to be a key factor in the success of change communication in the three organisations: without integration, ownership of the EE strategy and/or process may be associated with only one department instead of focusing on the transformation of the entire organisation. (The comment from the most senior Human Resources practitioner confirms this fact.) Furthermore, the co-operation between these three departments, confirms the appropriateness of the theoretical sampling within each case study.

□ Leadership

All levels of leadership are reportedly responsible for some dimension of communication, i.e. chairman to team leader. At least one organisation follows the philosophy that all employees should empower themselves and not wait for formal leaders to inform them about corporate and other issues. This approach would also apply to the context of AA measures.

These facts indicate the importance of transformational leaders and leadership in this context, as proposed by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001), while also validating the notion of self-directed leadership that was articulated by Wheatley (cf. 1999). Furthermore, these facts support the notion that corporate values influence the type of leadership and/or degree of empowerment of employees, as proposed in the various frameworks for the management of communication about EE (in Chapter 4).

6.5.5 Objective 6: Key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and EE practitioners (A comparison across cases)

Both corporate level responsibilities and departmental responsibilities exist for the three groups of interviewees. And, as was indicated previously, the unique realities within every organisation influence the scope of responsibilities or the views of these individuals. The similarities and differences are also presented in table format.

□ Most senior Communication practitioners

A comparison of departmental responsibilities is not possible since evidence was not collected in relation to this dimension in two of the interviews. However, the inferences about the corporate level responsibilities may potentially contribute to the understanding of the strategic role of the most senior Communication practitioners in the context of EE. Other similarities are summarised in Table 6.5 (on the next page). No differences were reported:

Table 6.5

Key responsibilities of Communication practitioners

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
Corporate		Corporate		Corporate	
1.	Approach to communication	1.	Celebrate achievements	1.	Corporate reputation
2.	Motivation for approach to communication	2.	Unique organisational positioning	2.	Approach to external communication
Departmental		Departmental		Departmental	
1.	Information dissemination	None reported		None reported	
2.	Details of content				
3.	Empowerment of staff				

- o Similarities

All three interviewees agree that the management of communication according to the corporate philosophy (approach) to communication, as well as reputation management are inherently part of their corporate level responsibility in the context of communication about EE matters. The description of these responsibilities resemble the notion of three levels of activity (technician, manager and strategist) as proposed by Steyn and Puth (cf. 2000) and elaborated upon by Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003).

The credibility of the EE process internally is also important in all organisations – this is one of the reasons for managing communication about EE. The implementation of certain external communication actions, which are traditionally viewed as technical responsibilities, were cited as a corporate responsibility. At least one interviewee referred to the utilisation of media opportunities as a responsibility that resorts exclusively with him. However, he also stressed that his organisation views this approach to the management of external communication as strategic.

The aforementioned example illustrates the notion that all communication actions have strategic potential, depending on the needs of the organisation. The underlying principle of flexibility in strategy and structure, which is central to the chaos perspective, seems to be implemented in this manner.

Once again elements from the conceptual framework that was proposed for the management of communication in this transformational context toward the end of Chapter 4, seems to be realistic in terms of the requirement of flexibility and adaptability in terms of role players and roles. The departmental responsibilities of the interviewee in Case Study 1 were reported in a previous section of this chapter and does not need further clarification.

□ **Most senior Human Resources practitioners**

Whereas the previous group of interviewees referred to communication responsibilities, the second group referred to leadership responsibilities. The similarities and differences per case are also reflected in a table, while these aspects are also explored by means of a discussion and Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

Key responsibilities of Human Resources practitioners

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
Corporate		Corporate		Corporate	
1.	Understanding target-setting	1.	Custodian of process	1.	Correctness of message
		2.	Leadership philosophy	2.	Multiple directions of communication
				3.	Board level communication
				4.	Employment Equity Forum
Departmental		Departmental		Departmental	
1.	EE Targets	1.	Personal growth and transformation	1.	Information dissemination
2.	Identification of external recruitment talent				
3.	Setting an example				

○ **Similarities**

The one responsibility that the most senior Human Resources practitioners share is that of assisting the entire organisation in understanding the EE process, whether it be by means of target-setting or being a custodian of the process. This responsibility also explains why the Human Resources

department has taken the lead in terms of managing communication (information dissemination) in two of the three organisations.

Yet, these departments do not necessarily want to claim that the EE process as their exclusive responsibility. At least one interviewee warned that when the EE process is perceived as “ ... being an HR responsibility ... ” that the responsibility for the implementation of the strategy is not perceived as the responsibility of the entire organisation.

- Differences

The most senior Human Resources practitioner in Case Study 2 emphasised the nature of and need for leadership in this transformational context. This individual regards the responsibility of setting an example for others, at both corporate and departmental levels, as critical to his leadership. The underlying philosophy of this individual reflects the definition of Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001) of transformational leadership encompassing the dimensions of “knowing”, “being” and “doing”.

According to the same interviewee, communication about the EE process should assist employees in understanding that transformation related to the process is not necessarily easy. The approach that communication should help employees internalise the realities of the transformational process, echoes the views from De Beer (cf. 2002), as well as French and Delahaye (cf. 1996), about individual transition.

The interviewee from Case Study 3 is the only one to report that the communication responsibilities extend to all directions and levels of the organisation. Once again, the inference could be made that the structure of this organisation influences the sphere of responsibilities of each interviewee. In this organisation, the most senior Human Resources practitioner is central in terms of information dissemination and awareness of the process.

Since these individuals all play an important role in this context, the notion of flexibility regarding communication seems to transcend the mode of thinking in which the Communication department would be the almost exclusive division responsible for communication. As was indicated in both Chapters 2 and 3, the most realistic framework (model) for the management of communication in

relation to the EE strategy should be based on integrated thinking across all dimensions of the organisation.

□ **Most senior Employment Equity practitioners**

The most senior Employment Equity practitioners only reported corporate level responsibilities. And the differences between the responses are once again a result of both the different corporate perspectives on the management of EE, and the level of involvement or knowledge of a particular interviewee, indicated in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7

Key responsibilities of the Employment Equity practitioners

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
Corporate:		Corporate:		Corporate:	
1.	Legal compliance	1.	Information disseminator	1.	Progress
2.	Alignment of communication strategy content			2.	Technical details

○ **Similarities**

These individuals regard their role as disseminator of information to the rest of the organisation as the first priority. Without this function the technical details about EE legislation will not reach the rest of the organisation. This fact points to the need for co-operation between the three departments that were included in the study, i.e. Communication, Human Resources and EE.

○ **Differences**

The interviewee from Case Study 1 was the only one to refer to the contribution to the communication strategy, which confirms the fact that the three departments (included in the study) work closely together on the formulation of the aforementioned strategy. The interviewee from Case Study 3 was the only one to refer to the importance of communicating details about the organisation's progress to the rest of the organisation, and occasionally indirectly to external stakeholders.

The inference about these responses is that communication is also very important to these designated individuals. The fact that such individuals have unique technical knowledge about the legislative process and requirements makes them the proverbial linchpins in the trilogy of departments. Without this knowledge, the transformational vision will arguably not come to fruition: all leaders in all three of the organisations are regarded as having a responsibility in the implementation of the EE strategy. They need to be empowered with the operational details in order for their departments to contribute to the strategy in the desired manner. Thus information about the legal and organisational requirements flows in a rather mechanical/linear manner.

From these facts, it seems appropriate to describe the corporate responsibilities of the most senior EE practitioners as slightly more important than those of the other two designations. The corporate responsibilities of the other two designation, however are also critical in this context, but cannot be executed without the knowledge from the EE practitioners.

6.5.6 Objective 7: Contribution of the Corporate Communication function (A comparison across cases)

Views regarding the contribution of the Corporate Communication function in this context also point to similarities and differences across cases, as summarised in Table 6.8 (on the next page). The overarching theme is that the Corporate Communication function is seen as central to the management of the process.

The Corporate Communication function should not take the lead in this context, but provide support, as was also suggested in relation to Objectives 5 and 6. The Human Resources and EE interviewees in all three cases further agree that their expectations about the Corporate Communication function includes advice about various strategic and tactical issues.

- **Strategic advice/involvement**

The alignment of communication activities (either internal or external) with the corporate strategy is important to Case Study 1, while the alignment of communication activities into a communication strategy is important to both Case Studies 2 and 3. Only Case Study 1 indicated that the Corporate Communication function should understand the complexities of AA *per se* in order to be involved in the

management of the process in the rest of the organisation. This requirement could be interpreted as both a strategic and tactical asset: the context will depend on the understanding about the potential strategic and tactical contribution that this function can make.

Table 6.8

The contribution of the Corporate Communication function

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Alignment with corporate trademark	1.	Management of perceptions	1.	Communication strategy formulation
2.	Influence on corporate culture	2.	Balancing of interests	2.	Communication models advice
3.	Technical and strategic advice	3.	Information dissemination	3.	Leading department
4.	Understanding Affirmative Action	4.	Alignment of communication	4.	Details of plan
5.	Combination of expertise	5.	Leading department		
		6.	Details of plan		

- Tactical advice/involvement

This function should provide advice to others, including the Human Resources and EE departments on the most appropriate media to be used in various contexts. Here the differences between the needs of three organisations is most apparent: communication with employees on the factory requires the utilisation of different tools and techniques than an organisation in which most employees are office-bound and have access to e-mail.

Furthermore, advice from this department would include the planning of communication in relation to the different communication models. These responses reflect the realisation that the a communication strategy is important to the process and that the Corporate Communication function would be best equipped to help other strategic role players to integrate their ideas/contributions into such a strategy.

6.5.7 Objective 8: Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders (A comparison across cases)

Similarities exist across organisations in terms of the communication responsibilities that other departmental leaders have in the context of implementing AA measures. Again, the contextual realities

within each organisation dictate the expectations about what these leaders have to do. These communication responsibilities are summarised in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9

Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders across cases

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Dissemination of information	1.	Articulate needs	1.	Departmental leaders (Key performance areas)
2.	Facilitation of feedback	2.	Key performance areas	2.	Objectives
3.	EE Target-setting (Key performance areas)	3.	Communication is pivotal	3.	Transformational goal
				4.	Communication style

- Similarities

- Information dissemination

The first theme in relation to Question 6 is that all departmental (divisional) leaders have a responsibility for managing communication about the organisation's EE strategies. And the underlying assumption is that such leaders need to share information about the process either directly or indirectly. "Indirect" communication responsibilities are those that convey a message about their own and the organisation's commitment to the process of transformation.

- Employment Equity target-setting

Two responsibilities are central across all three organisations: the responsibility for target-setting feedback about the process. Target-setting needs to occur at departmental or divisional levels in all three organisations with the achievement of such targets being evaluated by means of performance management systems - this aspect is not applied in the same manner in all organisations. The latter is not a focal point of this study and was not further explored. Once again, the inclusion of target-setting in performance management reflect the guidelines from the Code for Good Practice for the EEA (1999).

□ Differences

Two expectations also exist in two of the organisations: leaders should facilitate this process on a more individual (one-on-one) level with employees, while the communication responsibilities of leaders need to be more structured and formalised. The latter was proposed as an element of the communication strategy that is currently being developed.

The last fact points to the potential of a communication strategy to articulate and align specific spheres of responsibility and specific types of messages, as suggested by one of the interviewee in Case Study 1 – an ideal which could be facilitated by means of the conceptual framework, as proposed toward the end of Chapter 4.

6.5.8 Objective 9: Content for internal stakeholders (A comparison across cases)

The content that is currently communicated to internal stakeholders reflect all the dimension that are described by the frameworks for the management of communication in this context and which appear in Chapter 4. These are (in no particular order): commitment to the process; the business and moral imperatives of the process; details of the EE strategy; issues that pertain to the climate for this process; the appreciation of diversity; EE targets; and misnomers about the process among both designated and non-designated groups. These themes are summarised in Table 6.10 (on the next page).

Again, the corporate focus at each organisation has an impact in the issue(s) that are deemed important in relation to internal stakeholders. For Case Study 1, AA is entrenched in the values to the extent that it has become “a way of life”. However, it does not mean that no skepticism about or resistance to the process exists. Thus communication must be continuous in order to remind all decision-makers that talent need to be sourced from the pool of expertise from the designated groups when appointments need to be made. Subtle forms of skepticism and resistance were also mentioned in both of the other organisations, as was indicated in the previous section of the chapter.

Case Study 2 has undergone a dramatic transformation and the unique problems were already emphasised elsewhere. However, the last organisation was the only one to refer to the dangers of complacency about internal communication in relation to the context of EE. This warning suggests that communication needs to be managed strategically, continuously and not support the idea that “ ...

when we have achieved our targets things will go back to normal ... ". (The last comment was made by the most senior Human Resources practitioner of Case Study 3.)

Table 6.10

Content for internal stakeholders across cases

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Communication climate	1.	Details of measures	1.	Importance of corporate strategy
2.	Hidden barriers	2.	Rationale for process	2.	Details of policy
		3.	Organisational context	3.	Progress of process
		4.	Typical problems	4.	Balancing of interests
5.	Centrality of communication				
	Current content	No distinction made between ideal and current contents		No distinction made between ideal and current contents	
1.	External recruitment				
2.	Affirmative Action is a way of life				
3.	Dispelling misnomers about the process				
	Ideal content				
1.	Appreciation of diversity				

6.5.9 Objective 10: Content for external stakeholders (A comparison across cases)

All three organisations agree about five themes that are communicated to external stakeholders, while differences exist about two dimensions. These are summarised in Table 6.11 (on the next page).

The five themes that are currently communicated to external stakeholders reflect the contents that are communicated to internal stakeholders. A noteworthy point is the emphasis that organisations place on not falling into the trap of achieving EE targets for the sake of "window-dressing". The genuine commitment to the process is the direct opposite to "window-dressing", as proposed by Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999).

Table 6.11

Content for external stakeholders across cases

Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Case Study 3	
1.	Organisational commitment	1.	Alignment of content	1.	Embedded nature of affirmative action
2.	Implications for stakeholders	2.	Credibility among customers	2.	Approach to external communication
3.	Approach to external communication	3.	Department of Labour	3.	Strategic relationships
4.	Influence on corporate reputation			4.	Corporate reputation
				5.	Corporate commitment
		6.	Variety of initiatives		

EE also influences the definition of stakeholders and the management of the organisations' relationship with such groups. As was indicated previously, the traditional boundaries between so-called external and internal stakeholders are re-defined within this context since all three organisations are very dependent on these relationships. It would seem that the organisations need to be seen as entities that only engage with business partners (the term is loosely used), thus requiring a different approach to the management of communication about transformational issues. This situation highlights both the importance of the legislative requirements of the BEEA, but arguably also the prominence of responsible corporate governance, as suggested by the King Report II (cf. 2002).

These organisations, however, follow different approaches to the management of communication in the external context. Their approach to external communication is influenced by the corporate philosophies and priorities.

The organisations that participated in this study seem to be concerned about their commercial survival in relation to both internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. And this fact highlights the complexity of balancing the needs of the organisation and those of stakeholders within an ever-changing environment.

6.5.10 Objective 11: Content analysis of communication strategy (A comparison across cases)

Organisation 1 is currently developing a communication strategy, while Organisation 3 is already managing this process according to a communication strategy that closely resembles the requirements (criteria) as formulated by Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999).

The implications of having and utilising such a communication strategy are evident from the responses by the interviewees in Case Study 3. There seems to be a higher degree of synergy between the views and actions of these three interviewees than in the other two organisations. Synergy in this context refers to the degree of similarity in understanding the value of communication, different areas of application and the strategic vision of the organisation. The fact that the three interviewees of this organisation have a similar view on several matters (issues) may also be attributed to the fact that the internal communication strategy is known and utilised by all.

Divergent perspectives exist about the strategic value of communication in both Case Studies 1 and 2. These views may be attributed to a number of factors. One of these factors may be the lack of a communication strategy that exclusively addresses EE matters, thus serving as the central element in all communication efforts.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The overarching conclusion about the way in which South African organisations manage communication about AA, within the context of EE and as a transformational phenomenon, rests on three key elements: One, the unique corporate culture of the participating organisations influence the manner in which the most senior Communication, Human Resources and EE practitioners and departments value and utilise communication in relation to the EE process. Two, the unique corporate values and commercial interests of each organisation appear to be the two factors that influence the model or approach to the management of communication in both the internal and external contexts. Three, communication and leadership are pivotal to the management of EE strategies and the transformation of values that will contribute to the creation of an equitable workplace.

These findings contribute to a holistic understanding of the research phenomenon, i.e. the management of communication about EE. A thin line exists between communication efforts for legal compliance and for corporate transformation: balancing these objectives seems to lie at the heart of all communication across organisations. Communication, as a vehicle for transformation, further serves both tactical and strategic objectives. The predominant model for communication in this context is two-way asymmetrical since organisations has an obvious obligation regarding information dissemination. Feedback is accommodated by means of various mechanisms, but are dependent on the specific realities of each organisation. Finally, all leaders in organisations are tasked with the transformational effort, with the emphasis on hierarchical structures and the dissemination of information.