

**COMMUNICATING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DURING
TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE:
A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY PERSPECTIVE**

by

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Life is a great partner.
Its demands are not unreasonable.
A great capacity for change lives in every one of us.

Margaret Wheatley

Declaration

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

Anné Leonard

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Abstract

South Africa is often described as a nation in transition since the societal and political transformation is an ongoing process. The South African employment environment is one area that now boasts a number of laws that are interrelated and aimed at achieving transformation of the workplace, as well as the economic empowerment of those who had previously been victims of racial segregation. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 is regarded as central to the appreciation of equality of individuals in the workplace, irrespective of race, gender and/or disability.

The management of communication is central to the process of corporate transformation as a result of this Act. (This fact is confirmed by the emphasis in the Act itself on organisations' duty to inform and consult with stakeholders and several guideline documents.) Since previous research had pointed to broadly defined communication problems, the overarching research question of this study is: "How do South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action (within the context of Employment Equity)?"

Chaos theory (a postmodern perspective) serves as the theoretical framework from which organisations' approach to the duty to inform and consult with stakeholders, transformational change management, the management of communication and transformational leadership were investigated. A conceptual framework for the management of communication in this context, which is based on the ideas of the chaos perspective, is also proposed.

Empirical evidence regarding the research question was gathered by means of a qualitative, multiple case study investigation. The most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners were interviewed in each of the three organisations, while the Employment Equity communication strategy of each organisation was compared to the theoretical framework by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999).

The unique corporate philosophy of each organisation influences the manner in which Employment Equity strategies are implemented. The term "Affirmative Action" is not utilised in any of the organisations. Communication has strategic value in the external arena, while internal communication about Employment Equity is not satisfactory in two of the organisations. All types/levels of leaders have

communication responsibilities in this context, while one organisation also relies on the philosophy of self-directed leadership. Only one organisation is currently managing communication according to a formalised strategy.

Recommendations regarding the management of communication in this transformational context can be summarised with the overarching requirement that transformation should be approached as a “thinking science”. The multitude of paradoxes that were highlighted by the chaos perspective should be considered constantly: herein lies the real challenge for South African organisations.

Opsomming

Suid-Afrika word dikwels beskryf as 'n land wat in 'n oorgangstadium is, synde sosiale en politieke transformasie 'n voortdurende proses is. Die Suid-Afrikaanse werksomgewing is een terrein wat nou spog met 'n aantal wette wat nou verwant is aan mekaar en ten doel het om transformasie van die werkplek teweeg te bring, asook die ekonomiese bemagtiging van diegene wat voorheen slagoffers van rasseverdeeltheid was. Die Wet op Gelyke Indiensneming Nr. 55 van 1998 word beskou as sentraal in die waardering van gelykheid van individue in die werkplek, ongeag ras, geslag en/of gestremdheid.

Die bestuur van kommunikasie is sentraal in die proses van korporatiewe transformasie as gevolg van hierdie wet. (Hierdie feit word bevestig deur die klem wat in die wet self gelê word op organisasies se plig om belangegroeppe in te lig en met hulle te konsulteer, asook verskeie riglyndokumente.) Omdat vorige navorsing dui op breë kommunikasieprobleme, is die oorkoepelende navorsingsvraag van hierdie studie: "Hoe bestuur Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies kommunikasie omtrent regstellende optrede (binne die konteks van Gelyke Indiensneming)?"

Chaosteorie ('n post-moderne perspektief) dien as die teoretiese raamwerk van waaruit organisasies se benadering tot hulle plig om belangegroeppe in te lig en met hulle te konsulteer, transformasiebestuur, die bestuur van kommunikasie en transformasieleierskap ondersoek is. 'n Konseptuele raamwerk vir die bestuur van kommunikasie in hierdie konteks, wat gebaseer is op die idees van die chaos-perspektief, word ook voorgestel.

Empiriese bewyse rakende die navorsingsvraag is ingesamel deur middel van 'n kwalitatiewe, meervoudige gevallestudie. Onderhoude is gevoer met die mees senior Kommunikasie-, Menslike Hulpbronne- en Gelyke Indiensnemingspraktisyns in elk van hierdie organisasies, terwyl die Gelyke Indiensneming kommunikasiestrategie vergelyk is met die teoretiese raamwerk van Thomas en Robertshaw (1999).

Die unieke korporatiewe filosofie van elke organisasie beïnvloed die wyse waarop Gelyke Indiensnemingstrategieë geïmplementeer word. Die term "Regstellende Optrede" word nie in enige van hierdie organisasies gebruik nie. Kommunikasie het strategiese waarde in die eksterne arena, terwyl interne kommunikasie rondom Gelyke Indiensneming onbevredigend is in twee van die organisasies.

Alle tipes/vlakke leiers het kommunikasieverantwoordelikhede binne hierdie konteks, terwyl een organisasie die filosofie van self-gedrewe leierskap ondersteun. Slegs een organisasie bestuur kommunikasie tans aan die hand van 'n formele strategie.

Aanbevelings rakende die bestuur van kommunikasie in hierdie transformasiekonteks kan opgesom word met die oorhoofse vereiste dat transformasie benader behoort te word as 'n "wetenskap wat denke vereis". Die vele paradokse wat deur die chaos-perspektief uitgelig is, behoort voortdurend oorweeg te word: hierin lê die werklike uitdaging vir Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies.

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Chapter 1

Orientation and background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first democratic general elections in South Africa in 1994 set in motion arguably the most significant political and societal transformation in this country's history. A decade later the process of social and political transformation continues. A key reason for this rather slow pace of transformation in society is the fact that " ... most people were not psychologically prepared for the type or level of change required of them" (De Beer, 1998:2). Deep-seated values and beliefs, previously upheld by the political dispensation, would only change over time. Societal transformation depends on the commitment of people to the appreciation of human dignity of all, as opposed to the acceptance of racial segregation and biases.

Government has thus taken on the responsibility of speeding up the transformation of areas it believes will put South Africa back on the road of global competitiveness. One key area is the development of the country's human capital (cf. De Beer, 2003; Horwitz, Bowmaker-Falconer & Searll, 1996). Business was granted the opportunity to transform the employment environment voluntarily through, amongst other initiatives, Affirmative Action since 1994. This was the so-called bottom-up approach. The comprehensive transformation process envisaged, however, did not occur speedily (King Report II, 2002:114). As a result, government decided on the top-down approach to transforming the employment environment and promulgated several laws aimed at granting all citizens a fair opportunity to employment, protection from unfair labour practices and addressing the country's skills shortage.

Legislation aimed at achieving the aforementioned transformation include the SAQA Act No. 58 of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997, Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998, Skills Development Levies Act No. 9 of 1999, Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act No.4 of 2000 and the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000 (Du Plessis, Fouché & Van Wyk, 2002:viii-x). The most recent legislation is the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003. The significance of this

legislation was highlighted by President Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nation address during May 2004.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 (henceforth referred to as the EEA) has specific significance against the background of organisational transformation. Employment Equity, as the overarching vision, is the fair reflection of different categories of people in society in the workplace. This EEA describes measures through which organisations should speed up their transformational efforts. These measures are collectively known as Affirmative Action.

Reactions to and perceptions of Affirmative Action in the South African context are varied. These reactions are often categorised as emotionally charged and/or politically explosive. Many people fear the implications of Affirmative Action, specifically the impact thereof on their individual positions within the workplace. Those who feel threatened by these measures, tend to question the political and ethical legitimacy thereof. Those who stand to benefit from these measures often dislike the labelling associated with these measures. Confusion also exists in greater society about the relationship between the equal opportunity, black advancement, Affirmative Action and diversity management paradigms and related practices. As a result, Affirmative Action is often not correctly understood (De Beer & Radley, 2000:28-4; De Beer, 2003; and Visagie, 1999:148-162). The differences between these approaches, and strategies associated with each of these approaches, are described in Chapter 3.

The sources of conflicting reactions to Affirmative Action stem from individual, group and cultural beliefs and values which were both shaped by the political realities of the previous regime and the ideals people cherish for themselves in the current dispensation. Literature suggests that employees' understanding of Affirmative Action can only be effected through **transformational change management**. This approach to change is deemed as the most appropriate since the employees' mindsets and behaviour, as well as organisations' cultures (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Department of Labour, 1999a) need to be altered to accommodate a radically different paradigm from what they had previously been used to (De Beer, 2003; cf. Cummings & Worley, 2001).

The need for **continuous communication** in this transformational process is highlighted by previous and current research on, as well as legislative and theoretical frameworks for the implementation of

Affirmative Action measures in South African organisations (cf. Blunt, 1997; Brynard & Van Rooyen, 1998:396-397; Department of Labour, 1999b; Human, 1996:46-64; Horwitz *et al.* 1996:140-142; Howard, Brits & Van Aarde, 1993:15-16; IDASA Report, 1995: 23-25, 44-46, 58-59 & 135-137; Mersham, Rensburg & Skinner, 1995:196-199; Mzaidume, in the press; Pillay, 1999; Seroka, 1999:179–181; Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:28-36; Van Sittert-Triebel, 1996: 280-286; Visagie, 1997:660-667 and 1999:148-162). However, as far as the researcher could establish by means of database searches and literature reviews in different sub-fields of study, very little research had been conducted to explore how organisations approach the **management of communication about Affirmative Action**.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The overarching question to be answered with this study can be formulated as: “How do South African organisations manage **communication about Affirmative Action** (within the Employment Equity context) during transformational change?” Since the emergence of so-called new approaches to change management, the usefulness of old-style thinking and strategies for this organisational context can be questioned.

Five interrelated sub-questions need to be addressed in the process of determining how South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action. The first question pertains to how organisations implement their “duty to inform and consult” with employees and reporting to government, as stipulated in Sections 16, 18, 21 and 25 of the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b). The second, third and fourth questions respectively pertain to the approach to transformational change management, the approach to transformational change communication and the nature of transformational leadership within this context. The possible impact of the different approaches (and related implementation strategies) on the transformational effort would be the last question if this topic was to be researched in its full complexity.

Answers to these questions could provide organisations across a wide spectrum (sectors and organisational type) with insight regarding the different organisational factors that may either contribute to or hamper the Affirmative Action process. The **exploratory** nature and scope of this study excludes investigation of the fifth and last question – pursuing this question would require empirical evidence that would have to prove a causal relationship between chosen approaches or strategies and the effect

on transformational efforts. Understanding the overarching research question, as well as the interrelated sub-questions, requires a more detailed description of the contextual realities within the South African situation. These are reactions to Affirmative Action; the legislative framework for Employment Equity; different approaches to transformational management and communication; the centrality of communication within transformation; existing South African frameworks for communicating Employment Equity; as well as transformational leadership in communicating Affirmative Action.

1.2.1 Reactions to Affirmative Action

De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000) contend that both designated and non-designated groups, as described in the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, have either covert negative sentiments toward Affirmative Action or view these measures with a fair amount of suspicion. Employees who are not part of the designated groups, as described in the EEA, most often fear the loss of existing jobs or potential development opportunities, while they also have racially charged stereotypical views about designated groups' labour specific competence (De Beer, 1998:5-6; Visagie, 1999:150-152). These views are often embedded in corporate cultures, which act as "hidden barriers" (Department of Labour, 1999b; Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:78).

People from non-designated groups often also don't understand the differences between the nature and purpose of the Equal Opportunity, Black Advancement, Affirmative Action and Diversity Management and related strategies (De Beer, 1998:1; De Beer & Radley, 2000:13-16 & 31-37 and Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:78-79). Corporate goals pertaining to Affirmative Action are interpreted as purposefully ambiguous as a result of employees' level of uncertainty about their future status within organisations (De Beer & Radley, 2000:28 – 40; Puth, 2002:119 – 120).

Conversely, designated groups often don't agree with the specific approach to Affirmative Action followed in their organisations or even the label of being "Employment Equity candidates" since their personal goals don't necessarily depend on the corporate transformational goals. Individuals do not want to be seen as not being employed on merit. Arguments from the designated groups against so-called "tokenism" or "window-dressing" Affirmative Action and " ... setting individuals up for failure ... ", add to the depth of scepticism about and resistance to these measures (De Beer & Radley, 2000: 38-39).

1.2.2 Perspectives on transformation change management and change communication

Theoretical descriptions of the management of change communication are broadly categorised as two groups, i.e. mechanistic (deterministic) or organic (non-determinant). The chaos and complexity theories/perspectives/approaches represent non-determinant thinking. These are also sometimes labelled as “emergent perspectives”. Mechanistic theories emphasise the need for control, predictability (including all components of communication strategies) and label change as a mere disruption – something that should be eliminated. Lewin’s three-stage model is perhaps the most well known “old style” description of change management (cf. Burnes, 2000), while chaos theory, complexity science and contingency theory represent organic thinking about the phenomenon (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Lissack & Roos, 1999; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; and Ströh, 1998).

Literature suggests that the new perspectives on change and transformation management and communication could lead to true (lasting) transformation of organisations and people, since the focus is on understanding change and transformation as well as on the people who are part of the transformational process. Misunderstanding either or both of these elements in organisational change and transformation is viewed as the fundamental reason for the high failure rate in change management initiatives (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Jick & Peiperl, 2003; Kallio, Saarinen & Tinnilä, 2002; Olson & Eoyang, 2001:187; Puth, 2002; and Wheatley, 1999:138-139).

Whereas mechanistic approaches emphasise specific models and theories that should be applied to organisations to effect change, organic approaches provide key concepts that are open to interpretation. These concepts are not meant to be prescriptive. The potential value of these approaches lie in the new philosophy toward understanding the true nature of information and how people, when allowed to self-organise, interact with information – the process through which they create meaning and learn to live with constant change. In organisational terms, this means a move away from rigid corporate strategies and resulting communication strategies or programmes to the creation of conditions that facilitate continuous organisational learning (cf. Cummings & Worley, 2001; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Fitzgerald & Eijnatten, 2002; Gayeski & Majka, 1996; Holtzhausen, 2000; Lissack & Roos, 1999; Murphy, 1996; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; Ströh, 1998; Wheatley, 1994 & 1999).

Organic perspectives on transformational management, however assert that transformational efforts often fail as a result of the old style conceptualisation of leadership and misinterpreting the needs and abilities of people who make up organisations (Wheatley, 1999:137-155). The assumption that people will only change or transform when told to do so by someone in a hierarchically higher position than themselves, is questioned. The chaos perspective specifically suggests that all employees are able to decide if, why and when they will change, i.e. if the required change or transformation is meaningful to them. From this perspective all employees are supposed to be self-directed leaders (cf. Keene, 2002; Johnson, 1995; and Wheatley, 1999).

The tension between the different perspectives on change and transformation, change communication and transformational leadership may leave many employees and organisations confused. Organisations therefore need to develop an appreciation for the new ways of thinking about leadership and the related communication or information needs employees may have. The possible implications of the key concepts of these theories, within this transformational context, are discussed in Chapter 2. The possible implications for change communication are explored in both Chapters 2 and 4.

1.2.3 The centrality of communication within transformation

Three facts point to the pivotal role of communication in achieving specific organisational transformation objectives. The first is the emphasis on communication and consultation as part of the implementation and reporting process pertaining to Affirmative Action measures, as described in the Code of Good Practice for EE (Department of Labour, 1999b) for the EEA (55/1998). This code is further described in Chapters 3 and 4. The second is the need for communication (managed from both the organisational and corporate perspectives) as identified in previous research in South Africa (cf. IDASA Report, 1995; Seroka, 1999; and Van Sittert-Triebel, 1996).

The third is the notion of communication as a “powerful mechanism of change” in change management literature. Communication is thus the tool or vehicle through which understanding of the organisational context and need for transformation is facilitated (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2003; Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Barrett, 2002; Bechtel & Squires, 2001; Burnes, 2000; Carnall, 1999; Clampitt, DeKoch & Cashman, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2002; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Keene, 2000; Lissack & Roos, 1999; Moran & Brightman, 2000; Murphy, 1996; Puth, 2002; Quirke, 1996; Spinks & Wells, 1995; Steyn & Puth,

2000; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; Ströh, 1998; Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999; Van Sittert-Triebel, 1996; Wheatley, 1994 and 1999). Furthermore, De Beer (2003) contends that South African organisations that implement the philosophy and principles of Employment Equity, should aim to achieve tolerance, mutual respect and trust among all employees. Communication is the only vehicle through which these ideals can be achieved. Achieving this goal requires transformation of people on personal, group and organisational levels (De Beer, 2002:2; Department of Labour, 1999b; Horwitz *et al.*, 1996:141; Van Sittert-Triebel, 1996:274-280; and Visagie, 1997:660-667). The vehicle that will facilitate this transformation process is communication.

1.2.4 Existing South African frameworks for communicating Affirmative Action

Tension seems to exist between the new perspectives on change and transformation and the traditional conceptualisation of organisations. The potential for a radically different understanding of the process of change and transformation is compared to traditional tools used to bring about either change or transformation. As was mentioned earlier, many change management failures have been ascribed to the failure to be flexible, e.g. to sticking only to a predetermined corporate strategy and predetermined communication strategies or programmes. The tension between the mechanistic and the organic perspectives on change management also holds true for managing communication about Affirmative Action. Literature about the implementation of Affirmative Action measures in the South African context highlights four frameworks that could be employed when developing a communication strategy for Affirmative Action.

The first such framework, by Wingrove (1993:83-117), focuses on the key components of the communication process, which can be categorised as dealing with the organisational purpose of Affirmative Action, content guidelines and guidelines for those directly responsible for the communication and implementation of these measures. The second framework, by Human (1993:53-70), focuses almost exclusively on broad guidelines for the managerial communication responsibilities and content of such a communication strategy or related programmes.

The third framework is provided by the Code of Good Practice for the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour, 1999b) and refers to communication by employers during the planning, development, implementation and monitoring phases of Employment Equity Plans. During the development phase, consultation with role players should assist an organisation in the formulation of

objectives, timeframes and communication thereof. The implementation and monitoring phases are viewed as ongoing and “should continue to include consultation, communication and awareness training” (Department of Labour, 1999b). This code also suggests specific mechanisms for internal communication (including representation of non-designated groups within communication forums), examples of consultation mechanisms and specific statistical information to be contained in the Employment Equity Plan. Finally, this code suggests that information about such a plan should be “easily accessible to all levels of employees” (Department of Labour, 1999b).

However, the fourth framework, by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:28–35), suggests that a comprehensive strategy for the communication of Affirmative Action should be developed prior to an organisation embarking on this transformational path, both from a business strategy and a communication strategy perspective. Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) strategy consists of four phases. During the first and most strategic level the strategy should help to position the organisation by means of communication. The second phase should facilitate management consensus about and commitment to the process by means of communication. Communication with different employee representatives is the focus of the third phase. The fourth and final phase focuses on ongoing communication with employees and is based on the steps of a communication programme (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:28-35).

Both the Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) framework and the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour 1999b) emphasise the recognition of this type of organisational transformation as a continuous process; the strategic identification of stakeholders; the importance of change leaders and the creation of a climate of open communication; trust and continuous feedback; the two-way symmetrical (balanced) worldview and new possibilities for transformational management as collectively described by Anderson & Ackerman Anderson (2001:173-174), Barrett (2002:221-227), Bechtel & Squires (2001:250-253), Carnall (1999:128-129), Clampitt *et al.* (2000:41-50) Deatherage & Hazleton (1998:58-59), Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:43), Grunig (1992), Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:201-202), Godard & Lenhardt (1999:84), Kallio *et al.* (2002:80-84), Keene (2000:17), Lissack & Roos (1999:226-227), Moran & Brightman (2000:74), Olson & Eoyang (2001:184), Spinks & Wells (cf. 1995), Steyn & Puth (2000:64-65), Ströh (1998:29) and Puth (2002:131).

Grunig and White (in Grunig, 1992:43-44) postulate that the two-way symmetrical worldview hinges on the presuppositions of interdependence, open systems, moving equilibrium, equity, autonomy,

innovation, decentralisation of management, responsibility within society and interest group liberalisation. In short, balance between an organisation's goals and those of other entities it encounters, is sought. Since Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999) suggest that communication about Affirmative Action ought to facilitate understanding and acceptance, their framework could be viewed as a benchmark for South African organisations. Designated employers also have to adhere to minimum communication requirements stipulated in the EEA and the accompanying code regarding the preparation, implementation and monitoring phases of Employment Equity (Department of Labour, 1999a). A more in-depth discussion of the aforementioned existing frameworks for an Employment Equity or Affirmative Action communication strategy appears in Chapter 4.

1.2.5 Transformational leadership in communicating Affirmative Action

The tension between mechanistic and organic approaches to change management extends to the concept of leadership since transformational leaders are central to the management of communication: transformational leaders need to be "communicating leaders" (cf. Puth, 2002).

The research problem points to organisations that still approach change or transformational leadership from a deterministic perspective. This perspective supposes that leadership is a "doing" role. Burnes (2000:489-496) describes three focal areas within this perspective, i.e. the personal characteristics of leadership, the leader-follower situation and the leadership style within the context of the overall organisation context and climate.

The "doing" perspective seems to govern the thinking of both human resources management experts and designated individuals in organisations that implement Affirmative Action. These designated positions, CEO's, Employment Equity managers, Transformation managers, Diversity managers, Human Resources managers and line managers are traditionally called on as leaders when Employment Equity policies and related strategies need to be implemented. The rationale is that the commitment of these office bearers to the transformational effort, is symbolically significant to all stakeholders since they are directly responsible for the strategic and tactical implementation of the Employment Equity strategy (cf. De Beer, 1998; De Beer, 2003; De Beer & Radley, 2000; Human, 1993; IDASA Report; 1995; and Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999). The Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) also suggests that senior management should be responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Employment Equity plan.

The potential role of the Corporate Communication Management department in the Employment Equity strategy seems to be poorly described in traditional Human Resource Management literature or the legislative framework. It appears as if communication for the implementation of Affirmative Action is not conceptualised as resorting under one specific department. Corporate Communication theory, however, suggests that the most senior communication practitioner would have to play the strategist role in this context (cf. Steyn & Puth, 2000).

Traditionally the organisational expert on communication facilitation and/or solving organisational problems together with management (Dozier in Grunig, 1992:330), such an individual is also viewed as instrumental in change (and by implication different transformational processes). The normative role conceptualisation for the corporate communication strategist (cf. Steyn, 2002) emphasises the need for continuous environmental scanning which should result in the adjustment of corporate and communication strategies (Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:203-204; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205; and Likely, 2002:26-29).

As was mentioned previously, in an attempt to make the new possibilities accepted by the organic theories more concrete for today's transformational leaders, Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:187-191) describe leadership as both a process of "knowing, doing and being" and suggest seven core competencies these leaders should have. Their description is not prescriptive in the sense that leaders can follow a checklist, but suggests the practical integration of key concepts associated with chaos and complexity theories into the dimensions of "knowing, doing and being".

1.2.6 Employment Equity legislative framework

As was indicated previously, the process of Employment Equity is formalised by legislation, but also supported by several guideline documents. According to both the EEA and Code for Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b). These guidelines are supposed to ensure that the process is implemented in a manner that will ensure legal compliance as a minimum outcome. The usefulness of such guidelines is also highlighted by the fact that organisations had previously made many mistakes while attempting to achieve representation of non-whites in the workforce. Both mistakes and details regarding the most recent approach to this socio-economic process are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.3 META-THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Stating the research question in relation to possible sources for solutions, clarifies the theoretical and empirical logic of this study. The nature of the research problem necessitates a brief explanation of the interrelatedness of the domains within which this study resorts, as well as the different theories that govern the study. Key concepts are also described in order to ensure the correct interpretation thereof within this study. These aspects are summarised in Table 1.1 on the next page and discussed thereafter.

1.3.1 Postmodernism as worldview

Postmodernism is the worldview that governs this study. Holtzhausen (2000:95-99) and Powell (1998:17) contend that postmodernism, as a worldview, is not easily defined since there is little agreement (and many misunderstandings) on/about the matter. This worldview is more easily defined when opposed to modernism. Whereas modernism was governed by distinct meta-narratives, postmodernism allows for multiple interpretations of phenomena: all views are equal. The most important difference that would be applicable to a study within the domain of transformational change management is the radical move away from the modern concepts of design, hierarchy and centering.

From the postmodern worldview, these concepts are replaced by chance, anarchy and dispersal respectively (Powell, 1998:17). Holtzhausen (2000:95) also contends that communication management¹ (public relations) faces new societal and organisational challenges from a postmodern perspective: "Coordinating pluralism will be the public relations role". The inclusion and facilitation of diverse values and conflict will be at the centre of this function as opposed to pure persuasion, alignment and stability.

Postmodern thinkers argue that the aspects mentioned previously would become more prominent since society at large is a vortex of moving people, values and interests that makes organisational survival a challenging and dynamic process. The postmodern understanding of order, transformation, information, communication and public relations will be further explored in Chapters 2 and 4. Finally, Babbie and Mouton (2001:39-54) also describe postmodernism as a research tradition that opposes

¹ Following Grunig's (1992:4) conceptualisation, the terms public relations and communication management could be used interchangeably. But communication management is preferred within this study.

Table 1.1

Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework

Research question	How do South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action (within the context of Employment Equity) during transformational change management?			
Domains and theories				
Worldview	Postmodernism			
Paradigms	1. Two-way symmetry 2. Human capital development 3. Emergent perspectives on change, transformation and change communication			
Domains	Human Resources Management	Corporate Communication Management		Management Science
Sub-fields within domains	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Psychology <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Communication Management <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder Management <input type="checkbox"/> Management Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Intercultural Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Management <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Development <input type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development	
Theories from respective sub-domains	<input type="checkbox"/> The Management of Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Equity Act (1998) <input type="checkbox"/> Black Economic Empowerment Act (2003)	<input type="checkbox"/> General Theory for Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Process <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder Theory <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Communication Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Two-way symmetrical model for Communication Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Chaos Theory <input type="checkbox"/> Scenario Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Management	
Major concept	Affirmative Action Communication			
Key terms	Transformational change	Transformational change communication	Affirmative Action	Transformational leadership
Empirical methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate strategy (document) analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate strategy (document) analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate strategy (document) analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate strategy (document) analysis
Measurement items	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Interview question <input type="checkbox"/> Entire strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Interview questions <input type="checkbox"/> Entire strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Interview question <input type="checkbox"/> Entire strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Interview questions <input type="checkbox"/> Entire strategy

the notions of modernist objectivity. Multiple interpretations of evidence pertaining to research phenomena also typify postmodernist research. Postmodernism thus affects the research methodology.

1.3.2 Paradigms

Three paradigms govern this study, i.e. two-way symmetry (Grunig and White in Grunig, 1992:43-44), human capital development (cf. De Beer, 1998; De Beer & Radley, 2000) and the emergent perspectives on transformational change and communication (cf. Lissack & Roos, 1999; Murphy, 1996; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; Ströh, 1998; and Wheatley, 1994). The influence of these paradigms on the purpose of Affirmative Action, communication and consultation will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

1.3.3 Domains, sub-fields and specific theories

Although the research problem could be interpreted as a Human Resource Management problem *per se*, the essence of the research question falls within the domain of Corporate Communication Management since the responsibility of communicating transformational change resides with the organisation and normatively requires a planned effort by the corporate communication management department/division, i.e. a corporate communication strategy and related programmes (Steyn & Puth, 2000:51- 95). Grunig (1992:4) further defines corporate communication as equal to public relations and as the process of communication between an organisation and its publics:

“Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organisation’s communication with both internal and external publics – groups that affect the ability of the organisation to meet its goals.”

Dimensions such as the importance of internal and external stakeholders, the nature of the communication strategy and the measurement of the transformational management effort within the context of the research objectives, all correlate with the aforementioned description, which leaves no doubt about the domain of this study. Further categorisation of the study against the background of either strategic communication management or change management is not necessary since both of these are regarded as sub-fields of study within Corporate Communication Management and Management Science respectively. Theories to be explored in Chapters 2 to 4 range from theoretical

assumptions about Affirmative Action in the South African context, the management of stakeholders, the communication process, formulation of a corporate communication strategy, leadership and organisational development through transformation.

1.3.4 Major concept

The major concept is derived from the research question and is thus defined as “Affirmative Action communication” – the contextual application of “transformational change communication”. This concept consists of content and audience dimensions. This term is meant for a broad, general understanding. This concept is further explored in Chapters 2 and 4.

1.4 KEY TERMS

Four key terms need clarification within the context of this study, i.e. transformational change management, transformational change communication, Affirmative Action and transformational leadership. These terms are further explored in Chapters 2 to 4.

1.4.1 Transformational change

Transformational change is a specific category within the realm of change management. Transformation is driven by change. It does not focus on incremental, process-driven adjustments, but the modification of behaviour based on the internalisation of changes by people (Cummings & Worley: 2001:498). In organisational terms transformation requires “profound change” (Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:191). These modifications also affect corporate culture profoundly.

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:39 – 40 & 50) describe transformational change as the type of adjustment organisations need to undergo in order to arrive at a “... completely new way the organisation and its people see the world, their customers, their work and themselves”. This process requires “... significant changes to organisations’ cultures, people’s behaviour and mindsets”. Gouillart and Kelly (1995:6) refer to these organisational dimensions as the “... spiritual essence of the organisational system”.

Transformation should thus not be equated with situational changes brought about by rearranging or restructuring the physical dimensions of organisations (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Jick & Peiperl, 2003; Schaafsma, 1997; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; and Wheatley, 1999).

The type of change required of individuals and groups in accepting Affirmative Action measures in South African organisations, can be described as both “profound” and of a continuous nature. These qualities confirm the view that the implementation of Affirmative Action measures, as part of the EEA, is transformational, rather than incidental or short-term, or only structurally driven. The relationship between the concepts of change, transition and transformation is further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4.2 Transformational change communication

Communication is seen as the vehicle through which meaning is shared between people in any context. Communication could be managed by organisations from either an organisational communication perspective (Conrad & Poole, 2002:3-5) or corporate communication perspective (Steyn & Puth, 2000:3). These classifications are not mutually exclusive within the context of transformational change management.

The organisational communication approach emphasises different internal dynamics of organisations that may enhance or impede efforts to get messages across to internal stakeholders. The corporate communication approach presupposes that communication is managed on behalf of an entire organisation and emphasises an organisation’s ability to negotiate both internal and external dynamics in its communication efforts with internal and external stakeholders (Grunig, 1992:4).

The purpose of communication also forms part of the understanding of communication at either organisational or corporate levels. Thayer (quoted in Grunig, 1992:287) differentiates between synchronic and diachronic communication. Synchronic communication aims to synchronise the behaviour of publics with that of the organisation – the organisation can thus continue without interference. Diachronic communication aims to negotiate “ ... a state of affairs that benefits both the organisation and publics ... ” (Grunig, 1992:287).

According to the same author these two concepts are reflected in asymmetrical and symmetrical approaches to communication management. The normative conceptualisation of the two-way symmetrical model for communication and its potential for transformational change communication, are further described in Chapter 2 and applied in Chapter 4.

1.4.3 Affirmative Action

As was indicated under section 1.1, a collection of specific measures employers should implement to achieve Employment Equity, are referred to as Affirmative Action. It is important to note that the term Affirmative Action should not be used interchangeably with Employment Equity, since the latter refers to the ultimate vision for the South African employment environment. Neither should it be confused with Black Advancement, Black Economic Empowerment or Diversity Management, since these are all historical eras which are associated with the development of South Africa's human capital.

The goal of Affirmative Action in South Africa is to ensure that designated groups (Black/African, Coloured, Indian), women and people with disabilities are represented equitably in all work categories and levels of the workforce. No preferential ranking of these categories is provided in the Act (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2002:80; King Report I, 1994:24; Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:143; and Visagie, 1999:150-151). The relationship between the terms Affirmative Action, Employment Equity and diversity management is further discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4.4 Transformational leadership

Conceptualising transformational change has an impact on the conceptualisation of transformational leadership within the context of this study. According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:5) and Cummings and Worley (2001:500-501) transformational leadership cannot be separated from the organisation's perspective on transformation. Therefore, if transformation is viewed as a process that starts with people at individual level, those employed as transformational leaders should also transform themselves. The transformational leader should thus be fully aware of his/her internal reality or orientation within a given organisational context (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:5). Transformational leaders have to model the desired new values or attitudes.

The same authors also refer to transformational leadership as encompassing both the dimensions of “being, knowing and doing” - an integrated approach which is driven by the key concepts associated with the emergent approaches to change and communication (chaos and complexity), i.e. the ability to live with varying degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity vs. certainty and stability as well as the ability to help other employees realise their potential for self-directedness and creativity.

Finally, and most importantly within the context of the current research, Burnes (cf. 2000), Moss Kanter (quoted in Jick & Peiperl, 2003:430 – 431), Ströh (1998:37-38) and Wheatley (1999:145) agree that communication, as the vehicle through which meaning is shared, is central to the enactment of leadership roles. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson’s (2001:181-187) conceptualisation of change leadership confirms the presupposition that communication will be the vehicle through which appointed or informal leaders will facilitate organisational transformation. A more in-depth discussion of transformational leadership appears in Chapter 2, while Chapter 4 focuses on specific communication responsibilities of various traditional leaders during the implementation of the EEA.

1.4.5 Empirical methods and measurement items

The manner in which each of the key terms contributed to the empirical investigation of the research goal and objectives, are described in the three theoretical chapters, as well as Chapter 5.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 General aim

To explore how a selection of three South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action (within the context of Employment Equity) during transformational change.

1.5.2 Objectives

□ Objective 1

To develop a conceptual framework for the management of communication about Employment Equity as a transformational change phenomenon in the South African context.

□ **Objective 2**

To describe the purpose of Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 3**

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners within each of the three South African organisations about the strategic value of communication in the management of Affirmative Action.

□ **Objective 4**

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners about the strategic value of communication in the management of Affirmative Action across three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 5**

To identify the key role players (both departments and designated individuals) responsible for managing communication about Affirmative Action in three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 6**

To identify key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners in managing communication about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 7**

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners about the specific contribution of the corporate communication function in managing communication about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 8**

To identify communication management responsibilities of departmental leaders, other than the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, in managing communicating about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ **Objective 9**

To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about Affirmative Action that is communicated to internal stakeholders.

□ **Objective 10**

To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about Affirmative Action that is communicated to external stakeholders.

□ **Objective 11**

To describe, by means of qualitative content analysis of corporate communication strategy documents, which content components of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity communication strategy, each of the three South African organisations communicate to various stakeholders.

□ **Objective 12**

To provide a general comparison of how three South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action by means of a comparative case study analysis along the inherent dimensions of Objectives 2-11.

1.5.3 Towards a holistic understanding of the major concept

As was indicated previously, the overarching research question is very broad (holistic). The relationship between the overarching research question, four sub-questions and 12 objectives are best illustrated by means of a table (table 1.2) on the next page.

Since the sub-questions encompass a multitude of dimensions, objectives overlap in some instances. The same principle also applies to the measurement of key terms since these all contribute the holistic understanding of the major concept. The theoretical chapters are aimed at describing some (normative) dimensions of the major concept, while empirical evidence will contribute to the completion of the conceptualisation of an answer to the overarching research question. Such a conceptualisation is presented in Chapter 7.

Table 1.2

Objectives in relation to research question and sub-questions

Question(s)	Objective(s)
Overarching question: How do South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action (within the context of Employment Equity)?	12
Sub-question 1: How do South African organisations comply with their duty to consult with and inform stakeholders about the process of Employment Equity?	2, 7, 9, 10 and 11
Sub-question 2: What approach do South African organisations follow in the management of Employment Equity as a transformational change process?	2 and 6
Sub-question 3: What approach do South African organisations follow in the management of communication about Employment Equity as a transformational change process?	3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11
Sub-question 4: What approach do South African organisations follow regarding leadership within the process of managing Employment Equity as a transformational process?	5, 6, 7, 8 and 11

1.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Communication problems, in the broadest understanding of the word, is one of the recurring themes in previous and current research about the implementation of Affirmative Action, as part of the EEA (IDASA Report, 1995:135-137; Mwafongo, 1997; Mzaidume, in the press; Pillay, 1999; Seroka, 1999:178-181; Siddo, in the press; cf. Snyman, 1997; Van Sittert-Triebel, 1996: 280-286; Visagie, 1997:660-667 & 1999:148-162).

As far as the researcher could establish by means of a National Research Foundation projects database search, this study is the first to focus specifically on the **management of communication about Affirmative Action** (within the context of Employment Equity) in South African. The title of this study reflects the focus on exploring how organisations address this phenomenon, i.e. "Communicating Affirmative Action during transformational change: A South African case study perspective".

Although exploratory in nature, the research results may lead to a better understanding of problem areas and solutions for organisations from different sectors (private, parastatal or government) with the specific focus on communication. The emphasis on contextual detail per case study could provide specific insight to organisations in similar sectors. Furthermore, specific themes in areas related to corporate communication, transformational change management, transformational leadership, and the importance of the BEEA (53/2003) have been identified for future research. These are discussed in Chapter 7.

1.7 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

An **exploratory**, qualitative research approach was followed within this study. The nature of the research problem was the deciding factor in adopting this approach. Anderson (1987:244-245), Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) and Murphy (1995:1) describe qualitative research as the appropriate approach when the objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, in this case the process of communication about Affirmative Action in South African organisations as part of organisational transformation.

A multiple case study design was followed in which each case study represented an organisation. Three organisations were included in the main investigation of the study, while a fourth organisation served as the pilot study. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), this research design is " ... especially useful where phenomena and relationships are studied that have heuristic value in terms of identifying issues to take note of in future research".

Two sources of evidence were used in each case study, i.e. partially structured personal interviews and corporate strategy documents. As is indicated at the bottom of Table 1.1 (refer to section 1.3), the items for the interviews can be directly related to the four key terms (refer to section 1.4). After analysis of each case study, the different case studies were compared to arrive at the results and conclusions of this study. A description of the methodology, results and recommendations appear in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF STUDY

Although the title of the study may at first glance create the impression that it resorts within the domain of Human Resource Management, the research problem and phenomenon resort within the domain of Corporate Communication Management.

The exploratory purpose of this study allows for empirical investigation of the main question about how South African organisations manage **communication about Affirmative Action**, including sub-questions pertaining to the approach to communication, transformation and leadership. The causal relationship between the chosen approach to either of these three elements and the ultimate

effectiveness of the implementation of Affirmative Action measures, as transformational change (the fifth and last sub-question as described in section 1.2), is excluded from this study.

This study is exploratory in nature and therefore does not accommodate the aforementioned sub-question. Furthermore, no attempt is made to formulate propositions or test hypotheses. Since the study focuses only on South African organisations, the results and recommendations may not be generalised to a wider context.

1.9 DEMARCATION OF CHAPTERS

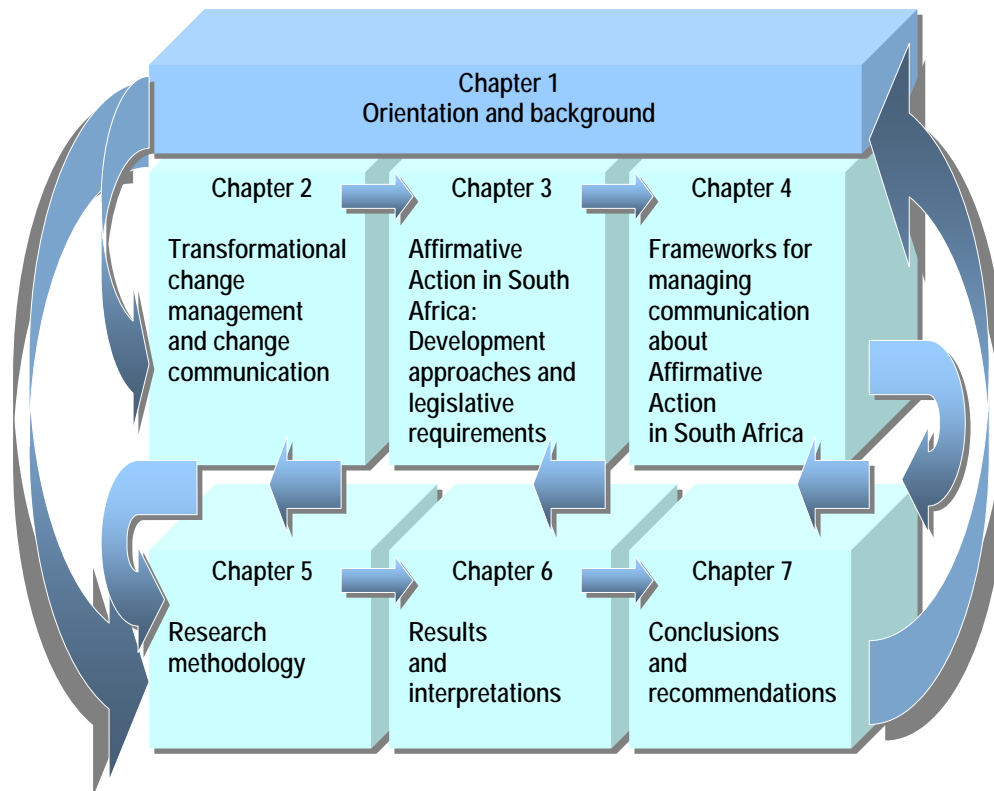
This study comprises seven chapters, including this one. Chapters 2 to 4 cover the theoretical background and exploration of the research question, each focusing on one or a combination of the terms described as key terms in section 1.4. These are transformational change management, Affirmative Action in South Africa and frameworks for the management of communication about Affirmative Action in South Africa.

Transformational change communication and transformational leadership are central themes in this study and thus appear in all the theoretical chapters. The last three chapters deal with the research methodology, reporting and interpretation of results, and conclusions respectively. The last two chapters also rely on the comparison of theory with the empirical evidence. The structure of this study is visually represented by figure 1.1 (on the next page). Appropriate elements from this figure appear at the beginning of each chapter.

□ Chapter 2

This chapter focuses on the description of transformational change as a phenomenon. Chaos theory and complexity science are described as the new perspectives on change and transformation that encompass the underlying principles of the organic worldview. Reasons for favouring the “chaos perspective” throughout the study, are also discussed. This emergent perspective in change and transformation also define the place of the individual and leadership in corporate transformation and change communication. The emphasis in this chapter is on the need to move away from deterministic models for understanding and managing transformation in order to integrate organic thinking into the process: the management of transformation is conceptualised as a “thinking science”.

Figure 1.1
Structure of study



□ Chapter 3

Since the transformational context of this study is the implementation of the EEA, the development and definition thereof need clarification. This chapter provides both a historical overview of the human capital development approaches and details from the EEA. Reasons for common misunderstandings about the intentions and requirements of the law are apparent from these descriptions. Arguments in favour of managing diversity vs. race-based Affirmative Action are considered since the first of these two approaches will arguably lead to lasting societal and organisational transformation. Finally, a number of challenges organisations face during the implementation of the EEA, are highlighted.

□ Chapter 4

An attempt is made to bridge the traditional divide between the abstract concepts from the chaos perspective and practical organisational problems in this chapter. Several, both old and recent, frameworks for the management of communication about EE matters were compared in search of

solutions to the current research question. Four of these are briefly evaluated. Two recent frameworks that provide guidance in terms of legal requirements (compliance) and a corporate strategy are then presented, i.e. the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) and a model for integrated thinking by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999). Thomas and Robertshaw's framework is favoured for its emphasis on the strategic positioning of the organisation, description of responsibilities for transformational leaders and the consultative (symmetrical) mode for change communication. Since all of the aforementioned frameworks have shortcomings, a conceptual framework is proposed for managing communication about EE matters. The conceptual framework is based on the notion of bridging the divide between traditional models for aligning corporate strategies with communication strategies and the chaos perspective on transformational change management. The underlying purpose of this framework is to facilitate continuous corporate transformation and learning.

□ Chapter 5

This chapter describes the reasoning for conducting the empirical investigation from a purely qualitative perspective. Details regarding the research design and specific methods (techniques) are also presented in this chapter. As was indicated previously, a multiple case study design was followed that included one organisation in the extensive pilot study and three organisations in the main investigation. Partially structured personal interviews were conducted with three key transformational leaders in this context, while the communication strategies for this context was compared to Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework in an attempt to summarise how organisations are currently managing communication about Employment Equity matters.

□ Chapter 6

This chapter is devoted to the reporting and interpretation of evidence in relation to each of the research objectives as formulated in section 1.5.2. The reduction and presentation of voluminous qualitative evidence in an appropriate format lies at the core of this chapter. Evidence and initial interpretations are presented per case study, while the comparison across the three cases and specific objectives form the second half of the chapter. The inferences from the comparison across cases form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations that are presented in Chapter 7.

□ Chapter 7

The last chapter focuses on the conclusions and recommendations about the research phenomenon. These conclusions are presented in relation to the main research question and the four sub-questions, as formulated in section 1.2. Finally, recommendations for further are presented as a result of the synthesis of conclusions and observations about the research process.

Chapter 2

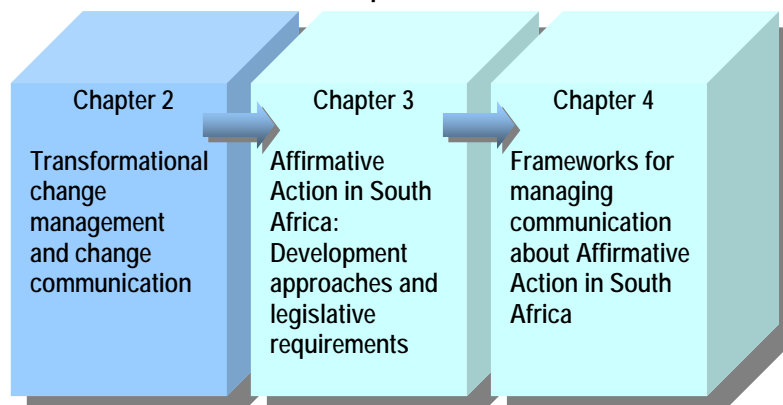
Transformational change management and change communication

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of three theoretical chapters of the study and focuses on the nature of transformational change as a phenomenon, as well as in the context of the current research question. Transformational change differs from change and transition in terms of the demands on organisational stakeholders and the impact on the core values of an organisation. Postmodern perspectives (specifically chaos theory and complexity science) on organisational transformation and transformational leadership form the most prominent component of this chapter. Key dimensions from these emerging approaches are explored in order to form a conceptual framework to be considered by transformational leaders when dealing with the implementation of the EEA. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:174) confirm the appropriateness of this approach with the statement that transformation is a " ... thinking discipline and not a process that depends on a cookbook approach". Finally the centrality of communication during transformation is highlighted throughout this chapter. Thus possible implications of the chaos perspective vocabulary for the formulation of a corporate transformational and corporate communication strategy are explored. The relationship between this chapter and the other two theoretical chapters is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 2.1

Chapter 2 in relation to other theoretical chapters



2.2 DEFINING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Defining transformational change requires a comparison of core concepts within the realm of change management and consideration of the many dimensions of this phenomenon. The three key concepts are change, transition and transformation. The underlying links between transition and transformation, as well as leadership within organisational transformation are of specific relevance to this study.

2.2.1 Change

Eisenbach, Watson and Pillai (1999:80), Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:192) and Puth (2002:110) define **change** as a situational phenomenon that may sometimes be temporary. Change refers to any number of “newness” elements, ranging from an office move to the appointment of a new CEO. Change is external and the end result of an event or intervention. Interim measures pertaining to any organisational aspect could thus also be classified as change.

2.2.2 Transition

Transition, however, refers to alteration within the psychological realm of individuals who have to adapt to a changed environment, values or related circumstances (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:39; French & Delahaye, 1996:23; and Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:192). This process pertains to the “hearts and minds” of employees and precedes the desired new organisational outcome in which their altered inclination toward an idea will be required. Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2002:192) further emphasises the importance of recognising transition as a mental state that allows employees to “let go” of old ways and then embracing a new way.

Since this process occurs on individual level (implicitly also at each individual’s pace), it is arguably the single most unpredictable element in the management of change or transformation. French and Delahaye (cf.1996) argue that individuals experience change (the term is loosely used here) as a series of events, whereas an organisation views it as an event. They also argue that too little attention is given to the role of the individual during change or transformation in the vast body of change management literature.

2.2.3 Transformational change

Transformational change differs from other change-related concepts in terms of the following dimensions: the philosophical nature of the new vision for the organisation, the required level of involvement (commitment) from internal stakeholders and the prominence of transformation in the business environment (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:174; De Beer, 2002:ii; Cummings & Worley, 2001:499; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995:6; and Jick & Peiperl, 2003:xvii-xviii).

Transformational goals shape an organisation into something “radically different”, very often from having reflected one end of the continuum to reflecting the opposite side of the same issue: organisational alchemy. (Alchemy is the ancient art and science of changing plain metals into precious metals like gold and was a typical task of wizards.) Jick and Peiperl (2003:218) therefore also refer to transformation as organisational reorientation.

This process is only possible in organisations through transition within its employees and the modification of behaviour based on the internalisation of changes by people (Gouillart & Kelly, 1995:6). Cummings and Worley (2001:498) and Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:192) refer to transformation as requiring paradigmatic modifications at individual and organisational levels: this process involves qualitatively different ways of perceiving, thinking and behaving.

Cummings and Worley (2001:500-501) and Gouillart and Kelly (1995:6) describe organisational transformation as arguably being the sole task of current day business leaders. Transformational change is prevalent which requires that business leaders become transformational leaders. And successful transformational leaders are “communicating leaders” (cf. Puth, 2002).

The view of the aforementioned authors also seems to have special significance within the South African context since organisations face many external forces, which in turn, originate from transformation in the wider socio-political context. These changes affect all spheres of life and are aimed at continuously bringing about a new order based on a set of radically different values than those that characterised the era of Apartheid. Following this logic, Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:193) refers to South Africa as “... a nation in transition”.

The two dimensions of transformational change management that are central to the aforementioned definitions form the focus areas for this chapter, i.e. corporate philosophy and leadership. The last, but overarching focus area is the exploration of new management paradigms to facilitate organisational transformation.

2.3 KEY DIMENSIONS OF CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE COMMUNICATION

According to the literature, five key dimensions differentiate transformation from other change phenomena or have a significant impact on the success of transformational change communication efforts. These five dimensions transcend specific worldviews. They need clarification in order to validate the conceptualisation of the implementation of the EEA as transformational change and possible complicating factors, as described in the next chapter. They are organisational complexity and the complexity of organisational reactions to change, corporate leadership, multiple stakeholders, corporate culture and organisational learning.

2.3.1 Organisational complexity and complexity of organisational reactions to change

Grundy (1998:55-58) and Jick and Peiperl (2003:218) define organisational change as a complex process since each organisation's collective reaction to change (or transformational) efforts is unpredictable. They estimate that the time it takes for change or transformation to be fully accepted is directly dependent on the complexity of the linkages within the organisation.

The complexity of organisations also means that no "magic bullet" hypothesis about communication or implementation formulae can be applied to all divisions or units of organisations: "Each level has to go through its own process of comprehending the change and coming to terms with it" (Jick & Peiperl, 2003:218).

These authors contend that large-scale transformation (reorientation) may take anything from three to seven years in complex organisations. Apart from organisational complexity, two other reasons may explain such a time lapse. Firstly the benefits of the required changes cannot always be observed quickly and secondly change (or transformation) often entails " ... false starts, derailments and the necessity to start over in some places ... " (Jick & Peiperl, 2003:218).

2.3.2 Corporate leadership

Carnall (1999:131), Conrad and Poole (2002:121-123) and Cummings and Worley (2001:500-501) agree that transformational change cannot come about without good corporate leadership. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001) and Cummings and Worley (2001:501) contend that this type of change requires more active leadership and an extra-ordinary understanding of communication than all other change contexts. These authors emphasise the role of transformational leadership as having moved away from the conceptualisation of “leader-follower” or a list of inherent personal characteristics such as charisma, as described by Max Weber (quoted in Conrad & Poole, 2002:123). Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:45) further assert that transformational leaders “ ... must attend to people as much as they attend to content”.

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:45), as well as Cummings & Worley (2001:501) agree that transformational leaders are mainly responsible for three dimensions of organisational transformation: envisioning, energizing and enabling. The articulation of a new vision and setting an “energising example” are core tasks of the transformational leader. These tasks cannot be fulfilled without communication (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Carnall, 1999; Conrad & Poole, 2002; Cummings & Worley, 2001; and Puth, 2002). The influence of the chaos theory and complexity science perspective on the conceptualisation of leadership, appear at the end of this chapter.

2.3.3 Multiple stakeholders

Cummings and Worley (2001:513) argue that transformational change also affects a multitude of stakeholders. Therefore they suggest that much consideration should be devoted to balancing the interests of various stakeholders. Goodijk (cf. 2003), Post, Preston and Sachs (cf. 2002), Scholes and Clutterback (cf. 1998), Steyn and Puth (cf. 2000) and Wheeler and Sillanpää (cf.1998) also emphasise the importance of the strategic stakeholder approach, while pointing to the implications for the management of communication. The same authors emphasise the importance of viewing employees as strategic assets - a perspective that governs this study.

Specific stakeholders to be considered within the context of implementing the EEA, deserves much attention. The most important fact to consider within this chapter is that the Act itself refers to specific internal stakeholders and the requirement that organisations which implement affirmative action

measures, are supported by several guideline documents issued by the South African Department of Labour.

2.3.4 Corporate culture

Cummings and Worley (2001:501-502) view corporate culture as the most common terrain of organisational transformation. They also define this phenomenon as the answer to three common questions: "What really matters around here?", "How do we do things around here?" and "What do we do when a problem arises?"

The same authors contend that new corporate strategies often fail since the corporate culture either cannot accommodate the desired change or if corporate culture itself is not addressed to reflect the desired transformed state. These arguments are congruent with various authors' view on the relationship between successful paradigmatic shifts (change and transition) and the transformational state as discussed in section 2.2.

2.3.5 Organisational learning

Cummings and Worley (2001:501) provide a conceptual link between transition of the individual and how organisations get transformed. These authors reason that lasting transformation is the result of continuous learning by all employees regarding the newly desired behaviour through which the new strategy (or strategic direction) can be achieved. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:32) also refers to organisational learning as the process through which "people transform themselves".

This learning process occurs at all levels of the organisation and does not have a definite end (Cummings & Worley, 2001:501). This is mainly due to the fact that continuous external changes occur while the organisation might still be "learning" about a particular strategy or philosophy internally. Cummings and Worley (2001:501) and Teare (1997:323) are also convinced that organisational learning is a key capacity since it will help organisations to cope with the continuous nature of change.

Appreciating the different dimensions of transformation for the sake of applying them to the context of implementing the EEA, requires consideration of the different schools of thought or worldviews on the

matter. As was indicated in the previous chapter, literature about changes, transformation and transformational communication support either the mechanistic or organic worldview.

2.4 ORGANIC THINKING ABOUT TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE AND COMMUNICATION

As was indicated in the previous chapter and sections, literature differentiates between the mechanistic (also referred to as deterministic) and organic worldviews as the sources of origin for the myriad of theories, models, concepts and opinions about the nature of transformational change. In an attempt to describe the place of emerging organic perspectives on transformational change (including chaos theory and complexity science), an overview of key characteristics from both worldviews is provided.

Although comparisons between the mechanistic and organic worldviews are well-documented in previous research and scholarly publications, a synopsis of these characteristics plays a central role in explaining the study's emphasis on the potential for understanding and addressing transformational change and transformational change communication. This comparison highlights contrasting views on the three key transformational change components within the context of the current research question: the role of the individual, the role of communication and the re-definition of transformational leadership.

The mechanistic worldview originated from the scientific management era when workers and organisations were equated with machines (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:26; Olson and Eoyang, 2001:3). Mechanistic thinking reflects the Newtonian beliefs about physics: the world is stable, predictable, unaffected by observation and driven by clearly defined causes and effects. To understand organisations, the different parts had to be studied in isolation.

A radically different perspective emerged in the form of the organic worldview. The organic worldview relies more on systems thinking in which organisations are viewed as living organisms. Grunig (1992:43-44) characterises the organic worldview according to ten dimensions. These dimensions are presented in relation to central concepts from the chaos perspective, which are highlighted.

- **Dialogue:** Communication establishes understanding among people and systems.
- **Systems thinking:**
 - Every system consists of sub-systems and forms part of a bigger, supra-system.
 - All the parts of the system are interdependent and interrelated.

- The organisation is an open system.
- **Holism:** The whole is bigger than the sum of its parts.
- **Perpetual turbulence in the external environment:** The organisation strives toward dynamic equilibrium.
- **Self-directed leadership:** All people are seen as responsible for controlling their own behaviour.
- **Control:** Management is decentralised and co-ordinated rather than authoritarian.
- **Creativity:** Innovative ideas and flexibility are encouraged.
- **Communication:** Conflict is solved through negotiation, communication and compromise, instead of coercion, manipulation or arguments.

2.4.1 Motivating factors for favouring organic thinking

The mechanistic worldview is not only criticised as being a relic of management science history, but for the flawed assumptions about organisations, the necessity for recognising relationships between the organisation and its internal and external environment, as well as assumptions about any form of change, including transformation (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Deming in Jick & Peiperl, 2003; French & Delahaye, 1996; Godard & Lenhardt, 1999; Kallio *et al.*, 2002; Murphy, 1996; Olson & Eoyang, 2001; Stickland, 1998; Ströh, 1998; Wheatley, 1994 & 1999).

These authors ascribe the high failure rate of organisational change interventions to these old-fashioned assumptions. Stickland (1998:2-3) also argues that the majority of transformational or change failures stem from the nine reasons for which chaos and complexity thinking may provide alternatives: lack of imagination regarding appropriate solutions; too much repetition of change initiatives; fear; insensitivity to the emotional cycles of transition; lack of ownership; lack of understanding about the influence of change on culture; lack of leadership; lack of organisational learning; and mismatches between communication and subsequent change efforts.

Secondly, Wheatley (1994:41) claims that scientific fields unrelated to management, revealed insights about organisations that could be useful within the arena of change and transformation management. The same author draws upon quantum physics, specifically thermodynamics, for her critique of mechanistic management thinking. This author primarily contends that mechanistic thinking relies on maps that necessitate knowledge of all the possible variables and manipulation of change outcomes.

She views this type of thinking as unrealistic since the world is essentially ever changing, unpredictable and the boundaries between systems are faint. Therefore she proposes a radically different interpretation of the forces at work in organisations, namely the act of organisation, the nature of information and leadership. According to her such a new appreciation is only possible when we "... take a step back and begin to see ourselves in a new way" (Wheatley, 1994:12).

Wheatley (1994:9) further argues that the majority of change failures stem from the fact that organisations try to follow recipe-like implementation strategies or models that were developed for different circumstances than those in which they are later applied. Her criticism stems from the observation that "... quantum physics explains clearly that there is no objective reality out there waiting to reveal its secrets. Thus everything is always new and different and unique to each of us".

Related to her questioning of change management models and theories, Wheatley (1999:138-139) points out that organisations should also no longer assume that the size and scope of change efforts will guarantee success. According to the same author organisational leaders make a critical mistake to think about these physical dimensions only. This usually occurs by matching the size and speed of any change effort with the organisation's size in the hope that this will counteract any natural organisational reaction such as resistance. In this light, French and Delahaye (1996:22-28) and Puth (2002:124-130) also recognise that fact that the reactions of humans, who are ultimately at the centre of organisations, cannot be brushed aside or used to label individuals/groups either as champions or saboteurs. Wheatley (1999:138-139) pleads for an understanding of these aspects as a natural phenomenon and not an indication of change failure.

Finally, Wheatley (1999:139) proposes that the metaphors used to describe organisations, ought to focus on the "living dynamism" of networks which continuously seek meaningful information, rather than viewing organisational elements as "... billiard balls that bang into one another in order to effect change ... " (or transformation). Such an understanding is only possible when the underlying assumptions of the organic worldview are fully integrated into organisational change (by implication also transformation) efforts (cf. Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fitzgerald & Van Eijnatten, 2002; Lissack & Roos, 1999; Murphy, 1996; Ströh & Jaatinen, 2001; Ströh, 1998; and Olson & Eoyang, 2001).

The aforementioned authors also describe the emergent perspectives from **chaos** and **complexity** as potentially yielding a much more realistic understanding of organisational change and transformation.

These emergent perspectives cannot be neatly packaged as a singular theory or model as is required by Western thought (Wheatley, 1999:139), but rather relies on core concepts which serve as a conceptual framework for re-defining the key components involved in organisational change and transformation. But before this new framework (vocabulary) is presented, the plausibility of these new perspectives needs to be critically assessed.

2.4.2 Considerations regarding the usefulness of chaos and complexity perspectives

Literature about chaos and complexity rarely seem to address the issue of how these theories/perspectives/principles are related. For the purpose of this study, the differences between chaos and complexity are not a focal point. The issue is whether the labels of "chaos" and "complexity" can or should be used interchangeably, as well as the manner in which these perspectives can be applied to the current research question.

Lissack and Roos (1999:10) define complexity as a collection of scientific disciplines, all of which refer to finding patterns among collections of behaviours or phenomena. Complexity is thus described as a broader category than chaos. But Murphy (1996:96) argues that chaos theory " ... attempts to understand why systems seem to not function in a linear, predictable ... way ... ". When viewed from afar, structures and patterns emerge. These two perspectives are thus closely related and sometimes used interchangeably.

However, Fitzgerald and Van Eijnatten (2002:402-411) contend that the interchangeable use of the concepts chaos and complexity often lead to confusion. According to these authors, many scholars sidestep this issue with vague descriptions that leave the impression that "chaos and complexity form a mantra". However, they are convinced that chaos theory is firstly an independent theory and secondly used as a lens for organisational analysis/management. These authors contend that compared to chaos theory, complexity " ... has never emerged from its original status as a metapraxis comparable to chaos ... ". This view governs this study.

Furthermore, Stickland (1998:7) is of the opinion that practice benefits from such theories since "... theory is light footed. It can adjust itself to changing circumstances, think out fresh combinations and possibly peer into the future ... ". However, Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:22) warns that failure in practice is often the result of business people's poor understanding of the abstract terminology of a particular

theory or perspective and their practical potential. This author further questions the value of theories against the background of their ever-shortening lifecycle. Previously, theories or perspectives were meaningful for about a decade. But, according to the same author, theories or perspectives now seem to lose their relevance quickly, with only a few lasting longer than one year.

This study subscribes to the notion of perspectives not being valid *ad infinitum*, therefore only proposing that organisational leaders responsible for the implementation of the EEA, take cognisance of all new perspectives, and interpret these within their unique organisational contexts. This application of ideas from the chaos perspective is also congruent with the meta-theoretical understanding of postmodernism that all concepts are open to interpretation. As such, the concepts from chaos thinking are not posed as the normative/only ideal. The latter was elected as the worldview from which to investigate the research question. However, further debate about the scientific evidence for these perspectives is beyond the scope of this study.

The emphasis of the chaos and complexity perspectives on information, communication, the individual's place and leadership within organisational change, confirm their relevance in addressing the research question and four related sub-questions (as defined in Chapter 1). The possible application of these perspectives in relation to the research question follows the description of key concepts (the new vocabulary for transformational change).

2.5 A NEW VOCABULARY FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE AND COMMUNICATION

According to Fitzgerald and Van Eijnatten (2002:406), Ragsdell (2000:104 & 113-117) and Stickland (1998:19-26) practitioners would be able to tap into the richness of chaos thinking if they "... are presented with a rich reservoir of metaphorical terminology". Therefore several concepts and metaphors that are central to the chaos perspective are described.

It is important to note that these phenomena/characteristics occur (new interpretations should be applied) simultaneously, across several dimensions of organisations and may seem paradoxical at times (cf. Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003; Murphy, 1996; Ströh, 1998; and Wheatley, 1994). The common element in all the concepts of the chaos vocabulary is communication.

2.5.1 Organisational metaphors

In recognition of the new way of looking at organisations from an organic worldview, Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:117-118), Hock (cf.1999), Lissack and Roos (cf. 1999) and Olson and Eoyang (2001:7-8) respectively prefer to use the concepts “chaordic systems” and “complex adaptive systems”. Both these descriptive terms touch on the essence of thinking about organisations in a postmodernist manner: both terms recognise the fact that non-linearity and turbulence in the external environment of organisations are the only constants of organisational life.

Sull (2002:91-99) confirms the need for re-evaluating old metaphors by citing a number of cases in which the loss of flexibility in the system became detrimental. According to him, the “new winning formula” of strategies, processes, relationships and values that set a business apart from the rest of the marketplace, is at the very heart of “the dynamic of failure”. If strategic frames help to focus managers’ attention on the issues that really matter, they may also become blinders if managers cannot see beyond them. And this, he contends, is sadly the rule, not the exception.

Processes also have the potential of becoming so routinised that they take on a life of their own once alternative ways of doing things are not even considered. Sull (2002:94) refers to this as the onset of “active inertia”. Relationships with both internal and external stakeholders also have the potential to turn into shackles once changes in the market demand different actions/reactions from an organisation (Sull, 2002:96). He argues that even though relationships and the culture pertaining to these relationships are invaluable, organisations should also realise that it is acceptable to adapt these dimensions if necessary for growth.

The final potential source of stagnation is values. Sull (2002:98-99) argues that values still represent the noble ideals of an organisation, but warns that these could easily become dogmas that no longer make rational sense. Such dogmas become almost insurmountable obstacles. That is, unless outsiders (very often consultants) are allowed to change the organisation around.

The same author concludes with the statement that the four very unique elements that once ensured success, might now cause an organisation’s death: “Success breeds active inertia and active inertia breeds failure” (Sull, 2002:99).

This argument confirms the need for organisational leaders to be fully conscious (Fitzgerald & Van Eijnatten, 2002:403) of radically different perspectives about what lies at the core of their business and whether they view themselves as part of a complex adaptive system. It further highlights Briggs and Peat's (quoted in Ströh, 1998:25) and Gouillart and Kelly's (1995:288) argument about the paradoxical demands on organisations today: coping with adapting to external forces and focusing on the current business.

2.5.2 Disequilibrium

Whereas the mechanistic worldview holds that change is disruptive and should be endured for short periods of time until the organisation could return to the "old" or known entity it was before, equilibrium is now viewed as a myth. Change is a constant state or context and so-called equilibrium a moving target (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:118). This reality influences the organisation's approach to strategic planning to the extent that various outcomes, as a result of one particular shift in the external environment, should be anticipated as opposed to only one.

Adjusting the organisation's interpretation of possible strategic actions (or reactions) is similar to adjusting the far end of a kaleidoscope and seeing unpredictable, changing patterns with every slight adjustment. Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:198) refers to the new notion of strategic thinking as "the management of surprise".

Braggett and Beavis (both quoted in Sullivan, 1999:414) argue that creative or even artistic approaches to planning need to be developed. Scenario and contingency planning are two modes of thinking suggested by Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:198) and Ströh (1998:37) for negotiating these unpredictable circumstances. Thus the very essence of long-term strategic planning is questioned.

2.5.3 Non-linearity

Newtonian thinking convinced academics and practitioners that change is a linear process, with a definite beginning and end. This type of thinking also implied that change effects follow in a predictable, linear fashion, much like the domino effect. Outcomes seemed certain. Lewin's three-stage model for change is a prime example of this type of thinking.

However, according to Murphy (1996:97), organisations face a multitude of internally and externally driven challenges, all of which translate into potential small-scale changes or transformational changes, simultaneously. Predictability is thus a misnomer in terms of both the effects on stakeholders and organisational processes. Whereas certainty (predictable outcomes) was once regarded as the ultimate goal for change management leaders (and followers), uncertainty is the new reality. This collective effect is also known as indeterminacy (sic.) (Fitzgerald & Van Eijnatten, 2002:403). The only predictable outcome is the fact that any slight change may have various (unpredictable) effects on any constituent part of an organisation. The concepts of bifurcation and butterfly-effect represent the new interpretation of the "effect of change" phenomenon.

2.5.4 Bifurcation and butterfly effect

According to Murphy (1996:97) changes in chaotic systems can lead to sudden changes in a system's direction, character or structure. This phenomenon is labelled as bifurcation. The concept bifurcation means "place of forking or branching" (Briggs and Peat quoted in Ströh, 1998:24). Sullivan (1999:414) argues that the direction of bifurcation paths is unpredictable as the result of the autonomy of response of each system. The non-linearity of changes (influences) inside and outside organisations, may be predictable, but the outcomes (direction or impact on an organisation) cannot (Murphy, 1996:97). This author maintains that an outcome (effect) may change over time – from " ... miniscule changes to [something] which bears little resemblance to the beginning".

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:40) further describes chaotic changes as occurring either as branching (bifurcations), chain reactions or accelerated movements. This author compares these occurrences with watching the blades of an electric fan at full speed: the only visible effect is the blur of all the blades.

Ströh (1998:24) interprets bifurcations as the instances when individuals for instance contribute in any "small way" and help steer an organisation in an unforeseen direction. This description suggests that when a butterfly flaps its wings in any major city in the world (an insignificant occurrence), this may lead to a weather occurrence on the opposite side of the globe (the unanticipated outcome). Cause and effect is thus non-linear. Hence the reference to the butterfly effect.

The necessity for organisations to actively facilitate inputs (of any magnitude) is apparent. This view on inputs also suggests that planned transformational strategies are flawed to the extent that unknown

dimensions often get ignored or are ultimately interpreted as “mistakes”. Resistance was also traditionally regarded as a “mistake”. The “old” notions of resistance would also apply to the implementation of affirmative action measures within EE strategies.

Against this background, organisations may want to adapt their assumptions about the psychological dimensions (reactions) to transformational efforts, including the pace at which the ideal (desired) effect would cascade downward/upward, or even the strength of a particular outcome. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:40) suggests that any manager that feels overwhelmed by these observations and the realisation of the omnipresence of change, should take the advice of searching for the “latent and lurking orderliness” within this mesh of change. The concepts of strange attractors and fractals could possibly provide insight.

2.5.5 Strange attractors and fractals

An obvious question would be: “What serve as forces that determine the occurrence and direction of bifurcations?” Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:41-42), Murphy (1996:97) and Ströh (1998:25) describe strange attractors as those phenomena that form the deep structure of any chaotic system and which also sets the boundaries for “containing” the erratic bifurcations. Briggs and Peat (quoted in Ströh, 1998:25) again stress the fact that organisations are simultaneously “ ... pulled apart and iterated toward change, transformation and disintegration ... ” and recognising the existence of “magnetic powers” that dictate these moves. Such magnetic powers are labelled as strange attractors.

A fractal, according to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:40), is any pattern that yields “greater complexity” when enlarged. Fractals arguably illustrate the essence of the chaos perspective best: in terms of form they seem chaotic since they do not correspond to the known geometric shapes, but their structure proves the existence of inherent patterns or order.

The second question to be asked, which is related to the first question, is whether organisations could exert any control over or create strange attractors. A third question is whether or not strange attractors can be strategically activated by an organisation. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:41-42), Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:200-201), Irvin (quoted in Fitzgerald & Van Eijnatten, 2002:403), Murphy (1996:97) and Ströh (1998:25) suggest that organisational ethics, culture, values and communication are strange attractors and obvious areas which organisations could utilise pro-actively. An

organisational vision, as an example, would also provide the impetus required for bifurcations to start evolving. The strategic potential of using rumours or the grapevine also becomes apparent against this background.

Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:200-201) and Wheatley (1994:135) both highlight the centrality of information and communication as strange attractors. Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:201) emphasises the very nature of communication as being a strange attractor since communication is the only means to “create meaning”. Wheatley (1994:116-117 & 135) makes two observations about information and meaning. Non-linear thinking in an organisation has the potential to free up ideas that will potentially result in information being released into the chaotic system. Information is not a linear phenomenon in chaotic systems. Following the logic of the argument that individuals will determine the conditions for their personal transformation (of whatever work-related nature), she concurs that the process of “making meaning” from information, occurs individually.

2.5.6 Irreversibility

The concepts of bifurcation and irreversibility are closely related. As open systems, organisations evolve forward and once a direction had been chosen, only fragments of the past are retained. According to Murphy (1996:96) the effect of any bifurcation cannot be reversed. When organisations decide in favour of a particular strategic option, the other options become virtually “... cut off from the future” (Sullivan, 1999:412). Sullivan (1999:412) contends that this quality in the change process helps to reduce the amount of complexity members of organisations must endure. Their options are “limited” to those in the future.

2.5.7 Scale and holism

Bifurcations are not isolated instances, but are often repeated, which leads to patterns. The interpretation of these patterns depends on the scale an observer uses for this observation. According to Murphy (1996:99) Newtonian logic proposes that generalisations can be made about a single part of the whole.

But the chaos perspective proposes a new sense of holism (the whole is bigger than the sum total of the parts). Bifurcation patterns evolve over time and indicate that an inherent order exists and governs the

bifurcations. Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:200) describes the principle of holism as critical for organisations that look back at occurrences to interpret their meaning.

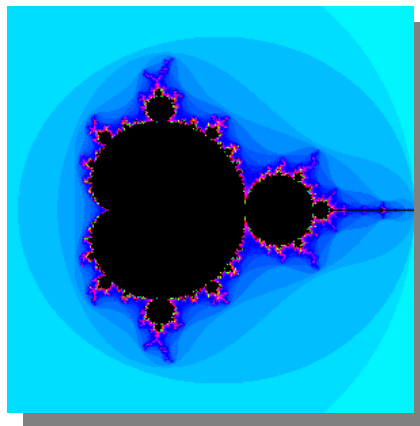
Murphy (1996:98-99) recognises the fact that different scales (miniscule detail or the whole) may be utilised when organisations want to derive meaning from an occurrence. Interpreting only the “smaller or bigger picture” is not inherently wrong, it may just limit the organisation in terms of insight (hindsight).

Wheatley (1999:144) refers to a case that highlights the difference of scale for each individual, as well as the impact of adding all these perspectives to form a whole. The purpose of “... involving the whole in pursuit of itself ...” is to indicate to the organisation where it is, while also helping individuals to see how their behaviour contributes to that whole. In terms of transformation, “... the surprise is then that they take responsibility for changing themselves”.

Figure 2.2 illustrates how a pattern had evolved and can be viewed from afar. The pattern is limited to the boundaries within which the iterations occur. Over time, the “bigger picture” forms a pattern. However, the close-up (myopic) view of any fragment of either the inner or outer dimensions of the pattern would not enable such understanding of the underlying order of the system. The myopic view is illustrated in figure 2.3 (on the next page).

Figure 2.2

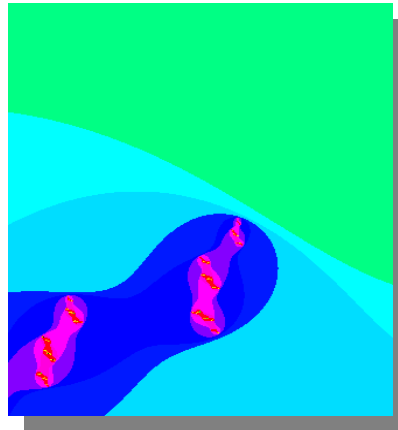
The holistic view of a fractal pattern



Source: Joyce (2004)

Figure 2.3

The myopic view of a fractal pattern



Source: Joyce (2004)

When the principle of scale and holism is applied to the context of organisational transformation as a result of an EE strategy, the lesson to be learnt is that the “bigger picture” or whole needs to be the focus when evaluating whether the transformational efforts are successful.

Specific structures or components of communication strategies cannot represent the complete picture. Since transformational change is an infinite process, the scale for evaluating the transformational process would have to be adapted accordingly. The holistic picture will point to wisdom regarding the symptomatic reasons for false starts and re-starts throughout the organisations as opposed to “quick fixes” of singular elements.

As was indicated in Chapter 1, the argument could be formulated that individuals do not change as a response to a supervisory person’s demand or a need for self-improvement. Transformation stems from a deeper awareness of the context within which they operate and insight about how individuals can contribute to a new outcome (Wheatley, 1999:144). This argument is also congruent with the view that people change or transform, not organisations.

The implication for communication is that all stakeholders (in themselves also dynamic) should be enabled to understand the bigger picture, in similar fashion as outlining a vision. Thus the mental picture could serve as energy through which individual commitment may be elicited from employees, senior decision-makers and/or other stakeholders.

2.5.8 Self-organising ability of systems and self-renewal

The most important fact about organisations, when viewed from the chaos perspective, is the defiance of the mechanistic dependence on control, structure and procedures. The act of organisation needs to be understood differently in order to fully appreciate possible implications for the management of transformation and communication. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:119-120), Tichy and Devanna (cf. 1986) and Peat (quoted in Sullivan, 1999:414) describe the process of self-organising from the perspective of evolution in systems. The last author views the evolution in systems as an " ... intelligent and co-operative adjustment to an ever-changing context".

Against this background, the self-organising process could be seen as a " ... gentle, creative and exploratory process". The inherent logic of this process is orderly, since creative jumps do not occur before the new phase has been fed back into the existing system. According to the same author, the self-organising process does not end with the creation of the new phase (iteration). Rather, each new phase adds to the holistic understanding of the whole system, as illustrated in figure 2.2 (on page 41) .

According to Littlejohn (1999:315) the act of communication is central to the organisation (in this instance the self-organising ability) of a system. Employees create an organisation by means of their everyday interactions and activities by means of a double interact process: the first act is a statement or behaviour, an interact encompasses both an act and a response, while a double interact requires at least two acts and responses.

This view could also be linked to Wheatley's (1999) view of information within a chaotic system. "Behaviour cycles are sets of interlocked behaviours that enable the group to come to an understanding about which meanings should be included and which rejected" (Littlejohn, 1999:317). In practical terms, any part of the organisation, the whole or a group of employees, self-organise and decide on the meaning and value of information.

2.5.9 Self-transcendence

Self-transcendence and the self-organising ability of systems are closely related (Sullivan, 1999:413; Wheatley, 1994:135). According to these authors, self-transcendence is an " ... evolutionary act of a social consciousness ... " to reach out beyond its known mental and physical boundaries: a process that

precedes the self-organising process when a system becomes something else. Jantsch (quoted in Sullivan, 1999:413) claims that systems need to break free from self-reference, the act through which organisations need to evaluate themselves, as well as others in the process of evolving into the new organisation.

Wheatley (1999:146) describes the act of self-transcendence as having a direct impact on organisational self-knowledge in three critical areas, namely identity, information and relationships. She pleads for this process in order for organisations to explore ways of becoming (in the sense of acting as self-organising systems) something different. The dimensions listed here, as well as her perspective, are similar to the comments of Sull (cf. 2002) in the description about the need for new organisational metaphors.

2.5.10 Interdependence and fragmentation

The single most important contribution of the chaos perspective is arguably the renewed awareness that organisational life depends on the connectivity between all participants/stakeholders. Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:199) describes the self-renewal ability of a chaotic system as significant for understanding that different units of an organisation operate interdependently – a central concept of open systems thinking. In contrast to the Newtonian compartmentalised organisation, in which units were viewed as replaceable or unrelated and with distinct borders, borders are now faint and blurred (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:118; Flower quoted in Grobler, 2003:199).

Ströh (1998:26-27) describes the disappearance of such borders as paradoxical: organisations may fear that their very autonomy could be at stake when external stakeholders, or any group that could potentially influence the organisation in its quest to achieve its goals, can cause a chaotic ripple effect. This reality may lead to a greater sense of identity and a focus on the core competencies of the organisation. If these two conditions prevail, the organisation would be better equipped to adjust rapidly to the demands from the external environment (Ströh, 1998:27). Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:199) also emphasises the potential role of a corporate communication manager in this borderless environment.

Dialogue, even in an advocacy context, would be central to the new role definition of the corporate communication manager or strategist. Advocacy would arguably stem from differing values and interests

between the organisation and publics/stakeholders or activists. Therefore, this individual (or department) would have to be able to stand both outside and inside the organisation and influence its value-creation process (cf. Leonard & Ströh, 2000). Thus again highlighting the boundary-spanning role of the corporate communication function.

2.5.11 Feedback

The final concept from the new vocabulary is feedback. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:39-40) acknowledges that the Newtonian assumption about feedback was almost revered. Only “acceptable” feedback was welcomed for the sake of the stability of the system. On the other hand, chaotic systems invite all types and forms of feedback since a living system only grows as a result of its interactions with the environment (Wheatley, 1994:87).

Ashmos and Duchon (2000:581) suggest that organisations should rather react from a paradigm of complexity absorption and could subsequently establish *ad hoc* structures to direct the information to relevant organisational constituents. Instead of searching for more mechanisms (literally “mechanistic tools”) to regain control, the dialogic process between an organisation and its environment should be the focus area: this is its life-giving source.

Feedback is central to transformational change communication and the two-way symmetrical worldview as conceptualised by Grunig (1992:45). Based on the previous two theoretical observations, the potential boundary-spanning role (Spicer, 1997:56 & 215) of the Corporate Communication division is apparent. Dialogue needs to be managed between the organisation and its different stakeholders that are no longer merely dependent on transactional interactions with the organisation. The emphasis on the strategic relationship interactions between external stakeholders and the organisation highlights the change in the influence stakeholders have on organisations (Post *et al.*, 2002:91-94). Against this background, the argument about the disappearance between organisation and traditional stakeholders, gains practical value.

The level of abstraction of the previous concepts in this section would arguably not be useful without further application in relation to the research question. Therefore the focus of the rest of this chapter is on the possible influence of the chaos perspective on the actual implementation of transformational change and a corporate communication strategy.

2.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHAOS PERSPECTIVE ON THREE FOCUS AREAS

Various authors, all of whom have been quoted in the previous sections, have provided interpretations and possible applications for the new vocabulary from the chaos perspective. Considering the wide spectrum of applications, an attempt to replicate these intellectual efforts would be inappropriate within the context of this study.

The current research question and the definition of transformational change necessitate focussing on four key areas for which new possibilities need to be explored. These focus areas are transformational corporate strategy formulation, the individual in transition, transformational leadership and the centrality of communication.

These focus areas are directly linked to the sub-questions related to and research objectives of this study, as formulated in Chapter 1. Firstly, the EEA needs to be implemented at all organisations that are classified as designated employers. This can occur either according to a corporate transformational strategy or haphazardly.

Secondly, the individuals are central to this transformational effort since the theory about individual, group and organisational transformation is supported. Thirdly, transformational leaders are viewed as pivotal to this transformational process. Evidence of this comes from the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) that describes the obligations of senior corporate and other leaders. Finally, communication is viewed as the vehicle (linchpin) for this transformational process. Evidence for the validity of this perspective is also found in the previously mentioned code, and will be described in greater detail in Chapter 4.

2.6.1 Transformational strategy formulation and implementation

Three key dimensions appear to be central to the formulation and implementation of a corporate transformation strategy (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Jick & Peiperl, 2003; and Pearce & Robinson, 1997) and are relevant to the current research question, namely strategic visioning and planning; commitment from top management; modelling of the new culture with the intention of modifying the organisation on a transformational scale.

As was mentioned previously, the usefulness of the chaos perspective lies in the new interpretation of the dimensions that have traditionally been associated with organisational transformation.

2.6.1.1 Strategic vision and planning

This is a description of the direction and purpose of the organisation, irrespective of worldview. Cummings and Worley (2001:509) and Pearce and Robinson (1997:29-30) plead for clarity of new visions since they will guide the transformational effort. Furthermore, visions are predominantly the intellectual and strategic responsibility of executive leaders. However, Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:45) reason that the core purpose of being an organisation remains the same during times of chaos. The core purpose, vision and values are inseparable. According to them, this trinity is the DNA all members of the organisation can hold onto (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:45). And, like Gouillart and Kelly (cf. 1995), the same authors argue that employees also need to stay emotionally connected to the organisation during turbulent phases.

If transformation, as is the case with the implementation of the EEA, stems primarily from a change in corporate culture, this statement should be a " ... yardstick for defining the firm's existing culture ... " and for measuring whether the current values will accommodate possible organisational changes (Cummings & Worley, 2001:509). The ideal is to align internal values and structures with the new strategic vision (direction) of the organisation.

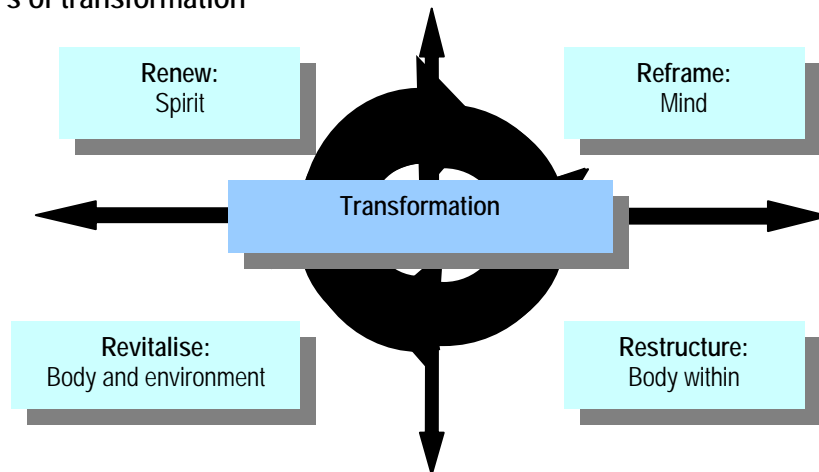
Gouillart and Kelly (1995:7) propose that four sub-divisions of the organisation need to be involved in the alignment of the vision: spirit, mind, body and environment, and body within. Following the tradition of organic thinking, these authors contend that organisations are analogous to the human body and that transformation occurs within the spiritual realm. Therefore they differentiate between four stages of transformation, which in turn, are interlinked with the four dimensions of the organisation. The relationship between these dimensions and stages is illustrated in figure 2.4 (on the next page).

The logic of these authors is similar to the notion of structure having to follow strategy, instead of the mechanistic view that structural changes will implicitly be the only solution to a problem. Chaos theory emphasises the disappearance of organisational borders and hierarchical structures, thus supporting the notion of informal leadership based on suitable expertise and possibly also matrix organisations. Matrix organisations, as described by Pearce and Robinson (1997:344-345) are flexible enough to

absorb rapid changes, or at the very least to distribute skills according to the changing needs of projects. Brodbeck (2002:26) further suggests that hybrid organisational structures and self-directed teams may serve the same purpose.

Figure 2.4

The four R's of transformation



Source: Gouillart and Kelly (1995:6)

The views expressed in the previous paragraphs echo the views of Wheatley (1994:53-55) who questions organisations' (people's) dependence on "clear" visions. The same author argues that employees seldom deal effectively with ambiguity and have thus come to rely on one specific picture or mental model of the future. She furthermore argues that leaders have and are still often ensuring that structures be put in place to control the outcomes as to fit the future state that was defined by a linear (Newtonian) vision, irrespective of the dynamic nature of the organisation's needs. Finally, this author pleads for the development of individual capacity to deal with ambiguity and a move away from the reliance on structure. Based on Wheatley's argument, it seems appropriate to emphasise that visions should not become blinders too, as described by Sull (cf. 2002) in section 2.5.1.

The paradoxical nature of the chaos perspective is evident with the emerging questions about whether alignment is not inherently based on control by the corporate leadership and whether strategic planning is at all possible within the ever-changing corporate environment. Such an interpretation leads to related questions, including the following four:

- Would the many possibilities that originate from a multitude of bifurcations really lead to a specific direction for the organisation?
- What if different units of an organisation refuse to reach consensus about the collective strategic direction?
- Is “coherence”, as suggested by Lissack and Roos (1999), really an alternative to strictly controlled compliance?

Scenario planning, as was mentioned previously, is viewed as one of the strategies to overcome possible confusion or paralysis. The misnomer that chaotic systems are unrelated to order, deserves to be emphasised again. Du Plooy-Cilliers (cf. 2003), Ströh (1998:19-20) and Wheatley (cf. 1994) stress the fact that the chaos perspective is at first misleading.

Novices may at first only take cognisance of the disorderly state(s) of a system, but they should come to terms with the concepts of scale, holism and fractals (and their interpretations) as described and discussed in the previous section. The underlying, natural order of the universe should be observed and then applied to the appreciation of organisational dynamics. Such insight, according to the chaos perspective, constitutes wisdom.

The aforementioned questions emphasise the need for communication as a vehicle to facilitate agreement. The centrality of communication seems to transcend all barriers between worldviews.

2.6.1.2 Commitment from top management

Mechanical and hierarchical thinking relies on the notion that transformation cannot occur without visible commitment from top management. “Constant pressure for the overall change process needs to come from a committed corporate leadership” (Cummings & Worley, 2001:509; Pearce & Robinson, 1997:340-346). Conversely, the chaos perspective suggests that informal leadership could facilitate transformation by means of the occurrence of bifurcations and ultimately a butterfly effect(s).

A question that arises from these opposing views is, whether in following Wheatley's (1999:139-140) suggestion about utilising the natural forces in organisations, the notion of self-directed leadership is not perhaps premature without employees being empowered to fulfil these responsibilities. In similar fashion to the previous sub-section, three questions are also posed about leadership:

- Are employees all capable of being self-directed leaders? (Are all individuals able and willing to take risks when traditional control mechanisms do not exist?)
- Will employees ever grow beyond the entrenched belief that assigned leadership positions must provide strategic leadership?
- Is it realistic to expect informal leaders to have or exert enough symbolic power to really influence the core direction of the organisation, instead of merely changing superficial aspects?

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:115-129) suggest that the nature of transformational leadership has evolved to the extent that chaos concepts are fully integrated. They also view such leaders as central to modelling the desired new values, but not as the only important organisational role players. Therefore these authors suggest that transformational leadership encompasses both “knowing, doing and being”.

The question of whether practices from the mechanic and organic worldviews should necessarily be viewed as mutually exclusive, also emerges. Firstly, the practice of appointing key role players in leadership positions, as described by Cummings and Worley (2001:500-501), continues fairly regularly. This does not mean that structure is the focus of such an intervention, but could rather indicate that the organisation focuses on the desired results. Secondly, the absorption of this transformational process into different dimensions of the organisation, may be facilitated by means of each organisation’s philosophy toward and capabilities regarding transformation.

2.6.1.3 Modelling of the new culture

The transformation of corporate culture is widely viewed as both quite a complicated and a continuous process, which also requires visible leadership commitment. Cummings and Worley (2001:510) contend that cultural change requires an almost missionary zeal to exhibit the desired new values and behaviours. The same critical questions about the nature of corporate leadership also apply to this dimension.

The only possible new questions about the applicability of the chaos theory the modelling of the new corporate culture are whether the traditional approaches to corporate culture management would change or whether corporate culture would facilitate the chaos perspective. Cummings and Worley’s (2001:505-509) description of three approaches to this phenomenon is relevant in this sub-section.

The behavioural approach emphasises the surface level and pertains to the patterns of behaviour that produce business results. The competing values approach recognises the existence of sets of values that pertain to the internal focus and integration vs. external focus and differentiation; and/or flexibility/discretion vs. stability and control (Cummings & Worley, 2001:506). Finally, the deep assumptions approach focuses on the tacit and shared assumptions that guide behaviour and " ... very often have a powerful impact on organisational effectiveness" (Cummings & Worley, 2001:507).

From this description it seems that the organisational dimensions described in the competing values approach, need to be addressed in order to accommodate the potential insights from the chaos theory perspective. Once again, the feasibility of such changes can be questioned. Sull's (cf. 2002) opinion about values and cultures becoming dogmas, may prove that such changes don't occur organically, but may require expert assistance from external sources, thus leaving it open to interpretation as either intrinsically mechanical or organic.

2.6.2 Individual transition

Exploring the nature of individual transition within corporate transformation stems from both the nature of the current research question and four related theoretical views. Firstly, the industrial psychology perspective about the levels of change necessary for the implementation of organisational diversity measures such the EEA, postulates that the individual is at the core of this process (De Beer, cf. 2002). Secondly, transformation is described as a continuous process (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:171-173). Thirdly, the importance of the individual is emphasised within the chaos perspective on change and transformation, as described by Wheatley (cf.1994 & 1999). Finally, the conceptual link between transition and transformation is emphasised by various authors (as mentioned at the start of this chapter).

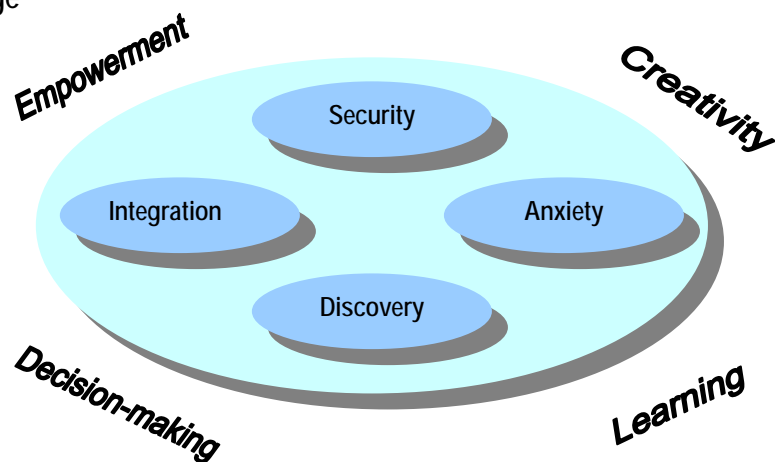
A repetition of these ideas would arguably not add any insight in terms of the research question. Thus French and Delahaye's (cf. 1996) view about the evolution of theories of individual transitions is explored. These authors argue that both the gap closure and gap connection approaches to understanding and facilitating individual transition are flawed when assumptions about the true nature of change (or transformation) are flawed. Both of these approaches relied on the mechanical assumptions that transition is linear, finite, resistance is guaranteed and an externally focussed process (French &

Delahaye, 1996:23-24). Gap closure refers to the notion that a gap exists between an old and a new situation and rests on the objective of transplanting the individual into the new situation.

Gap connection further focuses on the degree of movement required between the old and the new situation in order for the individual to accept the change and rests on the fulfilment of diverse individual needs (French & Delahaye, 1996:23). These authors embrace some of the chaos perspective principles and thus propose that individual transition is cyclical, progressive, contemporaneous and selective. Individual change is not as predictable as was initially believed. These authors formulated a model to explain the intricacies of individual transition that consists of four phases and four propellants, as illustrated in the figure 2.5. The phases are security, anxiety, discovery and integration.

Figure 2.5

Transitional change



Source: French and Delahaye (1996:6)

□ Security

Security is the first phase and refers to the pre-change state. French and Delahaye (1996:24) maintain that the illusion of control over changeable situations lead to this sense of security. Their reference to the illusion of control reflects the chaos perspective notion of continuous change. These authors also view the building blocks of security as the very stumbling blocks of transitions: familiar habits and views of the world need to be challenged in order to regain some flexibility through which continuous scanning and the disappearance of boundaries will emerge (French & Delahaye, 1996:24).

The same authors also warn against too much security since this may lead to boredom and dissatisfaction. Individuals can break free from security once they react to their true interaction with the internal organisational environment. Such creativity encompasses self-awareness, knowledge, intuition and environmental scanning (French & Delahaye, 1996:24).

□ Anxiety

Anxiety, as defined by French and Delahaye (1996:24-25), means more than the fact that the individual loses familiar patterns of processing. It also recognises the fact that some individuals may stay in the “cusp of change” much longer than others. During this phase all the emotions, such as fear, disillusion, grief and disorientation, as described by Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:193–194) and Puth (2002:124), surface most prominently. Gap closure interventions could assist the individual in moving beyond this anxiety. French and Delahaye (1996:24) emphasise the importance of communication as a central element of gap closure interventions.

Learning is the modification behaviour required to move beyond anxiety. In this context individual learning will enable someone to develop an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, thus having an impact on career and life goals (French & Delahaye, 1996:25).

□ Discovery

Discovery is the third phase of this model and is also multi-faceted. Apart from almost obviously referring to the discovery of new information, skills and behaviours, it is empowering and propelled by high levels of energy (French & Delahaye, 1996:25). Time lapse associated with this phase is linear in the sense that it allows freedom for letting go of old behaviours and embracing new ones. Individual development, by means of gap connection models, helps to ease the individual into new realities.

□ Integration

At this point the paradoxical reality of constant change becomes apparent: the more learning takes place, the wider the spectrum of choices an individual would have (French & Delahaye, 1996:25). And this knowledge enables the individual to make choices in accordance with his/her newly discovered objectives. Choices about change thus pull individuals from discovery to integration (French &

Delahaye, 1996:25). Integration is the stage when all learning is synthesised and individuals seek opportunities for the new behaviour to be evaluated. French and Delahaye (1996:26) reason that self-evaluation and reflection is central to this stage since they allow the individual to “belong” in the new environment.

Finally, these stages come to a momentary end with the completion of the cycle of implementation, evaluation and commitment (French & Delahaye, 1996:26). The same authors conclude that this model is supposed to broaden the understanding of individual transition in order to manage it. In the postmodern tradition, it may provide “multiple pathways” for individual transition, which may ultimately result in organisational transformation.

2.6.3 Transformational leadership

Finding insight regarding the ideal nature of leadership within the context of the current research question, necessitates the exploration of two key aspects, i.e. emergent dimensions of transformational leadership and the formality of leadership status. Once again the possibilities from the chaos perspective are explored in an attempt to gain insight about the potential of transformational leaders within the context of the implementation of the EEA.

As was indicated throughout this chapter, transformational change requires mindset shifts. Individuals are at the centre of the transitional and transformational processes for the simple reason that they need to make those mindset shifts in order for an organisation to reflect the transformed vision, values or emerging state, irrespective of the worldview about transformation management. Various authors who embrace the chaos perspective contend that the nature of leadership has changed, but agree that it is still a key impetus to effect transformation (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Jick & Peiperl, 2003; Johnson, 1995; Keene, 2000; Moran & Brightman, 2000; Teare, 1997; and Olson & Eoyang, 2001).

Instead of merely listing a number of responsibilities or qualities leaders ought to adhere to in chaotic systems, various authors attempt to integrate these dimensions into broad frameworks. Similarly to Wheatley’s description, Flower (quoted in Ströh, 1998:38) argues that managers (leaders) would have to spend energy in creating the environment in which individuals will pursuit the relevant information (during turbulent times) and develop themselves.

Keene (cf. 2000) and Moran and Brightman (cf. 2000) emphasise the need for a sense of accountability for the transformational effort, empowerment of others, visionary ability and facilitating the “... release of those within the organisation”. Similarly to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:183), Godard and Lenhardt (1999:69-72) and Keene (2000:17) agree that transformational leaders within the arena of organisational complexity should keep three guidelines in mind:

- ❑ Leadership does not imply the responsibility of conformity, but is an internal process, an attitude.
- ❑ The emotional ownership and pride make sensitivity regarding the empowerment of others to co-create the organisational reality, an imperative.
- ❑ The ability to solve problems by viewing the world differently lies at the heart of complexity-leadership.

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:183) further suggest that transformational leadership is primarily based on “conscious process thinking”. Thus transformational leadership encompasses both the dimensions of knowledge, tasks/responsibilities and consciously modelling the desired new mindset(s). This framework refers to seven core competencies of transformational change leaders. These authors’ framework is favoured within the context of this study and is therefore described in relation to broader theoretical views. The seven competencies of this framework are:

- ❑ **Competence 1: Integrating people, process and content needs**

Key dimensions of a transformational corporate strategy, as well as the emotional stake of employees in effecting transformation, are emphasised (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001:183). These authors evidently also understand the need for flexibility (adaptability) according to emerging organisational conditions and needs.

The organisational vision that gives direction to the transformational effort, is viewed as the pivotal element of re-aligning the organisation. Leaders can be either formally assigned (designated) or situational, depending on the needs of the organisation or transformational change effort.

□ **Competence 2: Conscious process thinking to design the change**

The responsibility of leaders is made explicit: they cannot shy away from their own commitment to the transformational process or their intellectual contribution to the latter. As was indicated previously, transformational change should be viewed as a continuous process, or more accurately an infinite process. This quality inherently requires unwavering commitment from leaders, either formal or informal.

The previous classification of transformational leadership as a “thinking science” further validates the reference to “conscious process thinking” by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001:183). Thinking implies that changing needs and organisational conditions need to be considered throughout. Leaders will be able to react swiftly and appropriately in adjusting dimensions of the transformational corporate strategy.

□ **Competence 3: Modelling and promoting the emerging mindset**

The tension between traditional and new conceptualisations of leadership is again evident in this requirement. It could be argued that leaders don't need to carry the responsibility of illustrating their commitment to a particular transformational effort first, but when the symbolic value of their actions is considered, Anderson and Ackerman Anderson's (2001:183) view seems valid.

Given the rather pessimistic view on self-directed leadership, it would further seem that the “being” of the transformational corporate vision or values, would still resort under the sphere of responsibility of leaders. The dimension of “being” further represents the only concrete manner of effecting transformation: if leaders were not committed to the day-by-day experience of the new mindsets, mindsets may arguably remain abstract phenomena. When mindsets are not operationalised, the effects thereof may not be noticeable and be ultimately worthless.

□ **Competence 4: Aligning and integrating all the interdependent systems and processes**

The emphasis on the interdependent nature of all organisational components is pivotal to understanding the place of leadership positions in relation to the rest of the organisation. This view also reflects holistic thinking as opposed to mechanistic thinking. Alignment is necessary in all components of the organisation, as explained by Gouillart and Kelly (cf. 1995) for transformation to take effect. Leaders

could utilise their strategic or managerial view of the organisation to build linkages (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 65) throughout the organisation in order to ensure alignment and possibly also organisational learning. Organisational learning is the state that could ensure lasting transformational change. Transformational leaders are also obliged to communicate, as well as facilitated communication about the details of a transformational strategy.

□ **Competence 5: Catalysing people's commitment and highest contribution to the change**

This requirement draws upon the conceptualisation of transformation occurring at individual intellectual and emotional levels. This is congruent with De Beer's (cf. 2002) theory about individuals being at the core of transformation. The commitment of employees is also the energy that will move the organisation forward.

The notion of "highest contribution" may be criticised as based on the assumption that employees will automatically be committed to investing emotionally and intellectually in the transformational process. Individuals are viewed as having the ultimate decision-making ability about this matter. And when compared to guidelines for leadership, it seems appropriate to question whether commitment can really be ensured from the organisation's side.

However, it seems that leaders can attempt to create the climate in which individuals could communicate openly about the transformational efforts or to exhibit their contributions to the process in their unique ways. The communication competence of transformational leaders is central to helping employees contribute to (feel part of) the transformational process (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001).

□ **Competence 6: Creating and sustaining conditions for success for the change**

The value of this required competency seems to lie at the level of connecting the abstract ideas from the chaos perspective with concrete organisational dynamics. Wheatley (1994:116) pleads for leaders to be "equilibrium busters" by means of opening systems to free flow of information and subsequent dialogue (also conflict) about a change or transformational process. Leaders are thus directly responsible for ensuring that their immediate or strategic sphere of influence remain receptive to all kinds of information, thereby being able to react appropriately to changing communication needs of employees.

This competence, as is the case with all the previous ones, would further imply that leaders are intrinsically responsible for communication: without their involvement in managing or facilitating communication any transformational effort would arguably lose speed and/or focus.

□ **Competence 7: Building organisational capacity for ongoing change and self-renewal**

Since transformational change is infinite, the organisation's ability to keep up with changing demands is critical. As was indicated previously, organisational learning should be central to self-renewal. Employees and communication are equally vital to this process, but leaders would have helped develop employees' ability to cope with and contribute to the organisation's well-being as an entity that continuously learns (cf. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001).

Against this background, it seems that leadership is much more based on a heightened sense of awareness of responsibility for accommodating complexity in all its guises. This stands in contrast to the notion of enabling massive forces that should wipe resistance, conflict and diversity from the table. The emphasis of the aforementioned seven competencies on the dialogic process of making meaning, may prove useful within the context of managing transformation related to the implementation of the EEA.

As was mentioned previously, the interdependence of leadership and other individuals are central in chaotic systems. The irony seems to be that employees have been indoctrinated into the hierarchical tradition to the extent individuals cannot become self-directed leaders (cf. Johnson, 1995; Keene, 2000; and Moran & Brightman, 2000). Johnson (cf. 1995) argues that employees refrain from being self-directed leaders because of their conditioning and organisational conditions that minimise their power and influence. This author suggests that some organisations do not yet realise the power of having empowered employees. She also argues that such a relationship is more like a parent-child relationship than the desired adult-adult relationship.

Wheatley (1994:64) cautions that the very notion of strictly hierarchical or formal leadership could limit organisations in terms of the possibilities that are observed and subsequently reacted on. Informal leadership and self-directed leadership (individual or in teams) are proposed as two alternatives to mechanistic thinking (cf. Johnson, 1995; Keene, 2000; and Wheatley, 1994).

Finally, Wheatley (1994:43) offers an interpretation regarding the real responsibilities of leaders within complex or chaotic systems. In short, leaders facilitate – through communication - the release of energy from individuals that will trigger creative processes, which in turn, will contribute to change or transformation (Wheatley, 1994:43) – a view that governs this study:

“As leaders, we play a crucial role in selecting the melody, setting the tempo, establishing the key, inviting the players. But that is all we can do. The music comes from something we cannot direct, from a unified whole created among the players – a relational holism that transcends separateness. In the end, when it works, we sit back, amazed and grateful.”

2.7 CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of transformational change had to be described prior to a description of the context of this study, *viz a viz*, the implementation of affirmative action as part of EE. Transformational change is different from other change-related concepts: it is an infinite process that affects the hearts and minds (spiritual essence) of individuals in organisations. Communication is central to the process of effecting transformation. Organic perspectives on the dynamics of change and transformation provide a new vocabulary that needs to be interpreted when applied to corporate transformation strategy formulation and implementation. The chaos perspective also extends to the conceptualisation of transformational leadership.

Chapter 3

Affirmative Action in South Africa: Development approaches and legislative requirements

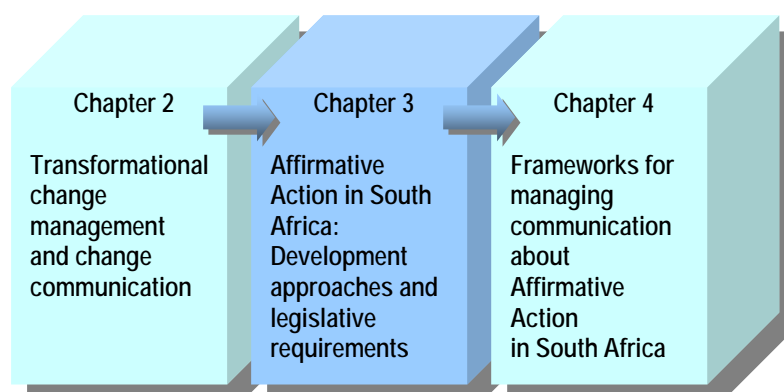
3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of definitions of and approaches to Affirmative Action within the South African context. The historical origins of five human capital development approaches emphasise key societal and organisational dimensions that have undergone dramatic changes since the late 17th century. It also focuses on defining Affirmative Action as a phenomenon from both a paradigmatic, legal and pragmatic perspective.

This chapter also explores the relationship between the concepts of Affirmative Action, Employment Equity, diversity management and black economic empowerment. Finally, it highlights key issues that complicate the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) as a transformational phenomenon. Figure 3.1 illustrates Chapter 3 in relation to the other theoretical chapters.

Figure 3.1

Chapter 3 in relation to other theoretical chapters



3.2 THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL NATURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Affirmative Action (henceforth referred to as AA), like any social phenomenon, requires a contextual description. The first half of this chapter describes AA against the background of different human

capital development approaches in relation to specific historical periods, as well as the impact of these approaches on corporate values, corporate culture and the wider South African society. This understanding of the evolution of the South African employment environment is of paramount importance.

Two dimensions of the EEA confirm that its implementation process is transformational. Firstly, the EEA is aimed at bringing about lasting societal transformation by means of enforcing certain measures on designated employers. Appointing employees from designated groups is not merely a temporary, superficial or structural change issue. De Beer (2002:ii) and Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:9) not only view these measures as mechanisms for facilitating equitable representation of previously disadvantaged groups in society, but also as measures which will result in a workforce which represents diverse individual and group values, cultures and contributions (cf. De Beer & Radley, 2000). In this context diversity encompasses race, gender, disability, culture, education/training, language and religion. Diversity *per se* cannot be reversed: once it is embedded in an organisation, it affects every fibre of organisational life (De Beer, 2003).

Secondly, individuals and groups across different race groups often have to alter deep-seated beliefs about one another in accepting AA measures in South African organisations. Such a process requires a paradigmatic transition as described by De Beer (2002:ii), Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:192) and Madi (1993:ix). These changes cascade downward through an organisation.

De Beer (2002:ii) differentiates between individual, group and organisational levels of transformation. Individual attitudes, values, stereotypes/prejudices and personality factors need to be transformed in accordance with the desired (or acceptable) paradigm. Cultural differences, ethnocentrism and intergroup conflicts need to be addressed at group level. At organisational level, human resources management systems and procedures need to reflect the legislative requirements, while structural and informational integration should also occur (cf. De Beer, 2002; De Beer, 2003; De Beer & Radley, 2000; and Thomas and Robertshaw, 1999). The information to be communicated internally is aimed at helping individuals make a transition, as was suggested by French and Delahay (cf. 1996).

The normative, overarching vision for organisations that implement the EEA, is the fair reflection of the South African population demographics based on tolerance, mutual respect and trust between all individuals. Even though the EEA is currently enforced as a top-down process, organisations realise

that the successful implementation thereof requires a change in the “hearts and minds” (spiritual essence) of employees, mainly by means of accepting a new set of values (De Beer, 2003).

This transformational effort should incorporate the two underlying themes of AA, as described by Van Jaarsveld (2000:7-8). The first is justice and the second, equality. Although this author emphasises the fact that these legal and philosophical concepts are open to debate, they need to be accepted in the wider society in order for related legislation to function properly.

Finally, this description of the impact of the EEA on organisations and specifically the people in organisations, is congruent with Cummings and Worley’s (2001:498), Gouillart and Kelly’s (1995:6), Grobler’s (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:192), as well as Jick and Peiperl’s (2003:xvii) conceptualisation of transformational change.

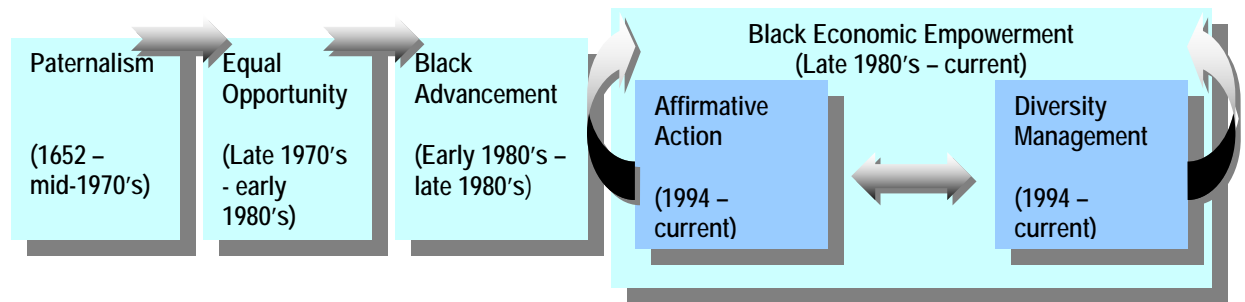
3.3 HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SIX ERAS

Understanding current thinking about the development of South Africa’s human capital requires an overview of the historical realities and previous development approaches. Such an overview will also sketch current thinking about the development of South Africa’s human capital against the ideals of the International Labour Organisation. (Since Chapter 1 refers to the philosophy of human capital development as a paradigm, the different historical eras and the subsequent approaches to development are not labelled as paradigms.)

South African history, specifically the principle of racial segregation, dictated the development of six human capital development eras. De Beer (cf.1998), De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000), Denton and Vloeberghs (cf. 2003), Horwitz *et al.* (cf. 1996), Edigheji (cf. 1999), Engdahl and Hauki (cf. 2001), King Report II (cf. 2002) and Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999) describe these as Paternalism, Equal Opportunity, Black Advancement, Affirmative Action, the Management of Diversity and Black Economic Empowerment. These six eras are illustrated in figure 3.2 on the next page. This figure further highlights the perspective that AA and diversity management are embedded in current thinking about Black Economic Empowerment.

Figure 3.2

Human capital development eras in South Africa



Finally, although the Affirmative Action and Diversity Management approaches are often compared for their relevance within and impact on South African organisations, they are viewed as of equal importance within organisational transformation.

3.3.1 Paternalism (1652 – mid-1970's)

De Beer (1998:3-11), Engdahl and Hauki (2001:11) and Van der Walt (1994:21-24) describe the paternalistic approach as a result of the feudal system of the Middle Ages when workers (serfs) had to work for landowners. In the South African context, property owners and employers were mainly white. Laws that segregated people on the basis of race, governed all spheres of life. Organisations did not always agree with these laws, but benefited financially – it was viewed as “unwise” to integrate “black people” into business if they were not integrated into government.

The meaning of the concept paternalism becomes evident when the underlying beliefs about the non-white workforce are considered. The primary belief was that such workers were not able to function independently, and therefore needed someone who “knew best” (De Beer, 1998:3; Van der Walt, 1994:21-24). Government’s migrant labour policies strengthened the perception that non-white employees were only acceptable as temporary in a “white environment”.

Finally, non-white employees were restricted to mainly unskilled jobs and very few training opportunities. Three categories of negative stereotypes about these employees influenced every aspect of organisational life, namely that these employees had inferior cognitive characteristics, their inferior scholastic training did not prepare them properly for the working environment, and finally that cultural differences would pose insurmountable problems (De Beer, 1998:5; De Beer & Radley, 2000:28-41; and Engdahl & Hauki, 2001:11-13).

Anstey (in De Beer, 1998:6) describes the corporate culture during this era as based on “unitary Westernisation” – Western values were deemed superior to any other values and enforced upon all constituents of organisations. The majority of white employees in management positions ensured that these values were enforced. These values also shaped the general notion of modernisation. Modernisation pertains to economic, social, educational, political, individualistic, intellectual and religious spheres (Moerdyk and Coldwell quoted in De Beer, 1998:17).

Non-white employees who wished to find more lucrative job opportunities, had to structure their lives in terms of urbanisation and take on the outwardly aspects of Western values. Employee participation for both white and non-white employees was minimal, while the latter was never expected to be involved in decision-making (De Beer, 1998:9-10). Negotiation committees in the workplace became reality in the sixties and seventies, but this system often failed as a result of mistrust and low credibility among employees since management often appointed such committee members.

Finally, the social role of organisations within this approach was divided along racial lines. Upliftment of the “poor whites” was the focus of government and business. Organisations rarely involved themselves in upliftment since their *raison d’etra* was business and not society, Government developed the infrastructure for self-development in the black homelands. However, this did not lead to the same degree of development regarding education, job creation and housing as was the case in white areas where “vast amounts of money was spent” (De Beer, 1998:11).

3.3.2 Equal Opportunities (Late 1970’s to early 1980’s)

The underlying philosophy of the equal opportunities approach originated from an increased awareness of community leaders about the moral right of all humans to be treated equally. As part of the relaxation of apartheid legislation, the Wiehahn Report (Madi, 1993:4; Van Jaarsveld, 2000:17-18) of the late seventies formalised the principle that all employees are equal before the law. Therefore all employees should also have had the opportunity to progress to senior positions in organisations (De Beer, 1998:13).

The macro-economic policy still depended on Apartheid laws, but the realisation that all race groups were economically interdependent, dawned. Non-white residents in cities were viewed as permanent, rather than temporary. But they had limited social rights. Government realised that the separate non-

white education system had to be improved and attempts were made to address some of the issues following the 1976 and 1983 riots (De Beer, 1998:14). The introduction of the Labour Relations Act and abolishment of legislation pertaining to work restriction signalled improvements of human rights (De Beer, 1998:14; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:84 - 85).

A philosophy of the Expectancy theory was adopted regarding non-white employees' careers. This theory postulates that employees are able to calculate the effects of their actions on desired outcomes (cf. Orpen, 1976). Employees would have to formulate expectations about the future and value of the future reward(s). According to De Beer (1998:15) and Madi (1993:8-9) this approach failed since many non-white employees had poor educational levels, low aspirations, low confidence levels and lacked support from management.

Furthermore, resistance to special development programmes for non-whites in organisations was threefold: training was seen as unrelated to the "business of business", white managers feared a white backlash and both white and non-white employees resented the notion of being singled out for such training or development efforts (De Beer, 1998:15; De Beer & Radley, 2000:28-40). Madi (1993:4) and Van Sittert-Triebel (1996:73) refer to this approach as the "peacock approach" since non-white appointees were more often than not appointed in client service, community relations, industrial relations and public affairs positions during this era.

Organisations reflected the assimilation of non-white employees' values. Western work ethic, capitalism and the free market system were still unquestioned. White managers started to appreciate the reality of cultural diversity (De Beer, 1998:16-18). In this approach very few non-white employees were considered to have advanced sufficiently on all dimensions of modernisation (as described in the previous section) to fill senior management positions.

White employees were also of the opinion that work and production standards should not have been lowered to accommodate more non-white employees into advanced high-level positions. De Beer (1998:19) describes the type of consultation in organisations during this historical era as limited, but real. Non-white employees were mainly consulted in production issues and while labour unions (predominantly for non-whites) became more prominent. Consultation with employees was very structured and " ... spontaneous participation of black people in decision-making ... " was almost unheard of (De Beer, 1998:19).

Finally, organisations' involvement with their communities was more advanced, but still excluded non-white employees. The schemes included housing subsidies, medical insurance and pension funds. However, many organisations focused on the grassroots development approach in non-white areas by building schools and providing transport from non-white residential areas to the workplace. Frustration about the limiting effect of apartheid laws regarding the involvement in non-white communities, forced business to lobby with government to lift these laws (De Beer, 1998:19).

3.3.3 Black Advancement (Early 1980's to late 1980's)

The macro environment underwent "radical changes" during this era. De Beer (1998:22) describes this as " ... the breaking down of grand Apartheid in all seriousness ... ". The Tri-cameral system and Presidents' council were introduced as forms of power-sharing and consultation, but both excluded blacks. Negotiations with black political leaders were initiated within this decade (De Beer, 1998:22; Madi, 1993:4).

Restrictions on individual freedom were removed, which meant that non-white residents were viewed as legitimate, permanent residents in urban areas. Mixed marriages were legalised and access for non-white learners was granted at white educational institutions under certain reservations (De Beer, 1998:22-24). According to De Beer (1998:22) and Van Sittert-Triebel (1996:73-74) the development from the equal opportunity approach to the black advancement approach was brought about by three factors: politicians' realisation that the political and economic futures of all races are "interwoven", enormous international pressure through economic sanctions, and the realisation that organisations should take responsibility for remedial and development programmes instead of government.

The provision of basic education became a cornerstone of organisations' social responsibility (De Beer, 1998:22). Internal training or development efforts were budgeted for the under social investment account and viewed as " ... an investment to rectify ... the past injustices to the community" (De Beer, 1998:24).

De Beer (1998:21) describes this era as vital to the realisation of the skills gap that existed between white and non-white employees. Most of the legislation that separated races in the workplace were abolished by now. But non-white employees were not yet represented on managerial level. Van Sittert-Triebel (1996:75) mentions that non-white employees thus reached a glass ceiling relatively quickly.

De Beer (1998:23) further claims that human resource practitioners realised during this period that each employee's early home and school environments form a whole with the work environment. The detrimental effects of disadvantages in either of these, as far as non-white employees were concerned, were slowly being recognised by organisations (De Beer, 1998:23). In an attempt to bridge these gaps, organisations implemented mentorship programmes that facilitated informal learning/education to those individuals who aspired to managerial positions.

Perceptions about the required duration of such training programmes varied between organisations. Van Sittert-Triebel (1996:75) claims that non-white appointees were very often sent on one development course after another, without a clear career path that would usually be associated with training and development. Many organisations also contended that it was almost impossible to measure progress within this system objectively, therefore they opted not to measure black advancement programmes at all (De Beer, 1998:24).

Values within organisations still reflected a dominantly unitary modern system, with some tolerance for non-Western values. The focus was on a relatively homogeneous modern value system amongst senior management (De Beer, 1998:24). White managers also viewed the relatively slow progress of internalising modern work values by potential high-level employees from the non-white ranks, as a major obstacle. Japanese examples regarding the internalisation of modern production values and manifest modern work behaviour, without the loss of traditional oriental identity, were often cited to explain that a similar transition was possible for non-white employees (De Beer, 1998:25-26). De Beer (1998:26-34) also refers to the myriad of development models/frameworks organisations implemented to address these issues.

Compared to the previous approaches to human capital development, inputs from non-white employees were actively sought for decision-making within the black advancement paradigm. De Beer (1998:35) also argues that participative management was introduced to South African organisations, but this failed in the majority of instances. He ascribes this failure to the fact that too few managers were well prepared to deal with these changed dynamics. Middle and lower level management often also misunderstood this approach and " ... manipulated employees to improve their productivity" (De Beer, 1998:35). Madi (1993:4) describes the mentorship programmes of this era as being aimed at " ... taking the township out of the assigned protégés".

Unions were the main vehicle for negotiation with management during this era, while non-white employees started to enjoy the same fringe-benefits as those their white counterparts were used to, e.g. medical and pension schemes and later bursary schemes. Profit-sharing with and shareholding by non-white employees were new practices within this era (Bishop, 2004; De Beer, 1998:35).

Finally, the concept of social responsibility was replaced by social investment – investment was understood as an investment in the future. According to De Beer (1998:36) most organisations came to the realisation that they had to get directly involved with their dependent communities and improve the quality of life. This, according to De Beer (1998:36) is the major difference between social investment in South Africa and elsewhere. Compared to South Africa, these activities were rather diverse in Europe and the USA.

3.3.4 Affirmative Action (1994 – beyond)

Affirmative Action, like diversity management, is defined and managed based on the unique dynamics of each country (cf. Bissessar, 2002; Cassell, 1997; Engdahl & Hauki, 2001; Finnegan, 1998; Gunderson, 1994; Human, 1993; Hutchings, 2000; Jain & Ratnam, 1994; Madi, 1993; Sagie & Weisberg, 2001; Sheridan, 1998; Sloane & McKay, 1997; Thomas, 1996; Upadhyaya, 1998; Valle & Romero, 2001; Wiersma & Van den Berg, 1999; and Wingrove, 1993). De Beer (1998:37) describes the era from 1994 as still reflecting " ... deeply-rooted, informal racial discrimination ... " in South African organisations. The advancement of non-white employees was hampered by these biased views, thus alternative means to achieve transformation of the employment environment had to be pursued purposefully. Preferential treatment regarding recruitment, selection and promotion of all categories of non-white employees was the only realistic approach to address this situation (De Beer, 1998:38; Madi, 1993:4). The overarching approach was broadly referred to as Affirmative Action. But before these details are described, some lessons from two other countries deserve to be mentioned.

3.3.4.1 Lessons from the United States of America

De Beer (cf. 1998), Engdahl and Hauki (cf. 2001), Van der Walt (1994:57-54) Van Jaarsveld (2000:25-26) agree that the South African and American legislation aimed at achieving Employment Equity, are closely related. The major difference between these two countries is that minorities in America drive the process, while the transformation of the employment environment toward equality is a relatively new

constitutional right for the majority of South Africans. Secondly, the economic debate governs AA in America, while it tries to “ ... tackle the complexities of social rights ... ” in South Africa.

3.3.4.2 Lessons from Malaysia

According to Van der Walt (1994:73-75) the South African minority dominance and ensuing AA is very similar to the Malaysian experience. After independence in 1967, the vast majority of ethnic Malaysians were rural farmers and on the verge of being totally marginalised by the Chinese, Indians and other groups. During talks about the political future of that country, it was also agreed that specific quotas of jobs would be reserved for the Malaysians. However, the disparity between the economically advantaged and the poor could not simply be overcome with this initiative. Initial AA initiatives therefore failed (Van der Walt, 1994:72-73).

However, after the “New Economic Policy” was implemented, many Malaysian citizens were economically empowered. This policy guaranteed that government departments/public sector would employ only one non-Malaysian for every four it appointed (Van der Walt, 1994:73). Though the country started to experience tremendous economic growth thereafter, new and unexpected trends emerged: Malaysians were viewed as being too reliant on government jobs, while the career choices of students of different ethnic groupings also changed. Eventually, Chinese students were predominantly interested in science and technology, which also led to financially rewarding careers (Van der Walt, 1994:74).

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, two approaches existed within the South African context, i.e. bottom-up and top-down AA measures. Understanding the current legislative framework for AA, necessitates a description of the differences between these approaches.

3.3.5 Bottom-up Affirmative Action (1990 – mid-1990's)

According to De Beer (1998:39) this approach flourished during the leadership era of F.W de Klerk. Grand apartheid was abolished, but the black community was not yet participating fully in the governing of the country. Thus the new political dispensation would be based on power-sharing and ultimate majority rule by non-whites (De Beer, 1998:39). Black liberation movements insisted that AA should be applied to government, thus affording black people the opportunity to occupy the majority of senior

positions in a new unitary state (De Beer, 1998:39). Although political negotiations would progress slowly, the integration of non-whites into previously exclusive structures, including state schools, the diplomatic corps, sports and the arts, occurred rapidly (De Beer, 1998:39).

Social integration also occurred with more non-whites buying property and establishing businesses in traditionally white areas. Within this approach organisations would be left to bring about changes to their employee profiles and thereby also addressing organisational culture and structure (De Beer, 1998:38).

Rosmarin (cf. 1992) identifies three reasons for the bottom-up approach, i.e. the recognition of social and economic pressures as a long-term competitive advantage; recognition of the fact that legislation could be introduced; and the relative cost effectiveness of utilising the manpower pool of qualified minorities, since the cost of doing so later, would merely escalate. Compared to the previous three development approaches, organisations were now aggressively implementing policies aimed at the advancement of non-whites (De Beer, 1998:40).

These policies encompassed two components, i.e. the elimination of forms of overt, indirect or direct discrimination against disadvantaged employees and the accelerated development of scholastic and work skills for both high and low potential non-white employees. Mainly black consciousness movements and labour unions (De Beer, 1998:41) contested this practice by insisting that such employees should be accommodated in special development programmes.

Conversely, the “levelling of the playing fields” became common practice in strategy formulation in organisations. Such strategies included at least two types of AA measures (De Beer, 1998:41-43). The first measure entailed short term preferential policies that focused on the recruitment and promotion of black employees, in comparison of white employees with equal potential and ability, for a limited period of time. De Beer (1998:45-46) refers to this as the escalator model – black employees are promoted to managerial positions when white employees are promoted, retire, resign or when organisations expand naturally.

The second measure entailed short term output policies that aimed to reflect the population composition of a specific region in an organisation’s employee profile within a specific time limit. Some organisations adopted the 80:20 principle, thus appointing 8 black people for every two whites, and

vice versa (De Beer, 1998:41). According to De Beer (1998:41-42) this approach forced many organisations to follow the route of “headhunting” in the open market, the pro-active development of skills in high schools or both of these approaches at the same time.

Afrocentric values were tolerated as long as these did not have a negative impact on organisational objectives and productivity – preference was thus still given to black individuals who adopted a strict Western, modern work ethic (De Beer, 1998:42). Organisations, however, also learnt that AA could only succeed if and when the “white male” value system was not the dominating system. Madi (quoted in Van Sittert-Triebel, 1998:76) highlights the underlying resistance within organisations during this era, in the following manner: “... malicious compliance, outright sabotage and underground resistance became a new way of life in organisations.”

According to Wingrove (cf. 1993) organisations set out to address this issue through various means of consultation between managerial and non-managerial levels of staff. The focus of this type of consultation was on dialogue, understanding different perspectives and gaining commitment to the change process from all parties.

The importance of consultation is also stressed by the fact that black employees were no longer merely individuals who had to be “developed”, but viewed as partners whose personal attributes and decisions were instrumental in modernisation (De Beer, 1998:43). This researcher emphasises the fact that modernisation in this context refers to the relative degree to which any employee has adopted modern work values at a given time.

Participation in decision-making, profit-sharing and challenges to traditional leadership control through unionised strike actions characterised this era in South Africa (De Beer, 1998:46). According to De Beer (1998:46) strikes were an example of how employees tested their decision-making power. Finally, the social investment arena was also transformed during this era, mainly with organisations aligning their involvement in such projects with their strategic objectives and greater co-operation between the public and private sectors in this arena (De Beer, 1998:44-47; cf. Thomas, 1996).

3.3.6 Top-down Affirmative Action (Emerging from 1994)

As was briefly explained in Chapter 1, government started to enforce the transformation of the employment environment through legislation shortly after the first democratic political elections in 1994. As was the case for the preceding approaches, the compilation of the government of the time had an immense impact on the nature of expectations from the electorate and changes in all societal spheres.

De Beer (1998:48-49) cites two election promises as pivotal to understanding the top-down approach to AA. The first was the promise of a “better quality of life for the deprived groups” and the second was the “redress of past discrimination”. As a result of these promises and expectations, many black graduates expected to get jobs which would provide growth, promotional and developmental opportunities, including remuneration packages that would cater for their basic and esteem needs (cf. Umlow, 1992).

Conflicting views across the board existed (and still exist) about the relevance of AA in a post-apartheid South Africa. For example, Mbatha (1992:14) claims that the empowerment of blacks occurs at a macro level, through a combination of government and private sector initiatives. Government efforts focused on, amongst other, the preferential allocation of funds for addressing the backlog in black communities regarding housing and education. Furthermore, government tapped into “wealth taxation” for additional funds for such programmes (De Beer, 1998:49).

Despite conflicting views or ideologies, government approved the Employment Equity Act during 1998, which effectively labels AA in South Africa as a top-down practice. The rationale for the top-down AA sub-approach was that organisations would not empower sufficient numbers of black employees through their free will (De Beer, 1998:47). The number of such employees should approximate the general population demographics. The EEA therefore differentiates between “designated groups” (Africans, Coloureds, Indians and people with disabilities) and “non-designated groups” (Whites). Individuals from designated groups should get preferential treatment in terms of recruitment and selection, while reasonable adjustments to jobs (as a developmental effort) for candidates from these groups are also ensured by the EEA.

It should also be emphasised that gender issues and issues of disability representation are equally important to race issues within the framework of Employment Equity. The EEA refers to the

appointment of both an Employment Equity Commission and a Gender Commission. The recent addition of a Code of Good Practice for Dealing with HIV/AIDS (Department of Labour, 1999a) in the workplace confirm that much attention is given to ensuring that employees' constitutional right to equality is protected.

The top-down approach to AA is of significance for this study, since this is still the approach that governs the EEA. De Beer (1998:48) compares the two approaches by means of a table (below). Three points of criticism against the top-down approach to AA, are highlighted by this comparison.

Edigheji (1999:2) views the emphasis on the achievement of power within organisations as minimalist. Instead, the focus should be on the collective empowerment of non-white employees.

Table 3.1

Differences between bottom-up and top-down Affirmative Action

Bottom-up	Top-down
Enforcement by consent	Enforcement by legislation
Power primarily obtained through personal growth and work skills development	Power primarily obtained through positional advancement
Productivity and work standards usually considered in the empowerment of the disadvantaged	Productivity and work standards often not considered in the empowerment of the disadvantaged
Senior management / organisation-driven	Government driven
Work skills, empowerment and personal growth as important as positional empowerment	Positional empowerment more important than work skills
Pro-active interventions	Reactive interventions
Both input and output policies equally important	Output policies slightly favoured above input policies

Source: De Beer (1998:48)

Resistance against AA may also be validated if the perception that AA does not take productivity and work standards into consideration, is not addressed within organisations (De Beer, 1998:47; cf. Human, 1993; Madi, 1993; and Thomas, 1996). Since the implementation of EEA is also linked to punitive measures for organisations that do not achieve their annual EE targets, the forced appointment of employees from designated groups may once again lead to racial polarisation and mistrust (Furh quoted in De Beer & Radley, 2000:3).

The top-down approach to AA would have an unpredictable influence on corporate culture and the focus on modernisation (De Beer, 1998:53-54). The number of black employees to be included in

organisations by means of the EEA is unknown, while the timeframe for ending this practice, is unspecified (EEA, 55/1998). But Mbigi (1993:11) is of the opinion that Africanisation of organisations, through appreciating African values and norms within corporate culture, would be a strong motivating factor for African employees:

“South Africa’s global competitiveness may continue to be elusive unless black employees can practice their cultural traditions and live their collective historical experiences. Without self-pride employees cannot be effective.”

And while the preferential funding of development programmes were tolerated, resistance toward this approach in organisations was gaining momentum since white employees resented the “ ... sacrifices they had to make regarding their positions and opportunities” (cf. De Beer, 1998:49; De Beer & Radley, 2000). Resistance toward this approach also came from the so-called “ ... previously disadvantaged ranks” (Edigheji, 1999:2). A minimalist approach to AA often enabled the creation of a “ ... filthy rich black business class without addressing the extreme poverty of the majority of the black population ... ” (Edigheji, 1999:2). Therefore, according to this author, a maximalist approach became necessary. Such a maximalist approach should focus on the collective empowerment of the majority of the black community.

The black economic empowerment approach is viewed as potentially more successful than the previous approaches (cf. Edigheji, 1999; Engdahl & Hauki, 2001 and BEEA, 53/2003). De Beer and Radley’s (cf. 2000) and De Beer’s (cf. 1998) description and the international emphasis on the management of diversity as a development approach, necessitates a similar overview as for the other approaches. Therefore, it is described as both embedded in and as a precursor to current black economic empowerment thinking.

3.3.7 Diversity Management vs. Affirmative Action

Diversity management, like Employment Equity and AA, is an international phenomenon. The reasons for and perceptions of the management of diversity are unique to each country and continent (cf. Abdulai, 2000; Bissesar, 2002; Cassell, 1997; Charlton & Van Niekerk, 1994; Finnegan, 1998; Humphries & Grice, 1995; Hutchings, 2000; Jain & Ratnam, 1994; Sheridan, 1995; Sheridan, 1998; Sloane & Mackay, 1997). Furthermore, the management of diversity is a top strategic priority

internationally (cf. Gröschl & Doherty, 1999; Kersten, 2000; Maxwell, Blair & McDougall, 2001; and Swanson, 2002).

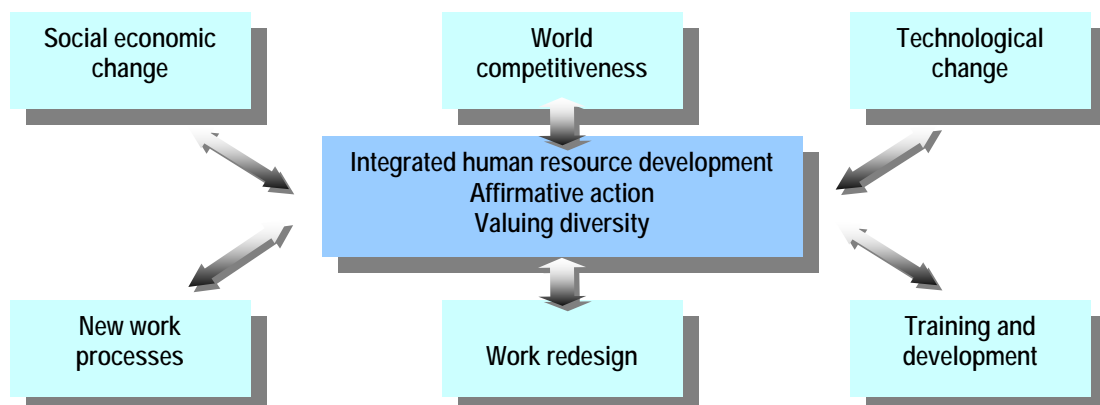
According to De Beer (1998:54), De Beer and Radley (2000:3) and Horwitz *et al.* (1996:135-139) the diversity management approach is more appropriate for South African organisations since it signals a move away from the focus of AA and focuses on dimensions like religion, physical ability, age, sexual orientation, functional and educational background, tenure with an organisation, lifestyle and geographic origins.

Horwitz *et al.* (1996:135;138 – 139) also view the development of human resources as requiring an integrated approach, as illustrated in figure 3.3. They emphasise the need for a holistic approach to AA and diversity management: these two approaches need to be integrated. They view the skills required of any manager to utilise the diverse talents/characteristics of employees as essential for understanding both ethnic and corporate culture.

Frost (quoted in De Beer & Radley, 2000:3) contends that far from being a problem, " ... the diversity of South African people is perhaps its biggest strength". AA focuses almost exclusively on race and gender. The management of diversity should also be regarded as an investment rather than a cost (Horwitz *et al.*, 1996:139). Human (cf. 1993) and Thomas (cf. 1996) also support this view.

Figure 3.3

Integrated human resources development



Source: Horwitz *et al.* (1996:139)

Horwitz *et al.* (1996:140) further argue that the management of diversity could have indirect positive effects on employees' performance, compared to AA. In the opinion of the same authors, employees' performance, level of contribution and personal growth are directly related to how they fit into and are treated in the work environment. According to them, the accommodation of uniqueness would enable the development of individual capacity, which should be a long term objective.

De Beer (1998:54) views this approach as more appropriate in the South African context since it encompasses dimensions such as extended employee participation, social investment, education, economic empowerment and general welfare of the previously disadvantaged population groups. He also prefers this approach for three related reasons: Firstly, the ability of this approach to accommodate the true differences of employees, while building trust and tolerance among employees is the first reason.

Secondly, it allows for the psychological processing of deep-rooted emotional changes pertaining to race and racism. Finally, it will allow all managers the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to accommodate the differences of all subordinates/colleagues – a reality of the transformed South African organisation (De Beer, 1998:54–56).

A comparison of the AA and diversity management approaches are summarised in Table 3.2 on the next page. The comparison highlights the differences between these approaches on the basis of goals, motives, focus, benefits and challenges. Supporters of diversity management approach favour it for being a more advanced approach, since the underlying goal, motive and focus are less robust than AA or Employment Equity (Horwitz *et al.* 1996:140; cf. Jones, Pringle & Shephard, 2000; Kramar, 1998:135; McDougall, 1996:64-66 and cf. Teicher & Spearitt, 1996).

Thomas (cf. 1996) further views diversity management as a mechanism for achieving cohesiveness, rather than possible division between groups. De Beer (1998:73) also favours diversity management since it focuses on the full utilisation of all human resources, as opposed to selectivity and implied short-term goals, pertaining to targets and compliance. Seopa (2004) also supports this perspective. Based on the previous comparison and views from other researchers, practitioners and academics, this study supports the perspective that AA measures form part of the EEA and are implemented as a top-down process. Diversity is a result of having a fully representative workforce, but the management of diversity is not necessarily the approach all organisations embrace when implementing the EEA.

Table 3.2

Comparison of Affirmative Action and Diversity Management approaches

Variable	Affirmative Action	Managing diversity
Goal	Creation of diverse workforce Upward mobility for minorities	Creation and management of diverse workforce Establishment of quality interpersonal relationships Full utilisation of human resources
Motive (primary)	Legal, moral and social responsibility	Exploration of 'richness' that can flow from diversity Attainment of competitive advantage / effective service
Primary focus	Acting affirmatively through "special efforts"	Understanding, respecting and valuing differences Creating an environment appropriate for full utilisation (culture and systems) Inclusion of white males
Benefits (primary)	Upward mobility for minorities/blacks and women	Mutual respect among groups Enhanced overall management capability Natural creation of diverse workforce Natural upward mobility Greater receptivity to Affirmative Action Escape from frustrating cycle Sustained benefits
Challenges	Artificial Creates own backlash Requires continuous intense commitment Cyclical benefits	Require long-term commitment Requires mindset shift Requires modified definitions of leadership and management Requires mutual adaptation by company and individual Requires systems change

Source: De Beer (1998:72 – 73)

3.3.8 Black Economic Empowerment (1980's to current)

A multitude of interpretations also exist for the concept of Black Economic Empowerment (henceforth referred to as BEE²). Authors describe this approach from both a minimalist and maximalist perspective, while also exploring the core of empowerment. Edigheji (1999:3) states that the core of black economic empowerment is based on an "alternative approach to development" which aims to redress a historical process of systematic disempowerment of the majority of South Africans.

Similar to the evolution of the previous development approaches, BEE has also evolved continuously since the late 1980's (cf. Engdahl & Hauki, 2001). According to these authors, white business initially regarded BEE as a mechanism for creating a black middle class that would have an influence on the economy. The apparent logic was that blacks would get access to the economy without affecting "the underlying structures of the economy" (Engdahl & Hauki, 2001:13). They also view the appointment of blacks into managerial positions without any real management responsibility, as part of the same

² The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003 is henceforth referred to as the BEEA.

process. This view is similar to De Beer's (cf. 1998) description of the inclusion of blacks in organisations during the same era.

This situation changed toward the end of the 1980's – early 1990's with major business anticipating dramatic political changes. Bishop (2004) cites examples of financial services companies that involved political advisers in discussions with their clients and other stakeholders in preparation for changes to come. Together with the first democratic elections in 1994 and the granting of full political rights to all, suspicion about BEE seemed to subside. The ANC's position on the matter was instrumental in creating trust in this (Engdahl & Hauki, 2001:13).

According to the same authors, following the general election, the Government of National Unity focused much effort and resources on reconstruction and reconciliation. Economic inclusion during this period was aimed at broadening the economic base. The Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) and the promotion of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME's) were central to this phase (Engdahl & Hauki, 2001:14). Whereas the EEA only stipulate regulations for the inclusion of previously marginalized/disadvantaged individuals, the BEE perspective focuses on the inclusion of the broad community of people who were previously excluded from economic empowerment (BEEA 53/2003). The purpose of the BEEA is summarised in seven points:

- ❑ The increase in the number of black people that manage, own and control enterprises and productive assets;
- ❑ The facilitation of ownership and management of enterprises and productive assets by communities, workers, co-operatives and other collective enterprises;
- ❑ The development of human resources and skills ;
- ❑ Achieving equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce;
- ❑ Preferential procurement; and
- ❑ Investment in enterprises that are owned or managed by black people.

The fourth point refers to the current place of the EEA within the broader context of human capital development. The BEEA also emphasises the shift of empowerment from one race group to another. A "substantial change" needs to occur in the racial composition of ownership and management structures of all organisations (BEEA 53/2003). Finally, the objectives of this Act are summarised in six related points:

- The promotion of economic transformation in order to enable “ ... meaningful participation of black people in the economy”;
- The increase of access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training by those individuals/groups previously mentioned;
- The empowerment of rural and local communities by enabling access to economic activities, land, infrastructure, ownership and skills;
- The promotion of investment programmes that lead to broad-based and meaningful participation in the economy; and
- The increase in the extent to which black women own and manage existing enterprises and to increase their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training.

Similar to the EEA, several tools exist for the broad implementation of BEEA. The first is an advisory council, which is chaired by the President and includes the appropriate Minister (Department of Trade and Industry), three Cabinet Ministers and between 10-15 members who are appointed by the President. The second is the Minister of Trade and Industry’s BEE strategy, which should ensure an integrated and uniform approach across all stakeholders.

Each sector must also reflect its intended transformational efforts by means of a charter which will be published by the aforementioned Minister in the Gazette. Finally, Codes of Good Practice which may include specific measures, targets and timeframes related to any aspect of the Act (BEEA, 53/2003). After comparing these approaches it would only be appropriate to indicate which of these is/are viewed as the most suitable for South African conditions.

3.4 THE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MEASURES

The EEA (55/1998) comprises of five chapters that focus on the following topics: the clarification of definitions, interpretations and application contexts, prohibition of unfair discrimination, AA, the commission for Employment Equity and monitoring, enforcement and legal proceedings. The AA measures described in Chapter 4 of this Act, are the legal solutions to effect the aforementioned “redress[ing] of the effects of discrimination”.

Contrasting views exist regarding the approach that should govern the redress process (cf. De Beer, 1998 & 2003; De Beer & Radley, 2000; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Horwitz *et al.* 1996; Human, 1993

& 1996; Madi, 1993; Thomas, 1996; and Van der Walt, 1994). These include Black Advancement and Diversity Management, both of which are described in the next section. Since AA measures are required by law and at the centre of this study, a definition of these measures is critical.

3.4.1 The purpose of the Employment Equity Act

A discussion of the three dimensions of AA (paradigmatic origins, legislative framework and influence on organisations) would not be realistic without clarifying the purpose and scope of this policy within the South African context. The preamble to the EEA (55/1998) expresses the sentiment that the discriminatory laws of apartheid had created such disadvantages for certain categories of people that "... simply repealing those laws will not effect the constitutional right to equality and the exercise of democracy".

The EEA was therefore tabled during 1998 and the AA measures described in this Act, came into effect on 1 December 1999. The goal of the EEA is fivefold:

- The elimination of unfair discrimination in employment;
- The implementation of Employment Equity to redress the effects of discrimination;
- The achievement of a diverse workforce, broadly representative of the South African population demographics;
- The promotion of economic development and efficiency in the workplace; and
- Compliance with the obligations for members of the International Labour Organisation.

3.4.2 Key concepts within the Employment Equity Act

Five concepts are central to the EEA and thus need clarification, namely "black people", "designated group", "designated employer", "employment policy" and the "prohibition of unfair discrimination". Black people is the generic term used when referring to either Africans, Coloureds and/or Indians. Designated group refers to black people, women and people with disabilities (EEA 55/1998). Designated employer refers to five components, as stipulated in the EEA . These are:

- Any employer (person/institution) that employs more than 50 employees;

- Any employer (person/institution) that employs fewer than 50 employees, but has a total annual turnover that is equal to or above the applicable annual turnover of a small business in terms of Schedule 4 of this Act. R2 million in the Agricultural sector and R25 million in the Wholesale, Commercial Agents and Allied Services sectors (Engdahl & Hauki, 2001:56);
- A municipality, as defined in Chapter 7 of the Constitution;
- An organ of state, as defined in Section 239 of the Constitution, but excluding local spheres of government, the National Defence Force, the National Intelligence Agency and the South African Secret Service; and
- An employer bound by collective agreement in terms of Section 23 or 31 of the Labour Relations Act, which appoints it as a designated employer in terms of this Act, to the extent provided for in the agreement.

According to the EEA (55/1998), employment policy refers to, but is not limited to the following: recruitment procedures, advertising and selection criteria, appointments and the appointment process, job classification and grading, job assignments, the working environment and facilities, training and development, performance evaluation systems, promotion, transfer, demotion, disciplinary measures other than dismissal, and dismissal.

The prohibition of unfair discrimination forms an equally important part of the EEA. All employers are required to take steps to eliminate any form of unfair discrimination on the basis of race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth (EEA, 55/1998).

3.4.3 Specific Affirmative Action measures

The goal of AA in South Africa is to ensure that designated groups are represented equitably in all work categories and levels of the workforce. No preferential ranking of these categories is provided in the Act (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2002:80; King Report I, 1994:24; Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:143; and Visagie, 1999:150-151), but designated employers are responsible for implementing the following specific measures, as formulated in the EEA (55/1998):

- ❑ Measures to identify and eliminate employment barriers, including unfair discrimination, which adversely affect people from designated groups;
- ❑ Measures designed to further diversity in the workplace based on equal dignity and respect of all people;
- ❑ Making reasonable accommodation for people from designated groups in order to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities and are equitably represented in the workforce of a designated employer. Reasonable accommodation means any modification or adjustment to a job or to the working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have access to or participate or advance in employment;
- ❑ Measures to ensure the equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in all occupational categories and levels of the workforce; and
- ❑ Measures to retain and develop people from designated groups and to implement appropriate training measures.

The EEA (55/1998) also refers to two key sub-regulations, which both assist any reader of the Act with the interpretation thereof, while also addressing some of the common misunderstandings about AA measures.

The EEA (55/1998) firstly states that the aforementioned measures include preferential treatment and numerical goals, but excludes quotas. Secondly, designated employers are not required to take decisions regarding the formulation of employment policies, which will establish absolute barriers to the prospective or continued employment or advancement of people who are not from designated groups.

3.4.4 Mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Employment Equity

Several mechanisms exist that should help to promote the EEA or provide technical assistance to designated employers. The Commission for Employment Equity was the first such mechanism and started its work in the middle of 1999 and served as an advisory board to the Minister of Labour (EEA, 55/1998). This commission consisted of nine individuals appointed by the Minister and was responsible for the development of all codes of good practice, regulations and policy matters related to the EEA in conjunction with the Minister of Labour. A key responsibility was to research norms and benchmarks for the process of target-setting (numerical goals) in various sectors.

Chapter 3 of the EEA further deals exclusively with AA. It not only describes seven AA measures, but also prescribes obligations of designated employers regarding mechanisms for the implementation of this process. These include consultation with employees, employment profile analysis, the compilation of an EE Plan, as well as and EE Report (EEA, 55/1998).

Organisations' EEA planning and reporting are supplemented by three codes of good conduct that focus on implementation and communication matters, dealing with disability and HIV/AIDS respectively (Department of Labour, 1999a, 1999b & 1999c). In short, the EE Plan pertains to cyclical (annual) and five-year targets that designated employers are obliged to set. On the other hand, an EE Report about organisation's actual progress, must also be completed. Both the EE Plans and EE Reports need to be submitted to the Department of Labour by 1 October every year.

It is important to explain that EE Plans and EE Reports are closely related, with the latter containing a compulsory checklist description of the various areas of communication, namely activities pertaining to the "duty to consult and inform" that is described in the EEA (55/1998) and the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b).

The compilation of a communication strategy for this transformational process is not required or described in either the legislation or supporting guidelines. However, transformational change theory and change communication theory suggest that the EEA would need to be incorporated into a corporate strategy and supported by means of a communication strategy (and various programmes).

The King II Report (2002:115) also emphasises that these mechanisms will be central to the management of relationships with stakeholders. All of these mechanisms are significant within the context of this study, since they pertain to both internal and external communication efforts of designated employers. Chapter 4 of this study considers the utilisation of these mechanisms in the overall management of communication about AA.

3.5 MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR FAVOURING THE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT APPROACH IN SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

Although this study is not aimed at validating either of the development approaches, the impact of the Diversity Management approach, as opposed to the AA approach, is obvious. Several authors suggest

that the Diversity Management approach is the ideal approach to the implementation of equality and fairness in the South African working environment (cf. De Beer, 1998; De Beer & Radley, 2000; Horwitz *et al.*, 1996; King Report II, 2002; Maxwell *et al.*, 2001; and Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999). As was indicated previously, many fear that the racial tension (and division) could refute all previous attempts of reconciliation, thus limiting the potential impact of the EEA on societal development.

The King Report II (2002:115-116) proposes that the ideals of equality in the workplace, fairness and diversity and empowerment should transpire simultaneously. This perspective suggests that the transformation of South African society must be sustained rather than pose a threat to interracial harmony.

De Beer (1998:72-73) also favours the diversity approach since it focuses on the creation and appreciation of core values, while no single racial group is being excluded by definition. Furthermore, De Beer and Radley (2000:19) and the King Report II (2002:116) argue that organisations can become only more flexible and adaptable to change (or transformation) when the appreciation of diversity is a core value.

De Beer's (1998:72-73) comparison of the AA and Diversity Management approaches reflect the aforementioned views. In his opinion, competitive advantage could flow from diversity, while AA measures are seen as "artificial or special efforts" to transform the working climate (culture and values). He also emphasises the sustainability of diversity, as opposed to the cyclical benefits of AA. (AA measures and plans must be reported annually by means of several mechanisms stipulated by legislation.)

Organisational transformation per definition involves and relies on changes in the mindset of all attached to an organisation, as would be the case within the Diversity Management approach (De Beer, 1998:72-73). Since diversity requires long-term commitment, this approach would also require a new appreciation of leadership and overall management. This view also governs this study since the appreciation of diversity of people seems to lie at the core of societal transformation and reconciliation between different races – a process that continues even after ten years of freedom for all South African citizens and the third democratic elections.

3.6 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY CHALLENGES FOR ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

A description of the EEA in South African organisations would not be complete without reference to three factors that may have an impact on the implementation of this process as a transformational change phenomenon. These are the debate about the continuation of the EEA; broad information efforts about details of the EEA; the formulation of corporate transformation and corporate communication strategies, as well as leadership challenges. Although these factors implicitly affect all communication efforts, communication about the EEA is the focus of Chapter 4.

3.6.1 Debates about the continuation of the Employment Equity Act

The debate about this issue is as complex as any other issue pertaining to the EEA. The EEA (55/1998) does not describe any timeframe that would signal the end of the implementation of this Act. While reversed racism seems to be the key political argument against the EEA, it seems that gender representation in organisations and the inclusion of disabled people, fall by the wayside.

At a political level, the appropriateness of prolonging the EEA in South Africa seems to be questioned mainly from the non-designated group, whites. This seems to be a major theme in the 2004 general election campaigns of so-called minority parties, including the *Vryheidsfront Plus*. This party, by means of its chairman, has expressed its concern about the employment future of white students during campaign meetings at institutions of higher education. In SABC television news broadcasts about the third democratic elections, he called for a cut-off date for the implementation of AA, so as to afford white graduates a reasonable opportunity to compete for employment on the basis of expertise. This party labels AA as a form of reversed discrimination.

The preamble of the EEA (55/1998) and statistics by the Department of Labour about the South African pool of expertise reflect a different picture than the one sketched by the aforementioned politician. The preamble and the statistics can be interpreted as the rationale for the current top-down approach to this matter. These statistics describe dimensions of society in terms of the four race groups and fields of study. According to these statistics, the majority of graduates (both university and technikon) are still white. Whites (both male and female) outnumber Blacks, Coloureds and Indians by far in all fields of study. The total number of graduates currently listed are 666 597, of which 458 943 are white

(Department of Labour, 2004). (These statistics also depict the current and future pool of employees in terms of disability, gender and age.)

The second largest number of graduates per field are Indian males in the field of Engineering and African females in the fields of Medicine, Arts, Education and Social Work. African males represent the second largest number of graduates in the fields of Agriculture, Natural Sciences, Law, Theology, Military Science, as well as Economic and Management Sciences (Department of Labour, 2004). These statistics seem to confirm the validity of the argument that the pool of potential employees from designated groups is often still small.

Institutions of higher education also report their current EE numbers (profile of learners) to the Department of Education. According to these statistics, more African students (both male and female) are currently enrolled than Whites. Roughly 180 000 African students vs. 137 000 White students. Since Africans make up roughly 31 million and Whites roughly 4.4 million of the total population, the discrepancy between the proportion of individuals from these two groups who have access to higher education, is apparent (Department of Labour, 2004). The total population consists of more females than males, i.e. 21 062 685 vs. 19 520 886 (Department of Labour, 2004). These facts further confirm the emphasis on gender equality, as described in the EEA.

Since this study does not attempt to validate arguments for or against the EEA, the aforementioned arguments and statistics are merely cited to illustrate some of the complexities surrounding the issue of terminating the implementation of AA. Furthermore, these views indicate the complexities of sentiments from both so-called designated and non-designated groups within organisations. Such diverse sentiments have obvious implications for communication and transformational efforts.

3.6.2 Information about the Employment Equity Act

Reactions to AA measures throughout different human capital development approaches seem to have one common element: varied degrees of resistance against the inclusion of persons of colour or persons who represent a different set of values/worldviews than the dominant perspective at any given point in time. The underlying tension in these views may stem from the fact that AA measures are enforced, rather than allowed to emerge from a diverse workforce.

Although the current legal framework has standardised the terminology for these measures, emotionally charged views (both latent and covert) still exist (cf. De Beer & Radley, 2000). It seems that misgivings about issues like target-setting within a timeframe vs. "quotas", are still prevalent. Recent media reports about quotas in sports teams may have strengthened these perceptions. The recent row about tennis medals that need to be returned by provincial teams that do not have the prescribed number of non-white players, is one such an example.

The EEA (55/1998) specifically states that no designated employer is under any obligation to implement "quotas" for employees from designated groups, or to limit the career development opportunities of employees from non-designated groups. The public debate or rumour mongering about quotas should be understood as a result of the fear of job losses, as described by De Beer and Radley (2000:32).

According to De Beer and Radley (2000:29-40) fear between different race groups often still lead to both latent and covert resistance or scepticism about AA. They also list the fear of revenge/retribution from non-whites, loss of standards, punitive taxation and nationalisation among the fears from whites. Black South Africans, according to the same authors, share different fears, including being a sell-out, being sold out, white manipulation, victimisation, tokenism and marginalisation.

De Beer and Radley (2000:33-34) thus suggest that the management of this process must be based on sensitivity for these fears. This implies that any manager responsible for the implementation of an EE policy, should keep the potential for further polarisation between race groups in mind. They contend that all decisions in this regard carry meaning and the impact thereof on individual or group relations are therefore not to be taken lightly. This view has obvious implications for the management of communication about AA at organisational level. The most important implication is that management training about these issues should be a top priority (Thomas quoted in De Beer and Radley, 2000:34).

From these facts it seems that organisations would have to place special emphasis on the management of communication about the EEA, specifically legal definitions and content. As was indicated previously, common knowledge (or rather common misunderstandings) about this legislation, and organisational implications, could possibly be detrimental to societal development and organisational transformation.

3.6.3 From cyclical to strategic communication efforts

As was indicated previously, the planning and reporting of progress regarding the EEA may reduce this process to cyclical communication with internal and external stakeholders. Overcoming this potential problem requires the integration of well-planned communication into the transformational strategy. The suggestion from Chapter 2 is that a communication strategy must be aligned with a corporate strategy, thereby articulating the strategic intent of the organisation.

In addition to requirement, suggestions from the Code of Good Practice (Department of Labour, 1999b) regarding consultation, awareness and monitoring efforts need to be central to any corporate communication strategy and/or related communication plans. The ideal way of assisting the organisation in this effort is to integrate all divisions into corporate communication strategies and plans. A fully integrated approach would firstly involve all role players and secondly empower the entire organisation. The empowerment of all employees reflects the chaos perspective ideal of decentralisation and subsequent organisational learning. An integrated strategic communication approach could also assist organisations in managing (nurturing) the relationships with internal and external stakeholders, instead of merely informing them of developments.

It is also important to understand the notion of “integrated communication” in this transformational context: all organisational departments (divisions) should be involved in the communication of the transformational vision as recipients and participants. The key departments responsible for messages would be the departments that are traditionally responsible for the policies or structures associated with this transformational area, while the Corporate Communication and the Marketing functions would manage internal and external communication in relation to the objectives of the transformational strategy.

The underlying principles of such an approach are co-operation across traditional departmental divides, as well as flexibility in all dimensions in order to enable the organisation to pursue the broad transformational vision amidst possible sudden changes in both the internal and external environments. (A conceptual framework for communication in this context is proposed in the latter half of Chapter 4.) The centrality of communication in this specific transformational effort is emphasised by the suggestions in the aforementioned documents. This also confirms the necessity for research about this

topic in the South African context. Therefore, the next chapter focuses exclusively on communication frameworks (even strategies) that have been suggested to facilitate this transformational process.

3.6.4 Transformational leadership within the context of Employment Equity matters

The final challenge organisations face with transformation because of the EEA (55/1998), and arguably also wider society, is transformational leadership. Without commitment, organisations may embark on this journey merely to comply with legislation and not focus on transformation. But, according to Denton and Vloeberghs (2003:92), the challenges of being a transformational leader in the South African context are complex. According to the same authors, leaders are involved with the " ... tensions and drama of transformation ... " on a daily basis. The transformation of organisations as a result of the EEA is but one of the contributing factors to this drama.

Denton and Vloeberghs (2003:87-91) further describe organisational structuring, downsizing, outsourcing, empowerment of employees and systems thinking as challenges that occur simultaneously. This description reflects Gouillart and Kelly's (cf. 1995) view that organisations, by means of its leaders, should be able to balance the focus on both the details of day-to-day business and the wider environment. It also confirms the truism that the turbulence of the external (and internal) environment only increases, thus defying any notion of stability or long-range predictability.

However, Denton and Vloeberghs (2003:91) argue that many of these organisational challenges have left managers and employees with negative and destructive emotions such as fear, stress, denial, mistrust and resistance. The same authors view the sudden attempts to compete globally as the overarching reason for the types of organisational change and transformation that were mentioned previously.

From this description it would seem that the transformational agenda as a result of the EEA may perhaps not be a top priority for all leaders. The possibility arises that the EEA may be reduced to legal compliance or a strategy that is driven by senior corporate leadership or the Employment Equity Office. When viewed from the perspective of transformation management theory, such a situation would be detrimental to the transformational effort.

Perhaps the conceptualisation of transformational leadership by both Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001) in Chapter 2, Godard and Lenhardt (1999:69-71), as well as Tichy and Devanna (1986:271-280), could assist South African leaders in this balancing act.

The “new bread” of transformational leaders are required to be courageous, lifelong learners and visionaries. These qualities are directly tied to the notions of “knowing, being and doing” and depend on the ability of such leaders to communicate purposefully about the organisation’s transformational vision. And although these requirements still focus on the “thinking perspective” on transformational leadership, they also have clear pragmatic value.

According to Tichy and Devanna (1986:271-280) courage refers to the ability and willingness to take risks for the greater good of the organisation, but in a well thought through manner. Balance between advocacy and the status quo, as well as “ ... emotional stability and a sharp intellect ... ” lies at the heart of this quality.

Translated to the context of AA, it means that leaders would have to be willing and able to challenge attitudes and opinions, often also misunderstandings, that will severely hamper the implementation process. However, this does not mean a purely one-sided effort, rather a well thought through effort based on situational requirements. Here the value of combining intellect and emotions is critical: knowledge of and respect for each individual in a team would dictate how communication about the transformational effort should be managed. This understanding of individuals would also help to facilitate contributions about the process. The ideal of two-way symmetry would be served in both instances.

Lifelong learning requires a mentality of openness about mistakes and commitment to the learning of all individuals in work teams. Tichy and Devanna (quoted in Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:92) further defines this inclination as being a catalyst for transformation. When people view themselves as lifelong learners, they would arguably also view transformation as an infinite process. Leaders who operate from this perspective would also value transformation as an on-going responsibility. This stands in contrast to the idea that non-managerial employees’ view change or transformation as “ ... something the organisation is doing and which would not affect or involve us”. Leaders who can successfully bring about this mental (psychological) transformation in themselves and colleagues would contribute to organisational learning.

Being visionaries, according to Tichy and Devanna (1986:280), is equally important. But this requires the ability to have dreams and translating those dreams into reality. Trusting one's instinct and taking calculated risks are central to visionary leadership. This translation process cannot come into effect without communication. Leaders who can translate and co-create visions clearly would arguably contribute to this transformational context in the most tangible manner.

Finally, transformational leadership seems to be a unique process within the context of AA. The tensions about the required organisational transformation seem daunting at times. But leaders who are courageous and committed to their employees and the values of the EEA, will possibly be the greatest asset to their organisations.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Before any framework can be considered for the management of an EE strategy, it is important to understand the historical development of EE and AA measures. Such an understanding contributes to a deeper appreciation of societal and organisational sentiments about EE. It is very important to take cognisance of the mistakes South African organisations had made up this point, but also the spirit of recent pieces of legislation that are aimed at social upliftment and transformation.

Following the argument that organisational transformation can only occur by means of well-managed internal communication and the psychological involvement of employees from individual level, the implications for both internal and external communication, as a result of the EEA and to a lesser degree, also the BEEA, is self-evident. Thus Chapter 4 focuses on the management of communication in this transformational context.

Chapter 4

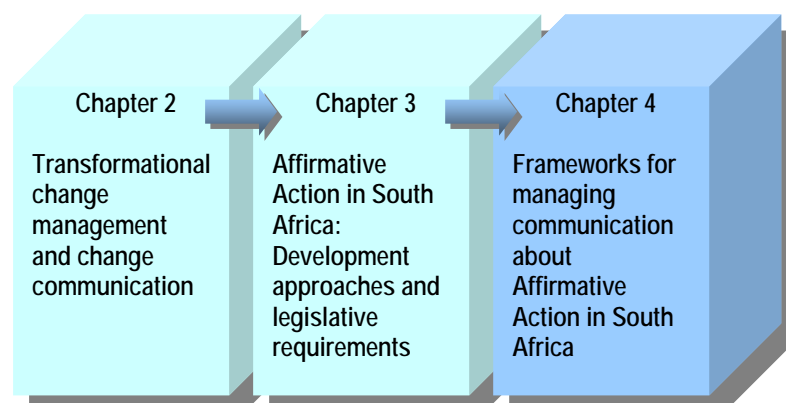
Frameworks for managing communication about Affirmative Action in South Africa

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the last of three theoretical chapters and focuses on the management of the EEA through communication. The purpose of this chapter is to explore ways in which South African organisations can manage communication about affirmative action measures in order to effect transformation. Figure 4.1 illustrates the place of this chapter in relation to the other theoretical chapters.

Figure 4.1

Chapter 4 in relation to other theoretical chapters



The research question and the previous two chapters highlight the importance of this chapter. In an attempt to arrive at theoretical answers to the research question, existing frameworks are compared according to key criteria from literature on transformational change and transformational change communication. These criteria reflect the chaos perspective on transformational change and change communication.

None of the frameworks have previously been labelled as “models”, thus the principle of “frameworks” will be retained in this chapter. Furthermore the concept “framework” accurately reflects the philosophy

from the chaos perspective. Thus efforts to integrate older and emergent ideas into a framework, are collectively labelled as “a conceptual framework”.

The frameworks that are compared are the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999) and suggestions regarding a communication strategy for Employment Equity by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999). Based on this comparison, Thomas and Robertshaw’s (1999) framework is preferred from both the strategic and tactical communication management perspectives, while the Code for Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) has much value in terms of ensuring legal compliance. The comparison of these two frameworks highlight their relevance in relation to the overarching research question.

Finally, since the goal of communication about the EEA is to facilitate organisational transformation, suggestions regarding a more comprehensive conceptual framework for strategically managed communication, forms the final component of this chapter. This conceptual framework emphasises the possibilities for integrating all organisational divisions in the communication process while adhering to the requirement of flexibility (adaptability).

4.2 FRAMEWORKS FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The overarching research question necessitates the consideration of existing frameworks for the management of communication about AA in the South African context. A literature review yielded six such frameworks, four of which were published prior to the promulgation of the EEA in 1998 and two shortly thereafter.

4.2.1 Four early frameworks: 1993 - 1995

Four frameworks were published by Linda Human (1993), Thea Wingrove (1993), SPA Consultants (cf. Pons & McGregor, 1994) and the IPM (1995) respectively. Two common elements of these frameworks are the rather mechanistic conceptualisation of the implementation process and the lack of details regarding the legislation that was eventually promulgated. As is the case for traditional (deterministic) models or frameworks, the management thinking of the era during which these four frameworks were published, is apparent throughout. The frameworks from both SPA Consultants and IPM are labelled as “toolkits” and are thus not discussed any further.

Wingrove (cf. 1993) describes the nature of and motivation for EE in the South African context holistically, with broad guidelines that ought to be considered in the planning of communication about the implementation process. This author describes some of the barriers to this process in similar fashion to De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000), but with an obvious lack of more recent developments in this arena.

The last of these early frameworks to be discussed was proposed by Human (1993:46-69). These guidelines regarding the communication responsibilities of different levels of employees are very comprehensive and based on the premise that the Human Resources function is central to the implementation of AA measures. The major point of criticism against this author's suggestions is that they are perhaps too detailed and rigid. However, it is interesting to note that some aspects from these suggestions were revised and incorporated into the framework that is proposed by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999). Incidentally, the same author also views the management of diversity as the preferred approach for the implementation of AA measures.

4.2.2 Two later frameworks: 1999

The two frameworks that were published shortly after the promulgation of the EEA are the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999) and that of Thomas and Robertshaw (1999). Both frameworks have the added advantage of incorporating lessons that were learnt by a number of organisations prior to government's top-down approach to EE.

Based on the research question and objectives, as well as the need for managing the organisational transformation of South African organisations strategically, the last two frameworks should be further explored. The description of these two frameworks also highlights a central argument that was articulated in the previous chapter, namely whether organisations will focus on legal compliance rather than lasting transformation. If organisations opt for communication only to comply with the minimum requirements regarding the "duty to consult and inform", lasting organisational transformation (both at individual and corporate culture levels) is arguably unlikely.

The two frameworks that are discussed in detail represent both scenarios and are intended to serve as benchmarks. These frameworks also provide theoretical answers to the sub-questions and research objectives formulated in Chapter 1. Since Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework is so

comprehensive, it is also used as a measurement instrument for empirical analysis within each case study. The communication strategy of each organisation is compared to this framework by means of qualitative content analysis.

Finally, these two frameworks are presented as precursors to an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for the management of communication about EE matters. Elements from both of frameworks are also reflected in the suggested conceptual framework for managing communication in this transformational context, in an integrated manner.

4.2.2.1 Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999)

The first framework to be considered is embedded in the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) that was published at the end of 1999 by the Department of Labour. The Commission for EE (that were appointed by the Minister of Labour) wrote this code. This document comprises nine components which include both guidelines for the overall planning of the process, as well as communication, awareness and consultation – these aspects are also stipulated in legal terms within the EEA (55/1998). For the purpose of this study, only the broad planning and communication dimensions, presented as Component 1 and Component 2, need further exploration.

□ **Component 1: Planning**

The planning phase should commence with the assignment of one or more senior managers who should have the responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of the plan. They should be permanent employees that report directly to the Chief Executive Officer (Department of Labour, 1999b). According to this code the assignment of one or more senior managers implies that:

- The employer should also provide the assigned managers with the necessary authority and means, such as an appropriate budget, to perform their allocated functions;
- The employer is not relieved of any duty imposed by this Act or any other law; and
- The employer should take reasonable steps to ensure that these managers perform their allocated functions. This could be done through the incorporation of key EE outcomes in performance contracts of the responsible managers as well as line managers throughout the organisation.

The second component further describes the elements of communication, awareness and consultation.

□ **Component 2: Communication, awareness and consultation**

According to this code employees should be made aware and informed of:

- The need for the involvement of all stakeholders in order to promote positive outcomes;
- The content and application of the Act as preparation for their participation and consultation;
- EE and anti-discrimination issues
- The proposed process to be followed by the employer; and
- The advantages to employees of participation in the process.

Employers must also consult with internal stakeholders with regard to conducting an EE analysis, the preparation and implementation of the EE plan, as well as the submission of EE Reports to the Department of Labour. To ensure the successful implementation of a plan, " ... employers should make every effort to include employee representatives in all aspects of the plan, especially the planning and development phases" (Department of Labour, 1999b).

Managers should also be informed of their obligations in terms of the Act, and training should be provided to them where particular skills do not exist. Examples of required training could include diversity management, coaching and mentoring programmes (Department of Labour, 1999b). These aspects reflect both the premise of the diversity management approach and the responsibility spheres of transformational leaders (as described in Chapter 2).

The communication of an EE strategy should focus on positive outcomes, " ... such as the better utilisation of all of the employer's human resources and the creation of a diverse and more productive workforce" (Department of Labour, 1999b).

According to the same guideline document, communication should also include employees from non-designated groups and focus on the contribution these groups may make. This aspect emphasises the need for consultation (negotiation) vs. persuasion. It further highlights the complex needs of different internal stakeholders. This code also stipulates that consultation with employees " ... should commence as early as possible in the process". In order to achieve this objective, a consultative forum should be established or an existing forum utilised. The forum should include employee representatives

reflecting the interests of employees from both designated and non-designated groups and across all occupational categories and levels of the workforce (Department of Labour, 1999b).

This code further suggests that representative trade unions or representatives nominated by such trade unions, must be included in the consultation process. The designated employer should be represented by one or more members of senior management. The unique aspect of the code is its reference to and clarification of the process of consultation. It also refers to the need for regular consultation and specific types of mechanisms. According to this Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999) consultation would include:

- ❑ The request, receipt and consideration of relevant information;
- ❑ The opportunity to meet and report back to employees and management;
- ❑ Reasonable opportunity for employee representatives to meet with the employer; and
- ❑ Adequate time allowed for each of these steps.

To ensure an informed and constructive consultation process, structured and regular meetings of the consultative forum or forums should be held. Where a representative body or trade union refuses to take part in the consultation process, the employer should record the circumstances, in writing, including those steps that the employer has taken to communicate and initiate the consultation process. A copy of this document should be provided to the representative body or trade union concerned (Department of Labour, 1999b).

Finally, the disclosure of relevant information by designated employers is vital for the successful implementation of the plan. The suggested contents correlate well with the content frameworks previously discussed. According to the Department of Labour (1999b) the information could include:

- ❑ Information relating to the relevant economic sector or industry;
 - ❑ The particular business environment and circumstances of the employer;
 - ❑ Relevant local, regional, and national demographic information relating to the economically active population;
 - ❑ The anticipated growth or reduction of the employer's workforce;
 - ❑ The turnover of employees in the employer's workforce;
 - ❑ The degree of representation of designated employees in each occupational category and level in the employer's workforce;
-

- The internal and external availability for appointment or promotion of suitably qualified people from the designated groups; and
- Employment policies and practices of the employer.

The description of the consultation process and possible content concludes with an observation that highlights the overall approach to this transformational process: “All parties should, in all good faith, keep an open mind throughout the process and seriously consider proposals put forward” (Department of Labour 1999).

These two components from the code highlight the need for two-way (asymmetrical and/or symmetrical) communication, as defined by Grunig (cf. 1992). The importance of internal stakeholders and the representation of all groups are also central to these two components. Finally, these components illustrate the need for understanding EE planning and communication as an integrated process, while the suggestions about key messages seems to have much practical value for any designated employer.

4.2.2.2 Thomas and Robertshaw 's (1999) Employment Equity strategy

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:9-12;29-35) suggests that the EE process be managed as a business strategy that is labelled as a “model for integrated thinking”. Secondly, they provide a framework for the management of a communication strategy for the EE process. These two components respectively form the basis for the strategic alignment of EE with the overarching corporate strategy, as well as the alignment and implementation of EE strategies by means of communication. The relevance of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) in relation to the research question is obvious.

The comprehensive scope of their proposed communication strategy served as motivation for including it as an empirical investigation tool per case study. Core ideas from the broader strategy also guided the formulation of questions that were included in the final interview schedule. The aforementioned authors (both experts in the field of EE) agree with De Beer (cf. 1998), De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000) and the King Report II (cf. 2002) about the ideals of tapping into the diverse potential of all types of employees in the EE process. They emphasise that diversity may contribute to organisational creativity, problem-solving capability, flexibility and adaptability.

4.2.2.2.1 A model for integrated thinking

This model comprises six phases, as illustrated in figure 4.2 (on the next page). Each of these phases will be discussed in relation to theory from the previous chapters.

This model firstly emphasises the fact that different elements of the implementation process are dependent on an understanding of the legislative requirements from the EEA. The transformational process that flows from this paradigm is continuous, an interpretation that is congruent with the conceptualisation of transformational change, as described in Chapter 2.

□ Phase 1: Leadership

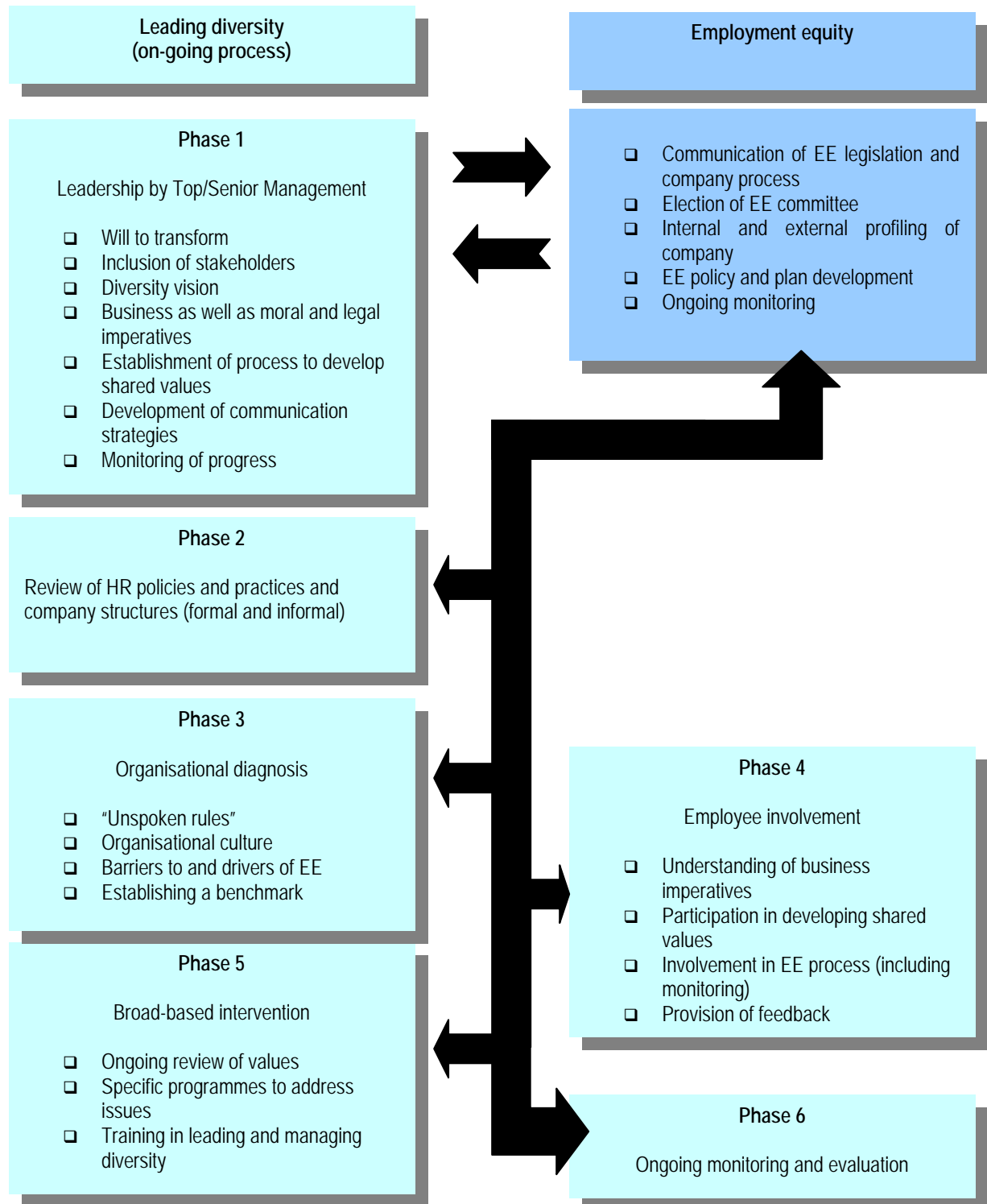
Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999:126) perspective on transformational leadership seems to reflect the chaos perspective on leadership. They emphasise interactive leadership and leaders' responsibility to create the environment in which a vision for the EEA could be co-created. Similarly to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001), Keene (cf. 2000) and Moran and Brightman (cf. 2000), the creation and promotion of the values that will sustain the new vision, demands individual responsibility and accountability (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:127). The same authors are convinced that line managers are central to the creation and promotion of the aforementioned values. Therefore their performance regarding this policy should be measured.

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:127) further seem to agree with the chaos perspective on the complexity of aligning personal and organisational values. They claim that the number of value-creation workshops don't necessarily lead to personal transformation since these values cannot be merely summarised onto posters or wallet cards without internalisation. Values need to transpire in the daily interaction between employees. This view is congruent with De Beer's (2003) view on this matter.

This first phase seems to be based on the traditional notions of the symbolic value of corporate leadership. In essence, the commitment of senior/top management is deemed a requirement to sustain the credibility and momentum of this transformational process (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:137).

Figure 4.2

A model for integrated thinking about Employment Equity



Source: Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:137)

Corporate leaders are responsible for setting an example for allaying fears and promotion of the emerging corporate values (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:125). Thomas had also conducted research for the Department of Labour during 1998 and found that employees prefer to look to leadership figures for guidance in these matters (cf. Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999). Finally, these authors view leadership as central to the creation, development and promotion of " ... strong communication structures and systems". They contend that South African research has also proven that face-to-face communication between employees and senior leadership is still regarded as essential for the correct transfer of information. This is in spite of the existence of EE Committees (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:127-128).

□ Phase 2: Revision of human resource policies and practices

The transformation process related to the EEA cannot succeed without revision and alignment of all human resource policies and practices (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:129). The alignment process should also be based on consultation between the EE Committee, management and other employee representatives. All human resource mechanisms should be aimed to facilitating the free flow of information about the EEA, specific organisational initiatives and inclusion of all employee categories. In the past women levelled much criticism at the male boardroom members (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:130).

They also warn against ignorance of the less visible or informal communication tools in all organisational endeavours, but specifically also in this context. Non-traditional communication tools or networks must be explored since these may suit the needs of employees and the "cause of AA" far better than older mechanisms.

□ Phase 3: Organisational diagnosis

Any physical or collective psychological barriers to full integration of all employees constitute "barriers" in the workplace. And since the EEA emphasises the removal of such phenomena, Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:131) suggest that a complete organisational diagnosis be completed. Contrary to

the first possible interpretation of this phase, the authors suggest that the positive elements of the organisation also need to be highlighted by means of such an analysis.

The aforementioned authors warn, in similar fashion as De Beer (2003), that the new values should not constitute assimilation of individuals or groups in areas that are not directly related to their jobs. Values should rather reflect fairness and performance standards that echo the EEA. The vision of diversity management should be the key driving force in the creation of an organisational climate that will contribute to the implementation of the EEA (Thomas & Robertshaw 1999:131).

□ Phase 4: Employment involvement

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:132) emphasise the principle of employment involvement throughout. But this dimension is highlighted as Phase 4 in figure 4.3. Open and free participation in this transformational effort is valued. Therefore Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:132) maintain that a democratic process for the election of the EE committee is not negotiable.

All managers should also be trained to deal with the EE and diversity issues effectively and sensitively. In contrast to the autocratic cascading down of EE targets, managers should ideally facilitate the target-setting process within their spheres of responsibility. Both the values and targets could then be communicated to top management for consolidation (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:132).

□ Phase 5: Broad-based intervention

“EE needs to be seen as a strategic issue, effected in an holistic manner with management commitment and with accountability at all levels” (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:133). With this statement the authors warn against “flavour-of-the-month” attitudes and techniques for the implementation of the EEA. They suggest that Phase 5 should focus on the development of broad and more specific programmes, specifically to address problem areas.

□ Phase 6: Monitoring and evaluation

Phase 6 could arguably not really qualify as a separate phase since it focuses on ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all implementation activities and is embedded in all previous phases. However, figure 4.3 illustrates the importance and place of this phase within the realm of continuous change. The EEA (55/1998) emphasises the fact that organisations need to report their progress in annual EE reports and EE plans to be submitted to the Department of Labour. (Refusal to do so, may result in punitive measures, in the form of fines, being instituted against organisations.)

From this perspective, monitoring and evaluation may be viewed as the mere phase for ensuring that designated employers comply with the EEA. However, Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999) view this as being equally important as the previous and concurrent transformational phases. Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:134-135) also draw upon research completed in the USA to broaden their classification of such continuous monitoring. (They list 16 examples of feedback that are reduced to six broad categories for the purpose of this study.)

The number of designated employees in strategic positions and a reduction of staff turnover in the designated ranks are the first two categories. (Incidentally, the phenomenon of aspiring individuals from the designated groups moving from one organisation to another at short intervals in pursuit of better remuneration, especially when the pool of expertise is rather small, is popularly referred to as “affirmative auction”.) These authors firmly believe that the nurturing and development of talent could curb this phenomenon. The third and fourth categories refer to the number of individuals from designated groups who are being mentored for more advanced positions and parity in salary between black and female employees in relation to their white counterparts.

The fifth category refers to the quality of communication about the EEA. The final category pertains to the progress of the business in terms of “... penetration of new and previously untapped markets” (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:134-135). These categories are relatively comprehensive and provide alternatives to the narrow interpretation or use of the mechanisms prescribed by the EEA. Their views are also congruent with De Beer’s (1998:72-73) critique of the top-down approach to AA.

4.2.2.2.2 A framework for a communication strategy

The framework for an EE communication strategy that Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) propose, also encompasses several phases. As was indicated previously, the use of this framework is not conceived as realistic without the foundation of the framework for integrated thinking. The level of detail of this framework is rather comprehensive, thus making it a possible benchmark for South African organisations that implement EE strategies. The different components of the communication strategy framework are reflected in Table 4.1 (which stretches over two pages).

Table 4.1

Thomas and Robertshaw's communication strategy for Employment Equity

<p>Phase 1: Positioning the organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Communication is pivotal ❑ Each organisation's stakeholder map will be unique <p>Content of the communication strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Rationale for strategies that go beyond legislative requirements, including the moral, legal and business imperatives ❑ Commitment by top management to Employment Equity ❑ Logistics of the process, including the development of strategies ❑ Statement of acknowledgement that employees may have concerns about Employment Equity ❑ Statement of acknowledgement that Affirmative Action will create greater diversity and that everyone will have the opportunity to striving toward corporate goals ❑ Details of how barriers to Employment Equity will be identified and how the culture of the workplace will be addressed to achieve the aforementioned ❑ Reassurance of the commitment of management to openness and participation in the formulation and implementation of the Employment Equity Policy and Plan ❑ Reassurance of regular feedback and communication relating to the progress of the Employment Equity initiatives.
<p>Phase 2: Management consensus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ CEO and top management's commitment to the process must be visible ❑ 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".

Phase 3: Communication with employee representatives

- ❑ **Overall goal:**
To obtain the full support of all members of this group before proceeding any further.
- ❑ **Employee structures:**
Workplace forums, trade unions representatives and other elected bodies of Employees
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **Suggested mechanisms:**
Discussion groups
- ❑ **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

Phase 4: Ongoing communication with employees on programme level

- ❑ **Tactics:** One or more senior managers must be present at face to face discussions
- ❑ **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:
 - National and regional demographics
 - Business imperatives
 - The concept of nation building
 - Legislative requirements
- ❑ **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
- ❑ **Communication climate:**
Trust: Employees should feel free to raise their fears and questions freely
- ❑ **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.

Source: Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:29-35)

From a corporate communication perspective it is significant that Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:132) view communication as central to this transformational process and also emphasise its strategic potential.

□ **Phase 1: Positioning the organisation**

The **first** phase should ensure that the organisation is positioned strategically through communication, including a stakeholder map. This view is congruent with Steyn and Puth's (cf. 2000) conceptualisation of the place of stakeholder maps in relation to corporate strategies and specifically a corporate communication strategy. Communication is also viewed as the means through which organisations articulate its strategic intent and involve different stakeholders in relation to such a transformational vision.

Interestingly, Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) also identify eight points of content that need to be managed at the strategic level. The need for the organisation to move beyond strategies that will only ensure legal compliance is the first such point. This point reflects the arguments from previous chapters about organisations having to embrace transformation vs. legal compliance. The emphasis on the moral, legal and business imperatives of AA would provide direction to the transformational effort.

Three other noteworthy points are the fact that the organisation should accommodate the deeply-held sentiments about AA measures, while expressing the organisation's commitment to open communication and dialogue. These principles would arguably contribute to a climate in which employees would feel safe to contribute to the process or to question particular actions or outcomes. When compared to literature on the role of communication in change and transformation, the inclusion of these three points should be complimented.

□ **Phase 2: Management consensus**

The **second** phase focuses on the role of management, both consensus about and commitment to this transformational effort. The guidelines within the integrated framework apply *idem ditto* to this phase.

□ Phase 3: Communication with employee representatives

The **third** phase of the strategy focuses on communication with employees, which is based on the goal of obtaining support for the transformational communication effort, before proceeding (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:137).

Employee communication structures, the approach to communication and suggested discussion topics represent the ideals of two-way symmetrical communication. The development of a vision and clarification about the role of the EE Committee are also embedded in this phase (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:137).

Literature on transformational change management confirms that the corporate vision is still central to translating the picture of the organisation's future. Visioning is applied slightly differently in this phase, but it emphasises the dialogical nature of transformational change communication: key stakeholders need to share their own sentiments and appreciate the sentiments of others.

The obvious ideal would be to arrive at some (even loose) form of consensus about this matter. Whether such a vision would ultimately really move the organisation forward, would have to be tested empirically. Thus the theoretical merit of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999:125-139) should be appreciated. Communication with employee representatives should also include discussions about the roles and responsibilities of the EE Committee. Clarity about the place of this important organisational mechanism seems to be a key requirement from the perspective of the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b).

□ Phase 4: Ongoing communication with employees at programme level

The **final** phase suggests that communication with employees ought to be continuous. The conceptualisation of communication plans flowing from a communication strategy again reflects the thinking of Steyn and Puth (cf. 2000). The contents described in this phase should thus not only be disseminated once or only to a select few. The contents include some elements of the EEA Plan

requirements (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:116-123). Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:137) further insist that representatives for this mechanism be elected in a democratic manner, once again contributing to a climate of trust. Such a climate would arguably contribute to optimism and the credibility of AA, as opposed to a climate of almost unbearable uncertainty or intolerance.

One significant component of this phase is the requirement of clarification of the differences between the concepts that often get confused, as was explained Chapters 1 and 3. Finally, this phase emphasises that the creation and maintenance of an open communication climate (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:116-123).

A critical content component of phase four of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999:132) communication plan is the clarification of the terminology associated with AA. As was indicated previously, misunderstandings occur often as a result of poor or inaccurate dissemination of information about the details of the EEA. The clarification of these terms would be a prerequisite for any other communication efforts.

Finally, this framework's reference to consideration of different needs of internal stakeholders and a multitude of communication channels, provides very concrete advice to any practitioner. From a corporate communication perspective, such advice is as important as strategic advice. This type of advice (suggestions) completed the framework in terms of the three levels of communication activity, as was explained in the previous chapter.

4.3 ESTIMATING THE VALUE OF THE CODE FOR GOOD PRACTICE AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS BY THOMAS AND ROBERTSHAW

Four points about the Code for Good Practice (Department of Labour, 1999b) need to be emphasised when estimating its value compared to other sets of guidelines. Firstly, it clarifies the legal requirements in a logical business context and is in this respect more comprehensive than any of the frameworks mentioned previously. The emphasis on roles and responsibilities in the planning stage is congruent with the traditional (mechanistic) approach to transformational management: expected outcomes can be most accurately predicted when the appropriate tasks are assigned to specific people. Within the

context of the study it could be argued that these guidelines are of paramount importance in order to overcome or prevent similar confusion, as is the case with the meanings associated with the EEA. The existence of various guideline documents (from the Department of Labour) on the Internet proves that some effort is made to assist employers with this process.

The EEA's description of designated employers' "duty to inform" may also be misunderstood, but more importantly, mismanaged. (This issue was also mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3.) The Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999) clarification on the communication, awareness and consultation dimensions are quite clear and comprehensive, but excludes a specific communication strategy. Many of the aspects mentioned in this code are reflected in Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) framework and communication strategy. For the purpose of comparing these frameworks within the parameters of this chapter, it is relevant to describe the contents of the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b).

Managers should be informed of their obligations in terms of the Act, and training should be provided to them where particular skills do not exist. These views are congruent with Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) notions of leadership and the paradigm from which organisations should approach the EEA (cf. De Beer & Radley, 2000; Horwitz *et al.*, 1996; and King Report II, 2002).

Finally, it seems that this framework, together with that of Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999), provide the most comprehensive guidelines for organisations regarding the implementation and facilitation of communication. The comprehensive nature of both of these frameworks, specifically the communication strategies, makes them possible benchmarks for South African organisations. Based on this evaluation both frameworks are also included in the research design in an attempt to answer the research question.

Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) model for integrated thinking and framework for a communication strategy also provide much more insight regarding the subtleties of organisational dynamics and the influence thereof on the implementation of the EEA. It is conceptually much more advanced than the other frameworks and could serve as benchmark for all organisations that implement the EEA, or that would only seek pragmatic assistance regarding communication strategies or plans.

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999:29) argue that a comprehensive communication strategy should be formulated even before organisations embark on this transformational path. The key variable in the formulation of such a strategy is the dynamic nature of various stakeholders. The authors contend that the needs of employees need to be the foremost consideration: "It is here that major issues of job security and promotional opportunities are of concern, especially amongst white male employees" (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:29).

One dimension that is not adequately described by either the Code of Good Conduct for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b) or Thomas and Robertshaw's (cf. 1999) work, is the continuous strategic management of relationships with external stakeholders. Communication management efforts for corporate profiling/strategic positioning is not specifically aimed at the external environment.

These remarks confirm that organisations could gain much by integrating the previously mentioned models and frameworks. But since transformational change management as a result of the EEA may differ from one organisation to another, this phenomenon cannot be encapsulated by (or restricted to) a single model or framework. Literature about the challenges South African business leaders face suggest that transformational leadership is both critical in an ever-changing environment. Thus also validating the description of transformational leadership as a "thinking science", as was explained in Chapter 2. Based on these observations, it seems appropriate to formulate a conceptual framework that could be used to guide and evaluate future communication and corporate transformational efforts as a result of the EEA (or even the BEEA).

4.4 TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

The conceptualisation of an improved framework for managing communication about EE seems appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, the efforts of three traditional organisational disciplines, Corporate Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity, need to be fully integrated. Integration of communication applies to the whole organisation. Secondly, the principles of the chaos perspective need to be reflected in a framework that focuses on transformational efforts as an intellectual effort

("thinking science") and accommodates the ever-changing needs of organisations in this context. Therefore the new suggestions are collectively referred to as a conceptual framework and not a model.

The conceptual framework is based on six broad principles: understanding the changing role of communication within transformational change management; appreciating the strategic alignment paradox, understanding the leadership paradox; corporate culture transformation; dialogue with stakeholders and organisational learning.

4.4.1 Understanding the changing role of communication within transformational change management

Communication, when defined as the sharing of meaning between people, is the process that enables employees to share information, create and co-create meaning and ultimately make decisions. This logic underscores the contribution of communication in this transformational context. Information changes continuously, based on the continuous changes in the internal and external environments of the organisation. This description will implicitly explain why the criteria for communication about the EEA in organisations cannot simply comprise elements such as "clarity", "direction", "roles" and "outcomes". (As was explained previously, such qualities typify mechanistic models.)

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2001:141) identifies 14 dimensions for comparing communication in the mechanistic and organic worldviews, but for the purpose of this study only five themes are described. Firstly, communication flows freely. Ströh (1998:29-30) also highlights this fact. Wheatley (cf.1999) further describes the relationship between information and the creation of meaning as a natural occurrence within organisations. The purpose and direction of communication are re-defined: communication now facilitates understanding and conflicting views (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2001:141). This is congruent with the concept of diachronic communication, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

Both the organisational climate and climate for communication invite change and transformation instead of both resisting change or dialogue between the organisation and constituent parts. This view highlights the implicit relationship between communication practices and assumptions about the

organisation, as explained by the Power-Control perspective as described in Grunig (1992:23). Fourthly, organisational learning takes place as a result of communication (Ströh, 1998:36). Communication facilitates the diffusion of both information and the interpretation of information (learning) throughout the organisation. The free flow of communication also opens up the possibility for all levels of the organisation to benefit or contribute to this learning process.

Finally, leadership and communication are viewed as inseparable. Leaders lead through communication, but primarily by means of appreciating and creating opportunities for the free flow of information and non-managerial employees' creativity (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2001:141). This specific view means that traditional notions of leadership are reversed: leaders primarily serve through their new understanding of this natural organisational force. (These qualities are reflected in the chaos vocabulary of self-organising ability of systems and creativity, as described in Chapter 2.)

4.4.2 Understanding the strategic alignment paradox

As was explained throughout Chapter 2, the application of the chaos perspective highlights a number of paradoxes, and could also lead to the critical evaluation of aspects such as "strategic" and alignment". These paradoxes are also apparent when evaluating possible ways in which organisations can manage communication about EE matters, as a transformational effort. In an effort to provide some answers to the apparent paradoxes, two models are presented and evaluated.

Firstly, Steyn and Puth (2000:53-76) conceptualised a model for the development of a corporate communication strategy that combines the dimensions of leadership, context and tactics. These authors also provide a comprehensive model for the different components of such a strategy, including the link to the corporate strategy; clarification of the internal and external organisational environments; identification of strategic stakeholders; identification and prioritising of key strategic issues; and the development of communication plans. This model focuses on the elevation of the contribution of the corporate communication division from purely tactical (functionary) practice to a key element of corporate strategy decision-making. This view has almost become axiomatic and no further discussion about the validity of this view is necessary within the context of this study.

In addition to this model, Steyn (cf. 2002) had conducted empirical research about the conceptualisation and contribution of the corporate communication strategist vs. the corporate communication manager. The views of this author are invaluable for the conceptual link between the possibilities of the corporate communication division and the realities of corporate transformation management.

Strategic research (including environmental scanning) and alignment of the corporate communication strategy are central tasks of such a strategist. When compared to the reality of change being the only constant of organisational life, the value of the corporate communication strategist as a key role player in a transformational process, seems almost too obvious. When measured against the qualitative dimensions of transformational change, as defined by the chaos theory perspective, the aforementioned model needed to be elaborated to allow for flexibility in many dimensions.

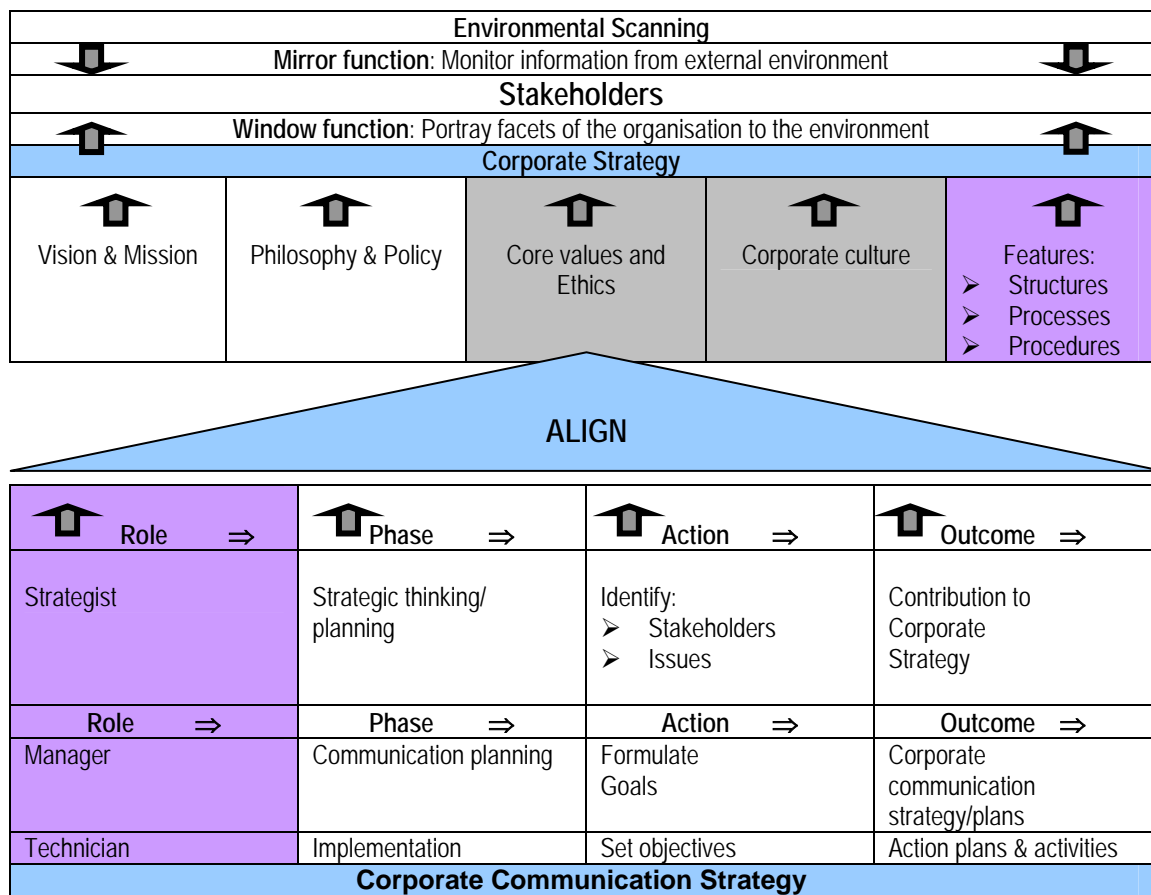
Secondly, Grobler (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204) incorporates all the theoretical assumptions, dimensions and elements of Steyn and Puth's (cf. 2000) model for a corporate communication strategy into a model for the alignment of strategic intent within the context of continuous change. These ideas are illustrated in figure 4.3 (on the next page).

The top half of this figure summarises the dimensions of strategically managed corporate communication. The emphasis on stakeholder management is central to this process. The five elements of the corporate strategy are also defined as the key dimensions of corporate transformation. (These do not need further explanation in this chapter.)

The potential of this model lies in the emphasis on flexibility in all the dimension of the bottom half of the figure 4.3, i.e. roles, phases, actions and outcomes. This model firstly refers to the fact that change, and for the purpose of this study also transformation, would require the most senior Communication practitioner to play not only a strategic or managerial role. The role of this individual will be contingent, based on the needs of the organisation and/or the transformational effort (Grobler in Verwey & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204).

Figure 4.3

Aligning the corporate communication strategy with the corporate strategy



Source: Grobler (in Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204)

Strategic thinking also needs to be translated into planning. When operating as communication manager, an individual will focus mainly on communication planning. And when operating at technician level, the implementation of plans would be the focus. Each of these roles also has distinct spheres of influence regarding actions (Grobler in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204).

At the strategic level, stakeholders and the identification of issues are central, while the formulation of goals and objectives pertain to the managerial and technician levels respectively. Finally, outcomes are also stratified according to three roles: strategic outcomes are mainly influenced from the strategic role, corporate communication planning is influenced by the manager, while technicians bring different elements of the corporate communication strategy and plans to fruition through activities (Grobler in

Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204). These activities are the wide spectrum of traditional and emerging tactics associated with communication management.

The usefulness of this framework for transformational change communication can be evaluated along three dimensions, i.e. advice to other departments about the management of communication; the integration of communication efforts of the organisation; and the ability to absorb the qualitative dimensions from the chaos perspective. These three dimensions are again directly related to the research question of this study and the premise that communication is the vehicle through which organisational transformation will be effected. For the purpose of clarification, this link will again be described.

Organisations that implement the EEA as a transformational process will need to communicate the transformational vision, with or without the assistance of specialists in communication. But the assumptions from corporate communication theory assert that specialist knowledge from either a technical, managerial or strategic perspective would be the normative ideal. The manner in which organisations manage communication and/or allow leaders to implement the transformational strategy, also depends on organisational conditions.

When considering organisations' duty to inform and consult internally about the EEA, it seems that Grobler's (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204) description of both strategic, managerial and tactical levels would be utilised in all organisational divisions. When the requirements of lasting transformation are considered, it would seem appropriate that communication efforts by all divisions need to be integrated, instead of relying on the corporate communication function or senior corporate leadership.

It also seems as if Grobler's (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204) model allows for flexibility in the structures or processes in the corporate communication division that will enable this function to both focus on current communication efforts and also the continuous scanning of the internal and external environments. Thus the scanning process is continuous in order to reflect the organisation's need for continuous adaptation and learning. Finally, communication is the vehicle for diffusion of such learning:

the transformational goal is that individuals will contribute to and appreciate the set of organisational values that will allow the EEA to function effectively.

4.4.3 Understanding the leadership paradox

As was indicated in Chapter 2, leadership is now more closely associated with facilitation than management, merely being a figurehead or having symbolic decision-making power. Since Anderson and Ackerman Anderson's (cf. 2001) conceptualisation of transformational change leadership is favoured in Chapter 2 and highlighted in Chapter 3, any framework for the management of communication about the EEA should also facilitate the ideals of "knowing, being and doing".

These ideals can be achieved by emphasising the fact that leaders need to model the transformational vision and facilitate dialogue about the EE strategy in various contexts. Any communication strategy for EE should specify expectations about the contribution of formal leaders. The contexts may vary from interpersonal communication to team or departmental meetings. And although expectations should be articulated, the corporate strategy should contribute to the empowerment of leaders to achieve the aforementioned expectations. Without empowerment, traditional leaders may feel overwhelmed or neglect their responsibilities regarding EE amidst their existing list of responsibilities.

As was indicated in the previous section, flexibility regarding leadership and content should be viewed in combination. Flexibility also extends to informal leadership situations. Thus frameworks for the management of communication about the EEA should allow for flexibility regarding these two dimensions.

4.4.4 Corporate culture transformation

Based on the argument that individuals need to embrace a new set of organisational values as the first step of organisational transformation (De Beer, 2002:ii), it seems that any framework for the management of EE, should also indicate how corporate values will be addressed. Any communication

strategy aimed at supporting the EE strategy should address so-called “hidden barriers”, as defined by De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000).

One of the most complex hidden barriers to overcome is a corporate culture of intolerance or one that is based on the beliefs that typified Apartheid South Africa. According to De Beer (cf. 2002) and Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999) the transformation of corporate values is at the core of “transformation” in relation to an EE strategy. The ideal set of values should at the very least focus on tolerance between races and the appreciation of subsequent diversity. These values reflect the sentiments of various authors about the appropriateness of the diversity management approach to the management of EE.

The almost too obvious implication is that a communication strategy for EE should focus on specific messages regarding the ideal set of corporate values that will articulate the vision of diversity and equality. Equality, as described in the preamble to the EEA, should be central to the transformational vision.

Finally, while the communication strategy should emphasise the ideal values, it should be flexible about the manner in which individuals (and groups) will engage with the values. Once again, a paradoxical situation develops when the success of the communication strategy is measured: it is unlikely that the most senior Communication practitioner will be able to convince other organisational decision-makers of the success of a communication strategy if the results are not easily measured. The question of how the abstract concept of transformation is measured, would certainly also contribute to the complex nature of planning and managing communication about EE matters.

Again both of these complexities should be addressed in the communication strategy: a variety of communication methods/techniques need to be specified for the dissemination of information about the ideal corporate values. And appropriate research methods should also be incorporated into the tracking of this continuous transformational process.

4.4.5 Dialogue with stakeholders

The research problem and the previous discussion both point to the need for understanding the nature or place of dialogue. The form of communication required to reach some form of consensus on the myriad of issues related to the implementation of the EEA, is dialogue.

Dialogue should firstly be understood as a phenomenon that resembles many of the elements of the co-orientation model as described by Dozier and Ehling (in Grunig, 1992:179–182) and the vehicle through which the relationships between stakeholders and organisations are maintained (cf. Post *et al.*, 2002). All of the previous authors highlight the need and potential for two-way symmetrical communication goals and outcomes. The process of dialogue is based on constant interaction between and balancing of the interests or views of the organisation and those of publics.

Two-way symmetry is viewed as the normative ideal. However, this ideal should not be misunderstood as total balance between the two parties/entities involved. Grunig (cf. 1999) explains that his conceptualisation of two-way symmetry was never intended to reflect pure co-operation or accommodation of interests of publics across all situations. Grunig (1999:3) states that the mixed-motive model for communication management provides a much more accurate conceptualisation of this dialogical process.

Based on the researcher's interpretation of the needs of organisations during the implementation of the EEA, it seems that the mixed-motive model for the management of communication is more realistic than pure cooperation for two reasons. The EEA requires compliance, which is in essence not negotiable, thus categorising the phenomenon as a one-way process. On the flipside, internal stakeholders³ evidently have multi-dimensional reactions to this transformational process. In order to arrive at the point of implementing the EEA and simultaneously ensuring organisational effectiveness, the interests of both sides need to be balanced.

³ The terms public and stakeholder are used interchangeably.

Organisations that embark on this journey are in a double-bind: if they do not comply with the EEA and the new BEEA, they will be fined by Government, while they can arguably not really force employees to transform their deeply-held beliefs or attitudes toward issues of race, gender and disability. As was explained in Chapter 2, the decision to adapt to or contribute to a new set of organisational values, lies with each individual. At most, organisations can aspire to all employees valuing the essence of the transformed corporate culture. No guarantees exist for this process.

Dialogue is also viewed as the mode for creating meaning and the overarching model for establishing transformational values, specifically when the relationships between the organisation and other entities are valued (Spicer, 1997:215). Even though the objective of communication actions has not yet been discussed previously, the maintenance of relationships is regarded as a governing principle within the context of this study.

The implementation of the EEA brings about profound changes that affect the psychological contract between the organisation and employees or external stakeholders (including investors, dealers, competitors, suppliers etc.). This psychological contract with employees would include dimensions like job security and trust, as was described in the literature about reactions to AA. Against this background, it could also be argued that these dimensions of the psychological contract are at the core of why this transformational effort is deemed profoundly difficult for some employees from the non-designated groups.

The importance of the organisation's relationship with internal stakeholders in the context of implementing the EEA, is further highlighted by Grunig and Haug's (in Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:30) conceptualisation of strategic publics. They argue that such publics are categorised as being of strategic importance based on the organisation's need to have a relationship with them. Based on these perspectives, any framework for implementing the EEA, should recognise the need for and allow for mechanisms to facilitate dialogue in order to manage the strategic relationship between the organisation and internal publics.

The relationship with external stakeholders is affected in a unique way as a result of both the EEA and the BEEA. As was explained in Chapter 3, the BEEA forces organisations to deal predominantly with suppliers (or other forms of business partnership) that are linked to the economic empowerment of non-whites. Although the BEEA is not a focal point of this study, the potential impact of this law should not be underestimated. And the same type of arguments about the top-down approach by Government could lead to similar debates about this law as is the case for the EEA.

Both of these laws necessarily have an impact on corporate profiling and relationships with current and potential investors. When business partners are considering new ventures, the profile of other entities in terms of the BEEA would also be a critical consideration. The EEA already requires that progress be reported annually by means of the EE Report and the EE Plan. As was mentioned previously, critics argue that communication on the basis of cyclical reports could hamper organisational transformation efforts when communication is interpreted as ending with the reporting or planning phases.

Furthermore, a danger to the process exists in the form of specifically external reporting. Reporting of progress regarding key appointments may be interpreted as “window-dressing” or “tokenism” vs. organisational transformation. One solution that has been proposed to avoid or overcome such a situation comes from the King Report II (2002). This report proposes that reporting on these matters (AA and empowerment) should be included in the Sustainability Report of each organisation. Although a debate about the validity of such a suggestion falls outside the scope of this study, the central idea of this suggestion echoes the principle requirement of communicating AA measures as a business imperative. Therefore, when considering frameworks for the management of communication about the EEA, the direct link between strategic business goals and transformation would need to be made explicit. Any communication strategy or plan would also have to refer to the ensuing management of strategic stakeholders.

4.4.6 Organisational learning

Ströh (1998:36) argues that employees should be empowered (enabled) to learn during times of change or transformation, as is the case in the context of the current research question. In order to

facilitate such organisational learning, the practice of communication needs to be aligned with the ideals of open, two-way (or at least consultative) interaction, a focus on teamwork and the availability of multiple communication mechanisms (Ströh, 1998:36).

Based on this description, any framework for the management of communication about the EEA should ideally emphasise how organisational learning will be facilitated and contribute to transformation. Corporate transformation is an infinite process and depends on organisational learning, also a process that is potentially infinite. Once again, communication is the vehicle through which learning can be facilitated through an organisation. Learning would have to start with individual transition, as proposed by French and Delahaye (cf. 1996). Individuals need to progress from transition to transformation. In order for individual transformation to contribute to group level and organisational transformation, as suggested by De Beer (2002:ii), experiences need to be shared in all directions.

Understanding the “true” nature and role of information, as a strange attractor, seems most appropriate in the context of organisational learning. When information about the organisation’s EE strategy is freely available and a climate for open communication (also debate) exists, employees would be able to take control of their own learning.

A paradox within the chaos perspective is apparent in the context of organisational learning: no guarantees exist for the willingness and ability of individuals to pursue information if not presented to them via traditional communication structures. A possible solution for this paradoxical situation may lie in the cultivation of a corporate culture of self-directed leadership, as suggested by Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:33). As was explained in Chapter 2, the free flow (availability) of information would also be critical in this corporate culture. But the ultimate decision of to align his/her values with that of the transformational vision still lies with the individual.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Communication is central to all (traditional and emergent) perspectives on transformational change management. Following this argument, communication is also the vehicle through which organisational

transformation will be achieved in relation to an EE strategy. The relevance of communication in this context is confirmed by the literature review, as well as the legal requirements. It would seem that organisations need to find a wise balance between managing communication in relation to EE strategies for legal compliance and lasting organisational transformation. Transformation of corporate values is the strategic vision. But, as opposed to deterministic thinking, the outcomes cannot be guaranteed. Although no ideal way could or should exist for this process, the chaos perspective provides a conceptual framework that transcends all differences between organisations from different sectors.

Chapter 5

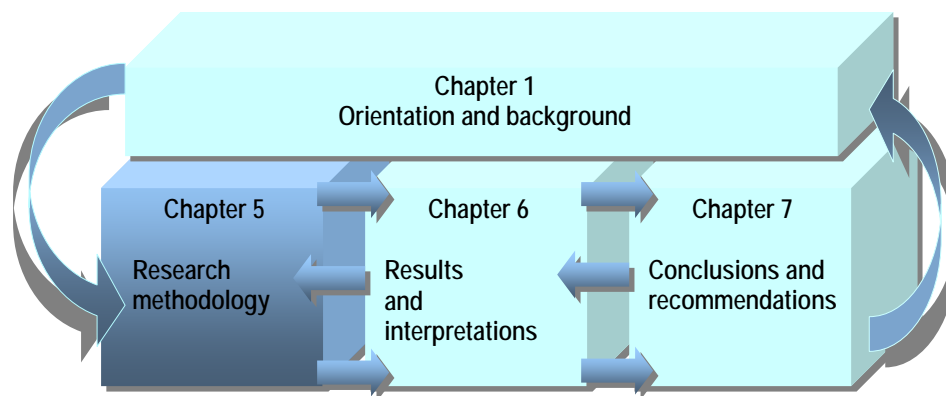
Research methodology

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the motivation for the qualitative empirical approach, research design and methods within this exploratory study, as well as the most pertinent aspects of the pilot study. Figure 5.1 illustrates the positioning of this chapter in relation to other components of the empirical phase. This figure further emphasises the requirement for constant interplay between Chapters 1 and 5, as well as Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Figure 5.1

Chapter 5 in relation to other components of the empirical phase



The three components of the empirical phase that should enhance the internal validity of the findings are central to this chapter. Firstly, the criteria for and attempts to ensure the scientific quality of this study are presented. Secondly, the influence of the research question, goal and objectives on the choice of research approach is presented. Details regarding the research design form the third component of this phase.

A multiple case study design, consisting of three cases, was followed. This design did not only suit the needs of this particular study, but incidentally reflects some dimensions of the research design of previous research about the generic implementation of affirmative action, completed by both IDASA and the IPM during 1995.

5.2 CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Two factors influenced the choice of empirical approach in this study. The first is the researcher's interpretation of the nature of the research phenomenon and the second is the research question. Du Plooy (2001:20-21) suggests that both the ontological, epistemological and theoretical assumptions about communication should be considered in deciding which methodological assumptions would govern a study.

The researcher agrees with Du Plooy's (2001:40) description of contemporary ontological assumptions about communication and the value thereof for understanding the current research problem. Accordingly, the researcher views communication as purposive, complex, creative, developmental and contextual, and something which "... takes place in a social, interactive reality, interrelated, amongst others, with physical, psychological, cultural and social contexts" (Du Plooy, 2001:40)

The nature of the research question and the ontological and epistemological assumptions about transformational change management and communication in the South African organisational setting serve as motivation for following the qualitative empirical approach within this study.

5.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: A DEFINITION

Babbie and Mouton (2001:270), Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2), Du Plooy (2001:29), Marshall and Rossman (1995:1-5), and Mason (2002:2-3) describe qualitative research as a paradigm that allows the researcher to get an "insider perspective on social action". Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) and Henning (2004:3) further describe the primary goal of this research approach as describing and then understanding ("Verstehen"), as opposed to merely explaining social action.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) summarise the characteristics of this approach as enabling the researcher to study phenomena in their natural settings, while attempting to interpret these phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Finally, Murphy (1995:1) views qualitative research within the management sciences as useful in "... articulating the range of scenarios which may occur under different circumstances". The last author's view has obvious relevance for the understanding of the research question and the potential significance of the findings of this study.

5.4 CRITERIA FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Before specific details about the design for this study is discussed, attention should be given to the criteria for defending the logic of qualitative research in general, as well as applying it to this particular study.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:142-143) two domains need to be considered when developing a qualitative research design: the criteria for soundness and demonstrating that the proposed work would be useful to the conceptual framework; and the initial research questions. The criteria for soundness (objectivity) of qualitative research are related to, but defined very differently from those used in the positivist research tradition. Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) provide a comparative table of such constructs that is presented below. Lincoln and Guba (quoted in Marshall & Rossmann, 1995:143-144) and Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) describe four main criteria for objectivity, i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Table 5.1

Quantitative and qualitative notions of objectivity

Quantitative	Qualitative
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Source: Babbie and Mouton (2001:276)

Credibility refers to the accurate identification and description of the subject (phenomenon). Marshall and Rossmann (1995:143) argue that the strength of a qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or process, such as the focus of the research problem in this study, will be its internal validity. To ensure internal validity, the researcher should clearly state the parameters of the study, including those pertaining to the setting, population and theoretical framework.

Transferability, or the generalisability of a qualitative study to other settings may be problematic, according to Marshall and Rossmann (1995:144). Quantitative researchers view the lack of external validity as a major weakness of qualitative research. But Marshall and Rossmann (1995:144) suggest that researchers can overcome this problem by explaining the relationship between the original theoretical framework, evidence collection and analysis, as well as concepts and models. If this

relationship is adequately described, the parameters of the study would be regarded as being clearly defined. Other researchers (or practitioners), working within the same parameters, can then determine whether or not the cases described in the initial project, can be generalised and transferred to other settings such as their own. A researcher who is interested in research that was conducted under very specific conditions, may also gain insight about how the initial study contributes to a body of theory (Marshall & Rossmann, 1995: 144).

Dependability, according to Marshall and Rossmann (1995:145), provides the qualitative researcher with a solution for the positivist notion that the universe is not changing and that research could be replicated perfectly. The qualitative research tradition assumes that research occurs in an ever-changing social context. Dependability thus also accommodates the researcher's improved understanding of a research phenomenon and related changes to the empirical design to do justice to this new understanding of the research phenomenon.

Since the concepts (principles) of dependability and replicability are closely related, the latter needs further description. Marshall and Rossmann (1995:146) highlight **replicability** as a traditional concern for the social sciences. These authors suggest that qualitative researchers can overcome this concern with by following three steps:

- Arguing that qualitative research, by its very nature, cannot be replicated - this notion is related to the construct of dependability and recognition of changes within the real world.
- Keeping thorough notes that record each design decision and the rationale behind it – this will allow other researchers to inspect each procedure.
- Keeping all collected evidence in a well-organised format – this will enable the researcher to defend the findings, should they be challenged.

The last criterion for qualitative research is that of **confirmability**. Confirmability is the criterion of having another study confirming the findings of a particular study. Lincoln and Guba (in Marshall & Rossmann, 1995:145) argue that the focus in this process should be on the evidence itself and not some inherent characteristic of the researcher. Marshall and Rossmann (1995:145) formulate this criterion as the question of whether the evidence helps confirm the general findings of a study. Several options exist for presenting the description of the manner in which the researcher attempted to abide by these four criteria for soundness. The logic of first discussing the overall research design and

specific empirical methods, dictates that such a discussion would appear toward the end of this chapter.

5.5 CASE STUDY RESEARCH

The exploratory nature of this study calls for an in-depth investigation and analysis of the research phenomenon. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:280-283), Du Plooy (2001:162-163) and Yin (1994:13) a case study research design would provide the researcher with an excellent opportunity to achieve the aforementioned objectives. Henning (2004:41) also contends that case studies focus on “discovery rather than confirmation”. A brief overview of advantages, as described by Du Plooy (2001:163) and Yin (1994:3-7) further illustrates the appropriateness of this research design within the context of this study – the second last and last advantages listed here, deserve special attention:

- Evidence from various sources can be used to build a “Gestalt” about a single case.
- Structuring case studies are more flexible in terms of resources such as money, time, subjects and social settings.
- Case studies can achieve maximum understanding when used in combination with theory. In this study, theory plays a critical role in defining and validating the initial research question, as well as the final research goal and objectives.
- Processes of development can also be described by means of case studies, e.g. the improvement of communication skills for teachers, or in this case improvement of the management of communication within the context of affirmative action.
- People’s experiences of making adjustments can be investigated by means of case studies, e.g. within South African organisations that implement affirmative action and employment equity measures. This example, as formulated by Du Plooy (2001:163), closely resembles the research question of this study, therefore confirming the appropriateness of the chosen research design.

The steps that were followed in operationalising this study are similar to the five steps described by Yin (1994), i.e. design, pilot study, evidence collection, evidence analysis and report writing. The application of the first three steps in this particular study is described in this chapter. The last two of these suggested steps are dealt with in Chapters 6. (The lessons that were learnt from the extensive pilot study are documented under section 5.10.)

5.6 MULTIPLE CASE STUDY DESIGN

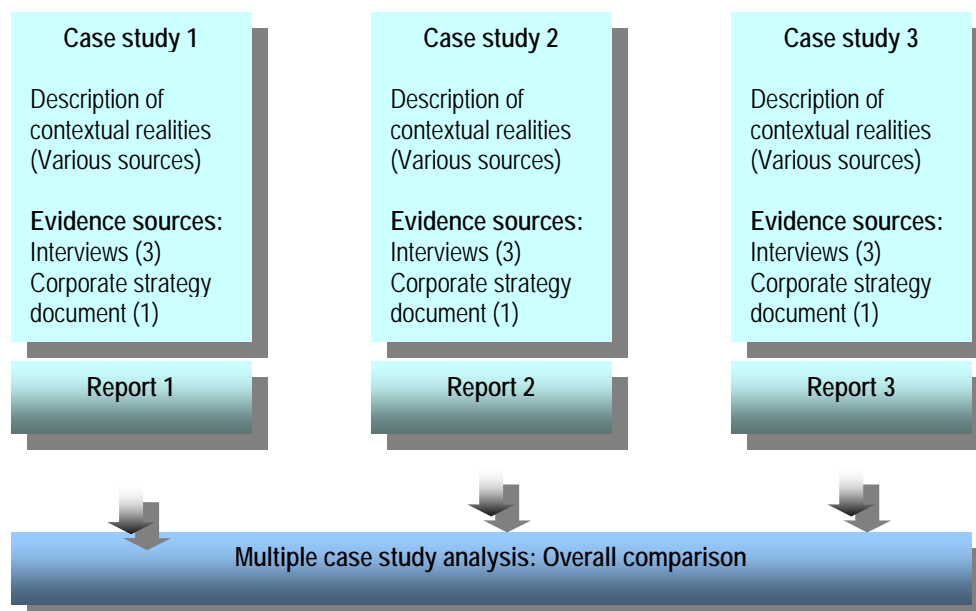
The possible depth of information that could be collected was the determining factor in adopting a multiple case study design. The exploratory nature of the research and the required depth of investigation were the deciding factors in determining that three cases should be investigated. Babbie and Mouton (2001:279) confirm that qualitative research designs generally focus on “a small number of cases to be studied”; as being open to the inclusion of multiple sources of evidence; and being “flexible in terms accommodating changes if necessary”.

Marshall and Rossman (1994:144) further validate the strategic choice for a multiple case study design by claiming that evidence from multiple cases, informants or evidence gathering methods could improve the study’s usefulness for other settings.

Yin (1994:48) also describes the replication of multiple cases as the appropriate design when the researcher wishes to investigate the “general existence of a phenomenon”. If three (or more) cases yield similar results, replication has occurred. Thus three case studies are compared in this study, as illustrated in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

An application of a multiple case study design



Three case studies, each representing a South African organisation, were included in the study. A deliberate decision was taken to include organisations from various sectors since the context for each case was important in terms of transferability. Transformation as a result of the EEA is assumed to be a reality all “designated employers” in South Africa have to grapple with. The manner in which organisations in different sectors deal with this, may differ because of conditions within the individual organisations or as a result of sector-specific qualities. In an attempt to prove the general existence of a phenomenon, organisations from three sectors or industries were included in the selection of case studies.

5.7 SAMPLING DESIGN

Mason (2002:120) warns qualitative researchers against the misnomer that rigorous and systematic sampling strategies are not important. The direct implications of sampling procedure decisions on the transferability (generalisation) of the results are equally important for qualitative and quantitative research.

5.7.1 Sampling technique

The soundness of sampling decisions regarding cases is an important consideration. The sampling technique for the cases is consistent with Babbie and Mouton’s (2001:287) description of theoretical sampling – categories are theoretically defined before conducting the fieldwork. Criteria for inclusion were formulated based on the literature review as well as the research goal. These criteria were:

- Organisations had to adhere to the criteria for the status as “designated employer”, as per the EEA.
- Organisations had to have a Corporate Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity function.

A related principle was applied to the selection of three interviewees per case study. As was indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, theory suggests that three key role players should be involved in the implementation of AA measures, i.e. the most senior Communication practitioner, the most senior Human Resource practitioner and the most senior Employment Equity practitioner.

The Code for Good Practice for the EEA (1999) refers to the centrality of the senior Employment Equity practitioner. Corporate Communication theory (cf. Steyn & Puth, 2000) suggest that the most senior Communication practitioner would also be a central figure in this process. The involvement of the most senior Human Resource management practitioner in this process, was confirmed by Thomas and Robertshaw (cf. 1999).

Du Plooy (2001:114) refers to this type of sample as either a known-group or judgement sample since the researcher uses his/her judgement and deems the sample as useful in terms of the information that is needed for a study. The requirement of transferability was also adhered to by means of purposive sampling – a strategy suggested by Guba and Lincoln (quoted in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277).

5.7.2 Case study realisation

A list of randomly selected names of organisations was compiled and details of the study, (a synopsis of the research goal and objectives, methods and the timeframe) were prepared. (The document containing details about the project appears as ANNEXURE 1.) Telephone calls to each of these companies were made to establish contact with the correct responsible department and or individual(s). The criteria for inclusion were also made clear during the initial contact. After expressing interest in participation, the project background was e-mailed to the appropriate individuals at different organisations. Almost 40 organisations were approached during the fieldwork stage.

Two noteworthy observations regarding the sampling process are that a considerable number of organisations were a bit apprehensive about participating in this study because of misunderstandings about the focus of the study, while getting approval for participation was a cumbersome process. The time-delay in decision-making about participation in research, specifically academic research, was an initial barrier to the completion of the fieldwork. Some organisations also suffer from research fatigue.

These observations highlight the initial need for a carefully developed project description and fieldwork plan. Such a fieldwork plan should ideally include contingency plans. Finally, a municipality, two international motor vehicle manufacturing firms and an institution of higher education participated in the study. One of these served as the pilot study. All participating organisations are listed on the Department of Labour's 2000 Employment Equity Registry on the Internet.

5.8 EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Mason (2002:52) suggests that the term **method**, when used in the qualitative research context, refers to more than just the mere technique for collecting evidence. The same author holds the view that qualitative method includes activities that are “intellectual, analytical and interpretative”. In similar fashion to Marshall and Rossmann (1995:14), Mason (cf. 2002) further explains that the interplay between researcher, research question and research objectives should allow for flexibility in the design phase.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) also claim that “... [a] combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation”. Subsequently partially structured personal interviews and corporate strategy documents were chosen as appropriate sources of evidence. Yin's (1994:93) principle of convergence of evidence from different sources within a single case was followed in this study.

The decision to utilise two sources of evidence, stems from the research objectives described in Chapter 1. Objectives 2-10 are linked to the personal interviews, while objective 11 depends on corporate strategy documents. Finally, the external websites of the participating organisations were consulted for corporate profile details. Such details form the basis of Part 1 of each case study report, as illustrated in Table 5.5.

5.8.1 Partially structured personal interviews

Du Plooy (2001:177) describes this type of interview as containing standardised questions, but allowing the researcher the opportunity to deviate from these questions and to ask probing questions based on the respondent's responses. The exploratory nature of this study the research objectives, perceived strengths of this method, as well as the findings from the pilot study were the deciding factors in adopting a partially structured approach to the three interviews in each case study. Kvale (in Babbie and Mouton, 2001:290) describes the qualitative interview process as entailing seven steps, i.e. thematising, design, interviewing, transcription, analysis, verification and reporting.

At the start of each interview it was made clear that the interviewee could at any stage still decide not to participate should he/she feel the need thereto. This was done in accordance with Mason's

(2002:81) list of considerations about informed consent. All interviews were recorded electronically, while the interviewer (researcher) also made cryptic notes. Both forms of evidence are available from the researcher. Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) describe the latter as one of the steps to ensure confirmability of any qualitative study. The strengths and potential weaknesses of personal interviews are compared in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Strengths and weaknesses: Interviews

Sources of evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Targeted – focuses directly on case study topic ❑ Insightful – provides perceived causal inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Bias due to poorly constructed questions ❑ Response bias ❑ Inaccuracies due to poor recall ❑ Reflexivity – interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear.

Source: Yin (1994:80)

- ❑ **Strengths**

Each interview allowed focused investigation of the research objectives: the research problem was described within the specific case studies. The conversational nature of partially structured personal interviews further allowed for insight about the research phenomenon to emerge.

Interviewees cited examples of different dimensions of the research phenomenon, which contributed to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon. The conversational tone also allowed for follow-up questions.

- ❑ **Weaknesses**

The potential weaknesses of this source of evidence were explored in the extensive pilot study, whereafter adjustments were made and incorporated into the interviews of the cases of the main investigation. Bias resulting from poorly formulated questions, was overcome by the process of drafting several sets of questions, testing these during the pre-test and having these questions reviewed by outside experts. This process is described in more detail in section 5.9.

The potential of response bias is regarded as a useful clue to the contextual realities in each case study. An interesting form of response bias occurred in this study. Some interviewees commented that they have both private and professional opinions about the research phenomenon. The researcher attempted to overcome this form of bias by reminding interviewees about the purpose and context of the study. In order to overcome the weakness of poor recall, all interviews were recorded electronically. These interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Finally, reflexivity from the interviewees' side could not be avoided entirely. (Reflexivity is viewed as being closely related to response bias within this context.) Reflexivity regarding interviewee's desired to provide ideal (or ideally-formulated) responses, seemed to have occurred rather obviously on one occasion. This interviewee had brought notes to the interview and gave extensive responses to all the questions. These responses still allowed for follow-up questions (the conversational tone) and were thus used in the same manner as all the other interviews.

The manner in which interviewees prepared for the interviews possibly contributed to the degree of reflexivity. All interviewees of the pilot study indicated that they have very little time for these interviews and would therefore like to have the relevant facts ready, should it be required of them. This was the most important reason for forwarding the interview schedule to them prior to the actual interviews. The request to receive the interview questions prior to interviews was expressed by all remaining interviewees and became the standard procedure for the study.

Finally, although the anonymity of organisations and interviewees was guaranteed at the outset of the process of contacting organisations, interviewees seem to have been apprehensive about entering the interview situation without perusing the interview questions. As was mentioned previously, interviewees may have wanted to be prepared, but they may also have wanted to ensure that the scope of the questions did not require them to share confidential information. Almost all interviewees expressed the concern about this aspect, despite assurances that their personal or organisational identity would not be revealed in any form in the research report.

5.8.2 Corporate strategy documents

Marshall and Rossman (1995:85) describe organisational documents as potentially rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in a particular setting. Yin (1994:82) further cautions researchers against a very narrow understanding of the value of such documents. Documents should be viewed as

a form of communication between parties in organisations intended to achieve specific organisational objectives.

Thus the Employment Equity Communication Strategy of each case study organisation was chosen as the document that would potentially yield the most appropriate evidence regarding Objective 11 (as formulated in Chapter 1). The strengths and weaknesses of documents are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Strengths and weaknesses: Documents

Sources of evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Stable – can be reviewed repeatedly ❑ Unobtrusive - not created as a result of the case study ❑ Exact – contains the exact names, references and details of an event ❑ Broad coverage – long span of time, many events and many settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Retrievability – can be low ❑ Biased selectivity if collection is incomplete ❑ Reporting bias – reflect (unknown) bias of author ❑ Access – may be deliberately blocked

Source: Yin (1994:80)

❑ **Strengths**

The stability of the chosen documents is an obvious advantage within the context of qualitative research: it would allow for numerous readings or opportunities for review. The chosen documents were either available or non-existent at the time of the empirical investigation. Thirdly, details pertaining to the compilation of structures involved in the management of communication about the EEA were made available via corporate strategy documents. These documents were also useful in constructing the description of the specific history/development of each chosen case study.

❑ **Weaknesses**

Low retrievability and access to documents were not factors to contend with in this study. Only one organisation in the main investigation had the required corporate strategy document available and this information was shared directly after the first interview.

Biased selectivity regarding the specific documents to be used did occur within the evidence collection phase. Interviewees were probed about the most appropriate document(s) pertaining to Objective 11.

The researcher was only interested in a communication strategy for Employment Equity. And, as was anticipated in the initial research design, such a corporate strategy document either did not exist, was in development or was shared with the researcher. The unknown biases of the author(s) of these documents were recorded as part of the contextual reality of a particular case.

5.9 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A partially structured personal interview schedule, as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:84) was developed for all interviews. The purpose of partially structured interviews was to allow more flexibility for exploration of unexpected topics or themes. This decision was necessitated by the exploratory purpose of the study. The results from the pilot study necessitated major changes to the interview schedule, including the elimination of a number of unnecessary questions, finalising the order of items, the elimination of complex questions, including Corporate Communication Management terminology. The 18 initial items, including eight structured probing options, were based on the research question and theoretical perspectives. (The original interview schedule appears as ANNEXURE 2.)

5.9.1 Researcher experience

Following the researcher's progress in terms of experience with personal interviews, the content and format of the interviews were changed. Whereas the researcher was initially too dependent on the interview schedule and the probing (follow-up) questions, this situation changed toward the second and third interviews of the pilot study. This learning experience contributed to the focus on questions that are included in the final interview schedule. (This process reflects the principle of dependability, as described in section 5.4.)

5.9.2 The final interview schedule in relation to the research objectives

Table 5.4 illustrates the relationship between the research objectives (as formulated in Chapter 1) and the questions included in the final interview schedule. The rationale for each question is apparent from this description.

The last question is aimed at both concluding the interview and allowing interviewees to discuss any aspect that they had previously not mentioned, or wanted to emphasise again. The final interview

schedule comprises nine items. Probing questions depended entirely on the nature of each interview and are not documented here. (The final interview schedule appears as ANNEXURE 3.)

Table 5.4

The research objectives in relation to the final interview questions

Research objective	Interview question
Objective 2 To describe the purpose of affirmative action in three South African organisations.	Question 1
Objective 3 To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners within each of the three South African organisations about the strategic value of communication in the management of Affirmative Action.	Question 2
Objective 4 To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners about the strategic value of communication in the management of Affirmative Action across three South African organisations.	Question 2
Objective 5 To identify the key role players (both departments and designated individuals) responsible for managing communication about Affirmative Action in three South African organisations.	Question 3
Objective 6 To identify key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners in managing communication about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.	Question 4
Objective 7 To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners about the specific contribution of the corporate communication function in managing communication about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.	Question 5
Objective 8 To identify communication management responsibilities of departmental leaders, other than the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, in managing communicating about Affirmative Action in each of the three South African organisations.	Question 6
Objective 9 To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about Affirmative Action that is communicated to internal stakeholders.	Question 7
Objective 10 To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about Affirmative Action that is communicated to external stakeholders.	Question 8
Conclusion of interview	Question 9

After presenting the final interview schedule, the description of the pilot study seems appropriate. Several lessons were learnt from the pilot study and are thus described. This process should contribute to the future replication of this study.

5.10 PILOT STUDY

The exploratory nature of this study necessitated the completion of an extensive pilot study. Key aspects of the pilot study are the sampling strategy, development of the evidence collection instrument, the development of the researcher's fieldwork skills and experimentation with evidence analysis and reporting.

5.10.1 Pilot study profile and summary of findings

The pilot study organisation was an institution of higher education. This organisation is popularly known as a "historically white university" and accommodates about 30 000 students. The institution provides tuition in both Afrikaans and English. When the student enrolment is broken down to numbers per race group, this institution is also one of the largest "black" universities in the country.

This fact was central to the responses from all three interviewees: according to these individuals, this organisation has arguably undergone "much more transformation" than other universities or technikons. The demographics of the student population at many other institutions of higher education are not much different from the statistics prior to 1998.

These realities need to be reflected in the value system of the institution, as well as the change in staff profile. Thus the organisation had established a fund for the development of staff and specific positions. But, according to all the interviewees, the existing pool of expertise in some fields of study is very small, which complicates (delays) the appointment of individuals from designated groups. Appointments at middle or senior management, even in the purely academic side of the organisation, proves to be stumbling block in the path to a workforce that reflects the demographics of South Africa more accurately than what is currently the case.

Finally, the organisation does not subscribe to the notion of appointing persons of colour for external "window-dressing". Appointments at the most senior executive level are made on merit, but with an

emphasis on diversity: whereas this institution was previously only managed by white Afrikaans males, a number women, English-speaking individuals and people of colour are included in this structure.

5.10.2 Research experience

The pilot study provided a trial-run opportunity for the researcher in terms of managing the research process and honing the specific skills for evidence collection and analysis. As was indicated previously, the logistics of finding organisations to participate in the study and setting up of interviews were challenging. Two organisations had also initially agreed to participation in this study, but did not follow through on this decision. This left the researcher in a peculiar situation, but again highlighted the need for managing this type of research like any other business project.

The pilot study also allowed for experimentation with interview transcription and analysis. This process occurred concurrently with the development of the questions for the final interview schedule, as described in the previous section.

5.10.3 Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy regarding both the criteria for inclusion of cases and interviewees were proven to be accurate. No adjustments were made as a result of the pilot study.

5.10.4 Research design

The pilot study yielded one major finding as well as a challenge to the initial research design, namely the non-existence of the organisational document originally chosen for analysis. Since the pilot case study had no formal communication strategy for EE at the time (and AA specifically), the researcher was referred to this organisation's EE Report for 2003-4 that was accessible on the Internet to both internal and external stakeholders. This implied that the process of content analysis of a communication strategy could not be conducted. The EE Report is not a corporate communication strategy *per se* and was thus not appropriate for analysis.

5.10.5 Improvement of evidence collection instruments

As was indicated under section 5.8, the interview schedule was also finalised as a result of the pilot study. A cover letter explained the process of recording interviews on micro cassette and ensured the anonymity of both the individuals and their organisations. It is important to note that the interview questions changed as a result of the pilot study, but not the details of the project in the cover letter. (This cover letter appears as part of ANNEXURE 3.)

5.10.6 Experimentation with evidence analysis techniques

The transcription of interviews was the first step in evidence analysis. The researcher also had to experiment with different analysis techniques and display formats in order to finalise the technique to be utilised in the main investigation.

Furthermore, a checklist for comparing the interviews and corporate strategy documents with Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity communication strategy, was developed. However, this could not be tested in the pilot study since the pilot case study did not yield the appropriate corporate strategy documents.

5.11 THE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis is the management of communication about affirmative action within each case study. The interaction between the research phenomenon and research context, is thus the focal point. This conceptualisation is congruent with Henning's (2004:41) view on this matter. A broad case description analytical strategy, as described by Yin (1994:103-104), was followed.

The broad categories for reporting each case are described in Table 5.5 (on the next page). This framework for analysis helps to organise the study both analytically and in terms of reporting the findings. In order to achieve these goals, embedded units of analysis within each case need to be considered. These embedded units are the two sources of evidence that were described in previous sections, namely partially structured personal interviews and corporate strategy document analysis.

All attempts were made to adhere to Yin's (1994:123-124) four criteria for high-quality analysis, i.e. inclusion and reliance on all evidence, consideration of all rival interpretations, focus on the most significant aspects of each case and reliance on prior/expert knowledge.

Table 5.5

Structure for individual case study reports**Part 1: Organisational profile**

- Core business
- Overview of history and nature of ownership
- Number of employees
- Scope of operations

Part 2: Reporting and analysis of evidence

- Interviews: Reported and interpreted per theme (interview question and research objective).
- Corporate strategy document: Summary of themes in comparison with the theoretical framework for a Communication Strategy by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999)
- Interpretation of comparison with theoretical framework

5.11.1 Interview analysis

The analysis process for interviews started directly after the completion of transcribing all recordings. The analysis was also preceded by the development of various possible display formats – these two processes are intrinsically linked. Each interview question formed a theme in relation to the research objectives to be discussed in the overall case study report. The analysis of responses relied on post-coded themes, as described below. Henning (2004:104-109) refers to this as open coding. The same author further describes the logic that was applied during the analysis of interviews, as an interplay between reality, coding and recontextualisation. Themes (or chunks of reality) are reconstructed to form an argument about the research phenomenon.

The complete response to each question, for each interview, was read at least four times. The first time for completeness and to check for typing errors, the second time to encircle pertinent issues, which could ultimately serve as themes. The third reading entailed the numbering of these issues and separating themes from examples. The fourth reading occurred when themes and examples were reported in the process of reconstructing reality from the perspective of the interviewees.

The nature of each research objective dictates the logic to be followed in the process of analysing the evidence from the interviews in each case study or across case studies. These are presented visually in Tables 5.6 – 5.9 (on the following pages).

□ Logic of analysis 1

Responses pertaining to interview questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 required the integration **within each case**. This process is illustrated in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

Logic of analysis 1: Collective themes

Case study 1	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Case study 2	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Case study 3	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3

□ Logic of analysis 2

Another analysis logic was applied to the responses pertaining to objectives 4 and 6-9 in order to highlight similarities and differences **between the perspectives of the interviewees and the different cases**. This analysis logic is illustrated in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Logic of analysis 2: Comparison of one interview across three case studies

Case study 1	Case study 2	Case study 3	Interpretation
Interview 1	Interview 1	Interview 1	Interpretation: Interview 1
Interview 2	Interview 2	Interview 2	Interpretation: Interview 2
Interview 3	Interview 3	Interview 3	Interpretation: Interview 3

5.11.2 Corporate strategy document analysis

Qualitative content analysis was applied to the communication strategy document within each case. The purpose of the analysis process was to operationalise research objective 11.

The analysis of such documents was completed at the hand of pre-coded themes from Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity communication strategy. This analysis was

achieved by means of a grid, consisting of the different elements of the aforementioned framework, as illustrated in Table 5.8 (on the next page).

Table 5.8

Content analysis regarding Thomas and Robertshaw's framework

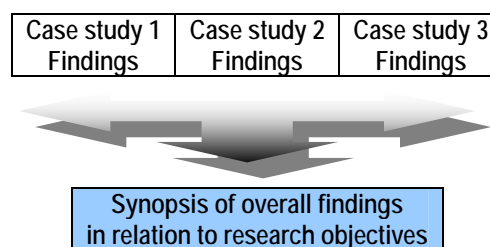
Elements from Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity Communication Strategy	Document(s) Yes / No

5.11.3 Overall comparison

The last research objective guided the analysis logic at **case study level**. The overall findings per case study pertaining to research objectives 2-11 are compared. The analyses logic that are described in both section 5.11.2, contributed to the overall case comparisons. This case comparison process is illustrated in Table 5.9. Finally, the overall case comparison forms the basis for the conclusions about the study that are presented in Chapter 7.

Table 5.9

Multiple case study comparison



5.12 APPLYING THE CRITERIA FOR SOUNDNESS

As was explained toward the beginning of this chapter, the manner in which this study was compared to the criteria for soundness, needs to be described.

5.12.1 Credibility

Suggestions from both Marshall and Rossmann (1995:143) and Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) were employed to ensure the credibility (internal validity) of the study. The parameters of three dimensions of the study were clearly defined, i.e. the setting, population and theoretical framework. Furthermore,

different types of interpretation were pursued, discussions with peers occurred and all materials pertaining to the documentation of findings are still available from the researcher.

5.12.2 Transferability

Marshall and Rossmann's (1995:145) and Babbie and Mouton's (2001:277-278) suggestions regarding transferability (external validity) were also followed. The parameters of the study were defined by means of indicating the relationship between the theoretical framework, concepts and frameworks, evidence collection and analysis.

The degree of detail in the description of cases should allow the reader to judge the transferability of this study. Finally, the choice of organisations to be included in this study was not only based on availability, but on the richness of evidence that different sectors could yield.

5.12.3 Dependability

Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) contend that the demonstration of dependability would also imply the demonstration of confirmability since these qualities are inseparable. But for the purpose of this study, these will be discussed separately.

The academic research context of this study ensured that the suggestion of an inquiry audit (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278) was followed. This process entails constant revision of the inquiry process and documentation. Within the academic research context, a study supervisor acts as inquiry auditor who considers the internal coherence of a study. The last aspect related to dependability of this study pertains to the validity and reliability of the interview and document analysis.

5.12.3.1 Coding validity

Stacks and Hockings (1999:179) suggest that three possible sources of invalidity should be considered, i.e. definition, category and sample. The categories/themes used for document analysis, adhere to the criteria of exhaustiveness, mutual exclusivity and equivalence. Finally, the sampling strategy reflects the aim of the research, as formulated in Chapter 1.

5.12.3.2 Inter-coder reliability

An independent, second coder was used to test the reliability of the coding pertaining to the interviews and documents. Using a second coder involved two stages, i.e. a briefing session regarding the context of the study and an explanation of the specific needs of this project.

Henning (2004:109) emphasises the importance of orienting/training a second coder thoroughly since he/she must understand the context of the study. In this study, the second coder holds a Ph.D. in Corporate Communication and has a well-established academic record. This individual has no vested interest in this study, thus his objectivity was guaranteed.

Holsti's reliability formula, as described by Stacks and Hockings (1999:178) and Miles and Huberman (cf. 1984) was applied to two sets of evidence, i.e. that of the researcher and that of the second coder:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

M refers to the number of coded units about which the coders agree. **N₁** and **N₂** represent the total number of units coded by the two coders. This reliability formula was applied to all the evidence from the three case studies. The relatively small number of cases necessitated the second coder's coding of all interview transcriptions and the communication strategy from Case Study 3. The formula yielded a reliability level of 97,5% about the 192 themes, sub-themes and examples. The high level of reliability confirms that the researcher's categorisation of responses into themes, sub-themes and examples was not the result of a purely subjective process.

5.12.4 Confirmability

Guba and Lincoln (in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278) suggestion regarding a "confirmability audit trail", was followed. This process entails the revision of six classes of evidence, i.e. raw evidence, evidence reduction and analysis products, evidence reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, notes pertaining to intentions and dispositions, as well as instrument development information. All of these classes of evidence are available from the researcher. The rationale for this audit trail is to ensure that the findings emerge from the evidence and not from the researcher's bias.

5.13 CONCLUSION

Qualitative research focuses on the understanding of a research phenomenon and the consideration of all contextual realities. This principle also governs case study research. A different vocabulary exists within the qualitative research tradition. This chapter served the purpose of allowing the researcher to indicate how the qualitative vocabulary will be applied to this study and what underlying logic determined how the evidence pertaining to the overarching research question, is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Results and interpretations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

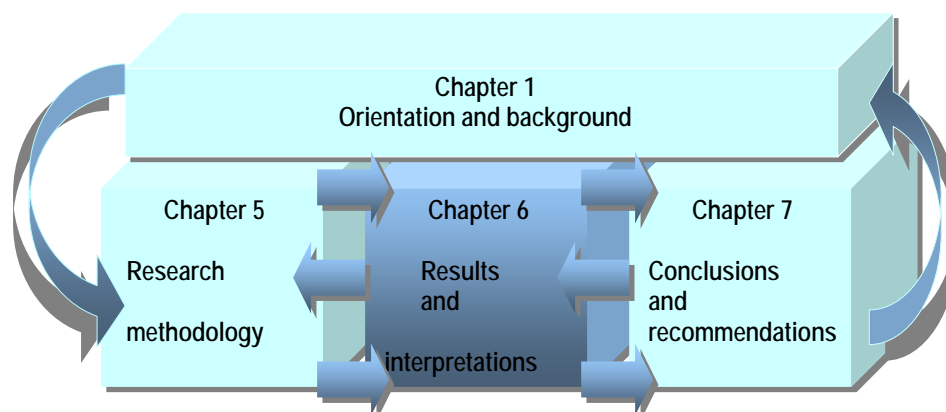
The empirical evidence and interpretation of the evidence regarding the overarching research question is the focal point of this chapter. The results of this study are presented on two levels: **per case study and as a comparative case study report**. Each case study report is structured according to 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

- 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

○ 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.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and recommendations

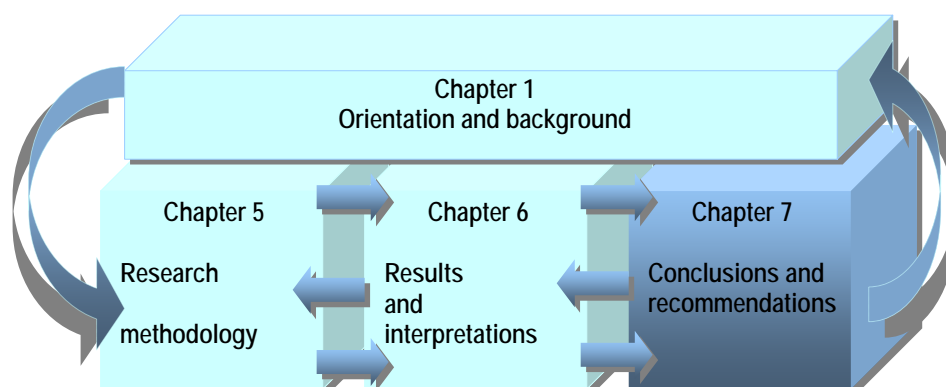
7.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of the empirical phase focuses on two main areas, i.e. conclusions and recommendations about the comparison of three case studies. These aspects are presented in relation to the overarching research question, “How do South African organisations manage communication about Affirmative Action (within the context of Employment Equity)?” The four sub-questions are further utilised to structure these conclusions, i.e.: “How do South African organisations comply with their duty to consult with and inform stakeholders about the process of Employment Equity?”; “What approach does South African organisations follow in the management of Employment Equity as a transformational change process?”; “What approach does South African organisations follow in the management of communication about Employment Equity as a transformational process?”; and “What approach does South African organisations follow regarding leadership within the process of Employment Equity as a transformational process?”.

Following the visual representation used in all previous chapters, the interconnectedness of Chapters 1, 5, 6 and 7 is illustrated by figure 7.1 below. The arrows in this figure emphasises the connection between Chapters 7 and 1.

Figure 7.1

Chapter 7 in relation to other elements of the empirical phase



The same principle that guided the process of interpretation in the previous chapter, also governs the process of formulating conclusions: these conclusions may also be contested. The conclusions and recommendations are also based on the theoretical insight from Chapters 2 to 4 – similar to the interpretations in Chapter 6. Finally, theoretical and empirical limitations of the study are presented under a separate heading.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

As was explained previously, the research question and sub-questions were investigated by means of 12 objectives. Two types of conclusions are presented, i.e. theoretical and empirical. Objective 1 is wholly theoretical and conclusions about the matter are thus presented as such, while conclusions about objectives 2 to 11 are presented under the second heading. Finally, a holistic view of the research phenomenon is also presented.

7.2.1 Objective 1: Conceptual framework for the management of communication about Employment Equity

It is important to note that the emphasis of Objective 1 is on the visual representation of the ideas that govern the epistemological and ontological interpretation of the process of transformational change management in this context. The purpose is not on creating yet another “model” which could serve as a “magic cure” since neither of these solutions would be appropriate within the realm of the organic worldview. The management of transformation and change communication is viewed as a “thinking science”, as conceptualised by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (cf. 2001) and the emphasis is thus on the integration of the chaos perspective vocabulary with the challenges of this transformational context.

The conceptualisation of a framework for the management of communication about EE matters points to the paradoxes from the chaos perspective: three paradoxes are important namely strategic alignment, leadership and organisation’s dependence on outcomes. Deterministic thinking may provide “how to answers”, while the chaos perspective emphasises the awareness of the complexity of organisational life (cf. Jick & Peiperl, 2003): disequilibrium and the natural tendency (cf. Wheatley, 1994) of unpredictability, thus challenging the notions of “alignment” as proposed by Steyn and Puth (cf. 2000).

The challenge for practitioners lies in translating the principles of the chaos perspective into terminology that is not too abstract and which will result in concrete implementation strategies, as well as approaching transformation as a thinking science. Leaders are traditionally held accountable for corporate progress, thus the challenge lies in making self-directed leadership and informal leadership critical components of the corporate culture, thereby also enabling organisational learning.

Since a static model or prescriptive set of criteria is not appropriate, the emphasis should be on dimensions that will allow organisations to be flexible regarding the structures and processes through which to address this transformational context. Grobler's model (in Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:204) for the alignment of a communication strategy with a corporate strategy seems to be an appropriate platform since it suggests that the dimensions of role players, specific roles and specific contributions are in constant flux. Structure is not proposed as *the* solution. Structure, if formalised, needs to follow strategy. Thus allowing the organisation to pursue transformation and learning through communication. The elements that serve as "strange attractors" in this context are the corporate values, culture and the transformational vision. Communication serves the purpose of conveying the details of these elements to all stakeholders.

Information should move freely throughout the organisation, thereby enabling all stakeholders to make decisions within the transformational context. The final paradox organisations face is that of not trying to predict or force specific outcomes even when the transformational vision would guide the efforts of the entire organisation. A more accurate understanding of non-linearity may contribute to a different approach to strategy formulation and implementation. The solution to this paradox may be the creation of a culture that supports the philosophy that transformation is not easily measured, an infinite process, requires individual transition (as described by French and Delahaye, cf. 1996) and a climate of trust that will allow for "creative/positive conflict" (as described by Ströh, cf. 1998).

The final dimension of the conceptual framework is the organisation's ability to manage stakeholders in an equally dynamic manner: disequilibrium, as defined by various chaos perspective experts, also applies to the organisation's definition of its relationships with stakeholders.

The critical lesson organisations should keep in mind is that of continuously observing the underlying patterns of occurrences in relation to the transformational process from afar: it would seem that the divide between "real" managerial problems and the potential of the chaos perspective may be

overcome when organisations are viewed as whole entities, and when traditional strategies are flexible enough to anticipate and accommodate the demands from the dynamic environments. The means through which organisations can engage with stakeholders are dialogue and scenario planning. Finally, the role of the Corporate Communication division may rather be the facilitation of such dialogue and corporate values than only mechanistic communication programmes.

7.2.2 Empirical conclusions

7.2.2.1 Objective 2: The purpose of Affirmative Action

Three conclusions that pertain to corporate values, terminology and approach to the process are presented in relation to this objective. Firstly, corporate values influence the manner in which organisations approach the management of AA. South African organisations implement AA measures as part of EE strategies and as a means to bring about an equally representative workforce. The spirit of the EEA and BEEA are appreciated and incorporated into the corporate values of organisations. The notion of “reversed discrimination”, as suggested by De Beer and Radley (cf. 2000) is not a motivating factor.

The implementation of an EE strategy is not a matter of legal compliance either, which highlights organisations’ awareness of their role or place as responsible corporate entities, as suggested by the King Report II (cf. 2002). This awareness of their role in (contribution to) societal development may stem from the fact that corporate reputation in relation to this area is extremely important. The current focus on the so-called tripple bottom-line (cf. Post *et al.*, 2002) and the manner in which organisations have to report on their achievements (cf. King Report II, 2002) may also contribute this sense of corporate responsibility.

Secondly, the terminology that organisations use to manage the process reflect both the corporate values and the evolution of Government’s approach to this process. “Affirmative Action” is not used. The fact that employees still hold strong negative emotions about that concept, confirms that organisations should indeed manage EE matters from the perspective of appreciating diversity. When organisation’s sense of responsibility within society is considered, it is not co-incidental that they also support the appreciation and development of their employees. The management of diversity is

favoured as the approach that will bind employees together instead of again creating a psychological division.

The reactions toward "AA" further suggest that ten years since the first democratic elections, is perhaps a very short period for people from all races to truly grow beyond the fear/resentment that divided them previously – a fact that supports De Beer's (cf. 1998) interpretation about the challenges that ordinary people would face.

7.2.2.2 Objectives 3 and 4: Strategic value of communication (An integrated approach from within and across cases)

Four conclusions are presented in relation to objective 3. The first is the fact that differences exist between the views of the three designated individuals per se, as well as across three cases. As was indicated previously, the specifics of an organisation's approach to AA, determines the focal point of the views each of these designated individuals has about the strategic value of communication. These facts confirm the suitability of a multiple case study design in relation to this exploratory study, as described in Chapter 5.

Secondly, communication is central to the transformational process. Agreement exists about the importance of communication in both the internal and external contexts, which confirms the theoretical relationship between transformational change and change communication: transformation cannot come about without communication. The notion of communication as a vehicle for transformation, as suggested by the myriad of authors in both Chapters 2 and 4, is also confirmed. Communication is viewed as the means for sharing information and meaning, as proposed in Chapter 1.

Thirdly, internally, communication predominantly serves the purpose of conveying details about the corporate programme for the implementation of AA to all employees. Thus organisations are fulfilling their obligation to "inform and consult" as suggested by the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999). And other departments also expect the Corporate Communication function to advise them on the appropriate management of communication in this context. The underlying principle of Grunig's (cf. 1992) role conceptualisation of expert prescriber and/or advisor is thus relevant in this context.

Finally, external communication serves the purpose of informing stakeholders about progress with the process. The management of corporate reputation falls within the realm of external communication, while organisations recognise both the opportunities and threats of such communication. The overarching view is that external communication about false achievements in the area of EE is a risk. This fact confirms that the broad or national approach to the management of EE is complex: political pressure exists in many forms and has a definite influence on whether organisations are perceived as responsible corporate citizens, if only by virtue of complying with legislation.

7.2.2.3 Objective 5: Key role players

A number of “key role players” are involved in the management of EE, at both strategic and tactical levels. Both departments, different levels of leadership and individual organisational leaders have a responsibility for managing communication (or the flow of information) about AA in South African organisations. At departmental level, both the Human Resources, Corporate Communication and EE departments have central roles in the process. These departments are responsible for corporate strategy initiatives, either in their specialist areas or in an integrated manner. When viewed from the chaos perspective, the challenges for organisations are apparent: The fact that the aforementioned departments and leaders are so central to this process suggest that organisations rely on traditional, linear modes of thinking, but paradoxically, also have to rely on the expert opinions from the three departments. Du Plooy-Cilliers (cf. 2001 & 2003) and Ströh (cf. 1998) emphasise the paradoxes that emerge from this perspective.

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

Three conclusions are presented in relation to objective 6. Firstly, the three interviewees in each case study have corporate responsibilities in relation to the EE process. The role of the Human Resources, Corporate Communication and Employment Equity departments in the process of implementing affirmative action measures, implies that the most senior practitioner in each of these departments, also have communication responsibilities in this context. Two levels of responsibility exist, namely corporate and departmental. Corporate responsibilities refer to (but is not limited to) the dissemination of information about the process, including the business and moral imperatives, and the organisational vision for Employment Equity.

Secondly, departmental responsibilities refer to (but is not limited to) setting numerical EEA targets; setting an example for others as a leader; addressing fears and concerns from designated and non-designated groups; disseminating information about the process, and facilitating dialogue about the process. From these facts it appears as if the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (1999) does influence the manner in which organisations manage the EE process since the aforementioned dimensions are all embedded in the code. These facts also confirm the value of the Code for Good Practice for the EEA (1999) and the model for integrated thinking by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) as benchmarks for South African organisations since they cover all aspects of the process.

Finally, the line between communication for legal compliance and communication for corporate transformation is rather thin. The conceptualisation of EE strategies as transformational change (as defined by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson, cf. 2001, as well as Grobler in Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003) was supported by the empirical evidence in all three cases. The core values of all three organisations were affected in preparation for such strategies, while the success of this process further depends on current (or evolving) corporate culture and values.

7.2.2.5 Objective 7: Contribution of the Corporate Communication function

Conclusions about two aspects are presented. Firstly the Corporate Communication function is expected to provide tactical and strategic advice. Secondly, organisations are not satisfied with the manner in which internal communication about EE matters is managed.

Corporate Communication departments are expected to provide advice regarding technical and communication strategy dimensions to the Human Resources and Employment Equity departments irrespective of the type of organisation. The role of this department would ideally not be to initiate communication about this organisational effort, but to be involved right from the start of the development of an Employment Equity strategy or plan.

However, in two of the three organisations this department is seen as having neglected internal communication in favour of external communication. The management of corporate reputation is largely viewed as strategically more important, and perceived as such by those who complain about this disparity. Activities/achievements in the arena of EE and BEE as important for corporate reputation management. Internal communication is important for the transformational effort, but the importance of

the external environment, as suggested in figure 7.2 (section 7.4), may be explained by the commercial survival of organisations. These facts again highlight the difficulty of balancing the interests of different stakeholders and responsible corporate citizenship, as discussed in section 7.2.2.2.

7.2.2.6 Objective 8: Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders

Legal compliance guides the range of responsibilities that leaders currently have in this transformational context. But the evidence also highlights the thin line between strategic (business) imperatives and legal compliance, one of the overarching themes that emerged from the study. All the responsibilities that were reported in relation to this objective in Chapter 6, confirm that the leaders in organisations are in fact held to the responsibilities as formulated in the Code for Good Practice for the EEA (1999).

The interrelatedness of communication and managerial responsibilities was also emphasised. Organisations still conceptualise transformational leadership in a rather narrow or mechanistic manner: leaders are predominantly responsible for information dissemination within hierarchical structures. This practice reflects the ideas by Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) about traditional leaders in this transformational context. The “knowing, doing, being” perspective is not widely supported, but depends on the corporate realities or needs. On the other hand, some aspects of the chaos perspective on leadership are embraced by individual interviewees and/or divisions. Only organisation formally supports self-directed leadership through the philosophy of empowerment.

7.2.2.7 Objective 9: Content for internal stakeholders

Internal stakeholders should be, and are currently, informed about the moral and business reasons for implementing affirmative action as part of the EE strategy. The communication of these reasons depends on the specific values that govern each organisation. The purpose of internal communication would be to facilitate the transformational process associated with an EE strategy: all employees ought to embrace the process as non-negotiable and a natural phenomenon in the workplace. However, traditional sentiments against or in favour of such measures still need to be addressed. Finally, the technical details of the process in organisations, together with progress reports, are also communicated to all levels of employees. This process is also hierarchical in all organisations, with some elements of the chaos perspective noticeable, as indicated in the previous section.

Content for internal stakeholders thus seem to reflect more than the minimum requirements, as required by law, as indicated in the EEA (55/1998) and the Code for Good Practice for the EE (1999). The complex nature of this transformational context is also reflected in these facts: the unique organisational dynamics will influence what messages will be used in order to bring about individual transition, as suggested by French and Delahaye (cf. 1996).

7.2.2.8 Objective 10: Content for external stakeholders

The information that external stakeholders receive is not different from the information that internal stakeholders receive. However, the advent of the EEA and BEEA have influenced the relationship organisations forge with external stakeholders, and which hinges on communication. Since organisations need to monitor equity in their business ventures, including dealers, supplier and contractors, these traditional external relationships have been re-defined as "internal".

Such stakeholders are often provided with exactly the same information as employees, which still constitute the traditional internal stakeholder grouping. The suggestions by Post *et al.* (cf. 2002) regarding the need for a new appreciation of stakeholders in a turbulent environment are thus also validated. The notion of incorporating the principle disequilibrium in relation to stakeholders as part of a conceptual framework, thus seems realistic.

7.2.2.9 Objective 11: Content analysis of communication strategy

Organisations value communication strategies in this transformational context. Communication strategies serve the traditional (deterministic) function of aligning messages and the specific contributions of divisions and/or individuals. All dimensions of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for a communication strategy are reflected in the strategy that was already in place at one of the organisations.

7.3 OVERALL COMPARISON OF CASES

Corporate values and culture determine the manner in which organisations approach the management of communication in this context. External communication efforts are currently managed more strategically than internal communication, thus causing frustration among Communication experts. EE

committees are also central to the success of the facilitation of information and feedback about EE matters. The Corporate Communication division is not the leading department in this context since this transformational context is more directly associated with the policies and processes from the Human Resources and Employment Equity functions. However, these three divisions co-operate in this transformational effort. Finally, communication is the key ingredient in the transformational process.

7.4 HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE RESEARCH PHENOMENON

The description of theoretical and empirical conclusions would not be complete without a summative view on the research phenomenon, i.e. communication about Affirmative Action within the context of Employment Equity, in the South African context. Such a view is presented as a means of summarising the key aspects from the previous chapter and the preceding conclusions. These ideas are illustrated in figure 7.2 (on the next page).

Evidence in relation to the four sub-questions further suggests that transformational change management is articulated by means of communication (in different guises). As was indicated previously, the ultimate purpose of the empirical investigation was to provide an exploratory answer to an overarching question and not only specific objectives. Thus four sub-questions need to be answered as part of the answer to the overarching research question.

The evidence confirms that organisations' transformational change efforts cannot come to fruition without the management of transformational change communication and transformational leadership. However, as was indicated previously, the exact manner in which the aforementioned sub-systems contribute to the achievement of the transformational vision, is unique in each organisation. The interrelatedness of transformational change, transformational change communication and transformational leadership is confirmed by figure 7.2

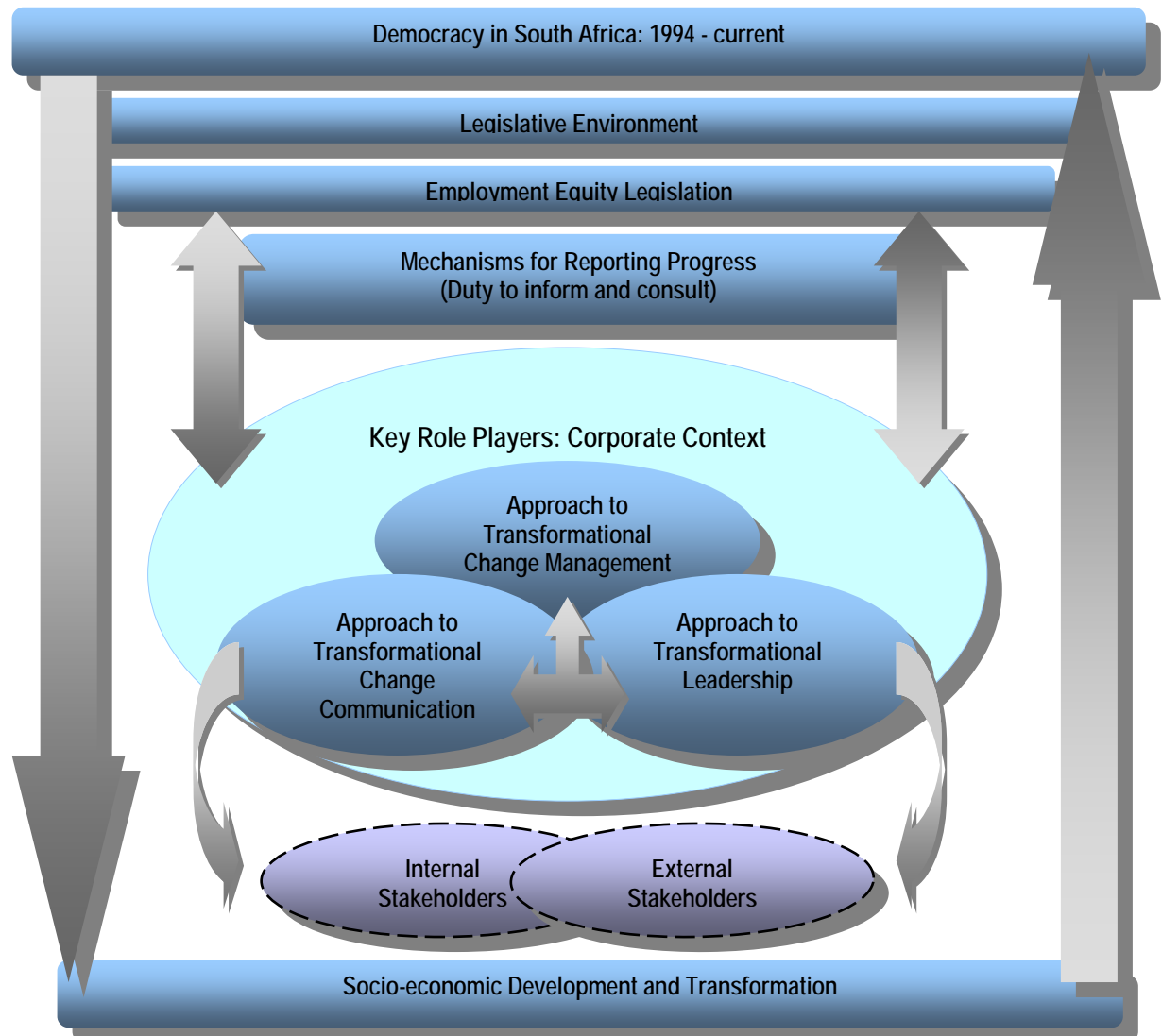
7.4.1 Duty to inform and consult with stakeholders

Legislation is enforced by different mechanisms related to the Department of Labour, primarily the Code of Good Practice for the EEA (Department of Labour, 1999b). Organisations implement EE strategies for legal compliance and adhere to the minimum requirements in relation to their duty to inform and consult with stakeholders, including structuring the mechanisms for the process.

Communication flows in all directions, thus serving the purpose of information and consultation. However, unique organisational complexities determine to which degree diachronic or synchronic communication (as defined in Chapter 1) occurs.

Figure 7.2

A holistic view of communication about Employment Equity



7.4.2 Approach to Employment Equity as a transformational change process

The implementation of EE strategies is unequivocally viewed as a transformational change process. The transformation that needs to take place in organisation is that of values that should lead to tolerance between different races, and specifically the acceptance of those employees who had previously exclusively owned and/or worked in the formal business sector. Race is the predominant

element in this process although gender issues were mentioned in the passing. But EE is also viewed as critical for the development of society and the transformation of organisations to reflect the diverse corporate philosophies. Most importantly, BEE as viewed as the overarching motivation for implementing AA measures.

7.4.3 Approach to the management of communication about Employment Equity

Communication is predominantly managed as a result of organisation's strategic business and compliance objectives. These two areas are interrelated and a factor that complicates communication efforts: balancing the interests of internal and external stakeholders depends on the unique realities within each organisation. The legislative process is continuously influenced by the socio-economic development of society as well as party-politics. The boundaries between internal and external stakeholders are increasingly blurred.

7.4.4 Approach to leadership within Employment Equity as a transformational process

The first level of responsibility for communication in the transformational context lies with key role players that make corporate and departmental decisions. Traditional levels of management are critical to the dissemination of information and leadership in relation to the process: leadership is predominantly defined as a "doing" process, while other, more advanced dimensions of leaders do not receive much attention.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are presented in relation to specific objectives, thus also contributing to the holistic understanding and future management of this transformational process.

7.5.1 Conceptual framework for the management of communication about Employment Equity

The conceptual framework for managing communication about EE matters may be utilised in order to reconcile the assumptions of the chaos perspective and the transformational needs of organisations. The six principles that form the basis for transformational thinking, as indicated in Chapter 4, are the

understanding of communication as vehicle for transformation, corporate culture transformation, dialogue with stakeholders, organisational learning, leadership and strategic alignment. Any future communication strategy should encompass these dimensions, while also serving the purpose of aligning all communication efforts with the corporate strategy, while corporate leaders should be fully aware that this process cannot be successful without “thinking” critically and continuously. Corporate and/or communication strategies should, however, not remain the exclusive property or responsibility of the Corporate Communication department or even the other two prominent departments. All departments should live the principles on which such strategies are based.

The key principle of the conceptual framework is flexibility (adaptability). Evidence from the case studies suggest that the environment within which organisations define themselves, stakeholders and then manage communication, is indeed turbulent or sometimes outright unpredictable. One of the most senior Communication practitioners referred to the dramatic impact a sudden change in Government’s approach to the process of EE target-setting would have: “If they would suddenly change from target-setting to prescribed quotas, I would instantly have to delete 90% of everything I currently have on my PC.” (This comment was made after the completion of that particular interview.)

7.5.2 The purpose of Affirmative Action

As was indicated in the previous section, all actions pertaining to the transformation effort should be based on a set of well-defined and well-known corporate values. The transformational vision should form the background for the “alignment” and mobilisation of the entire organisation. But these values must accommodate the philosophy of diversity in the South African context in order to steer away from further racial divisions. Finally, corporate values need to be co-created by all involved in the organisation. The most logical starting place would be the assessment of an organisation’s place in society. Dialogue about this matter and the corporate values should be continuous in order for all employees to internalise and participate in the creation of such values.

7.5.3 Strategic value of communication

Organisations should attempt to manage internal communication as a strategic priority within this context. The reason for this recommendation is the criticism from some of the participating organisations about the current external focus of communication about EE or BEE matters, while

internal stakeholders are the constituencies that need to live through and bring about the transformation in organisational climate in order for affirmative action to be implemented successfully. As was explained earlier, the growing importance of reputation management has contributed to the current external focus.

The real challenge lies in balancing the interests of internal and external stakeholders – a dilemma that is arguably as old as the notion of “responsible” business. And although a traditional response to this dilemma might be that “structures should be put in place to address the problem”, a more sustainable solution appears to elevate the status of internal communication from the management of publications and the intranet, to strategic contributions.

One solution for this situation may lie in a communication strategy: a strategy may overcome the perceived gap between internal and external communication. But the need for reconciling the ideas of the chaos perspective should govern the approach to strategy formulation and implementation, as suggested in the conceptual framework that was mentioned previously.

External communication should be managed strategically, taking into account the potential risk to corporate reputation about achievements in the arena of EE or BEE. External communication should not be limited to press agency activities. Such changes may only occur when the potential contribution of the Corporate Communication function is re-evaluated – refer to 7.5.6.

7.5.4 Key role players

So-called “key role players” cannot take the full responsibility for the success of the transformational effort. All employees should value the diversity of colleagues and be empowered to deal with the challenges of possible uncertainty about job security or career development. It would perhaps be too idealistic to propose that all organisations start supporting the philosophy of self-directed leadership in order to make employees less dependent (psychologically) on traditional leaders, but it is encouraging that several South African organisations are developing unique and advanced leadership models. The philosophy of empowerment should remain within the theoretical realm.

Empowerment should be a core value and effectively tied to the approach organisations will follow in the management of communication, or information. Key role players, either individuals or departments

would still have certain responsibilities as proposed by legislation, but these would act more like “observers of the whole process” than “controllers at micro level and the protectors of information”. The integration of efforts would far better serve the purpose of corporate transformation than silos and ego-boosting efforts.

7.5.5 Key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners

As was mentioned previously, specialised expertise poses a paradoxical challenge. Instead of limiting these three designated individuals to traditional responsibilities, either corporate or departmental, they could be employed as the core team of the corporate transformation strategy, related communication strategy, communication programmes, facilitation of corporate values and the empowerment of all other employees. However, communication between these three individuals and their divisions should be elevated from interactions about tactical matters to strategic thinking. The benefits of pooling such expertise are self-evident.

7.5.6 Contribution of the Corporate Communication function

As was implied in several preceding sections, this function needs to function on both the strategic and tactical contributions, as well as creation of corporate values and stakeholder management. This function should perhaps only provide tactical advice to other departments regarding the execution of message management, while providing strategic advice regarding stakeholders. Government relations and the involvement of organisations in the formulation of BEEA charters for each sector (industry) should be a critical focus area for this function.

Other areas in which this department may contribute strategically include internal and external environmental scanning; communication and conflict resolution training for all leaders; as well as a reputation management strategy in order to address the issue of being “the preferred employer”. Such a strategy would have to extend beyond mere publicity – it would have to be based on the sustainability of EE in the working environment and organisations.

7.5.7 Communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders

A more advanced understanding of leadership needs to be integrated with the “practicalities” of this transformational effort. The dimensions of “knowing, being and doing” should be a standard approach to leadership development. Such an approach should transcend the mechanistic notions of “content and effects”. Leaders should be honed to be *transformational leaders* in the true sense of the word, thus also accepting responsibility for the success of the corporate transformation effort.

7.5.8 Content for internal stakeholders

Three broad categories should be communicated to internal stakeholders. These categories are equally important. Legal compliance dictates that the details about EE matters are shared with employees. The implications of the EEA on Human Resources policies need to be clarified per organisation, thus highlighting the need for strategically managed internal communication. The last category is communication in relation to the creation/facilitation of corporate values.

As was indicated previously, a climate should be created within which this transformational process can come to fruition. All employees should be enabled to contribute to these values on a continuous basis since transformation is an infinite process. Once again, the emphasis should not be on formal structures to facilitate employee inputs, but rather a culture of dialogue. Finally, the achievements in the EE or BEE arena should be shared with employees prior to external communication efforts, if at all possible. Employees need to understand the whole picture, successes and failures, in order to comprehend their potential role in the process.

7.5.9 Content for external stakeholders

Corporate profiling should be the strategic concern in relation to this transformational effort. However, the potential risks about communicating for the purpose of quick fix publicity gains, should be considered very carefully. Individual organisations are at risk, as well as the broader EE process. Rather, all corporate profiling efforts should be aligned with the transformational vision and based on the management of relationships with external stakeholders. Once again, the organisation should focus on the dynamic nature of the legislative process, issues and stakeholders. Environmental scanning and scenario planning should be two further critical components of the transformational strategy.

7.5.10 Communication strategy formulation and implementation

Communication strategies could serve to help organisations negotiate their way through the maize of possibilities and challenges. Alignment should be based on the six principles described in section 7.5.1. The manner in which Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) have integrated the contents as required by legislation with the process of transformational change management, could serve as benchmark for South African organisations. Finally, the underlying requirement for communication strategies should be flexibility through which organisations will be able to keep up with ever-changing demands from the external environment and organisational conditions.

7.6 LIMITATIONS

7.6.1 Theoretical limitations

The phenomenon of **transformational/change communication**, does not seem to be well-researched and/or documented. This limitation posed a challenge: possible solutions for the management of communication in relation to affirmative action as a transformational change phenomenon had to be sought in the form of a conceptual framework, as described in Chapter 4. In attempt to overcome this challenge, the aforementioned theoretical work was formalised as the first objective under section 1.5 in Chapter 1.

7.6.2 Empirical limitations

High-quality qualitative case study research requires that the researcher only exits an organisation (case) when all the sources of evidence have been exhausted. However, the exploratory nature and specific objectives of this study were the main considerations in opting for the design that was described in Chapter 5.

Secondly, the interpretations of evidence in relation to the theoretical description of the organic worldview may be contested. The interpretation of clues pertaining to the different approaches to the transformational process and change communication was complicated by the fact that no standardised set of indicators of either deterministic or organic approaches was utilised.

The last limitation pertains to the transferability of the results. The exploratory nature of the research limited the number of cases studies to four, one of which served as the pilot study. The results of this study cannot be generalised to all large South African organisations. The results may, however, contribute to the better understanding of the research phenomenon in the sectors (industries) that participated in the study, i.e. municipalities and the automotive industry.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FUTURE RESEARCH

Recommendations pertain to the manner in which this study may be replicated or extended, as well as topics that seem to justify further research.

7.7.1 Empirical recommendations

Four recommendations are proposed: Firstly, the study may be replicated, but by means of a panel interview with the three interviewees. This would improve the process of making connections between the major themes since interviewees would, like in a focus group, be able to yield richer responses to the interview questions and comments from one another.

Secondly, a future study should include a focus group discussion with the different EE committees/forums. Responses from such a discussion would serve as the last element in the communication loop, i.e. a perspective from other role players that need to convey the messages about EE matters. More importantly, these committees/forums are central to the management of formal feedback about the process, an element that was not adequately pursued in the current study.

Thirdly, the so-called approaches to transformational change management, including the management of change communication, could be researched by means of explanatory (causal) studies.

Finally, future studies may benefit from the inclusion of more than three organisations and/or organisations that all represent different sectors/industries.

7.7.2 Research topics

Four research topics deserve further attention: Firstly, research could be conducted to test the validity of and refine the conceptual framework for the management of communication about EE that was described in Chapter 4. Results from such research could contribute to the body of empirical evidence regarding the chaos perspective on change and transformational change management.

Secondly, the impact of the BEEA may be researched from various perspectives associated with the field of Corporate Communication: The manner in which organisations manage a broad spectrum of external stakeholders could be a specific topic in this field of study.

The relationship between reputation management and BEEA measures could be also be researched. The last area for future research lies in the potential of managing communication in a fully integrated manner, which will encompass functions like Marketing, Human Resources and Corporate Communication.

The manner in which organisations manage the process of transformation may also be recorded in order to compare different frameworks for communication, policy formulation and legal compliance. Action research could perhaps be most useful to practitioners who are in search of answers in relation to the age-old question of “best practices” in this context. However, results of such research should not be mistaken for the only perspective on the matter since the knowledge of practitioners and academics should ideally contribute to the continuous evolution of this “thinking science”.

7.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

People and communication are pivotal in the management of corporate transformation in relation to Employment Equity in the South African context. The contextual demands of Employment Equity are unique: the type of individual and group transformation required, is radically different from cyclical or incremental changes. Individuals and organisations need to bridge the psychological chasm between the core values of Apartheid South Africa and reconciliation between all races – a paradigmatic challenge that will arguably never be repeated.

Negative sentiments and emotions abound on this transformational phenomenon, thus highlighting the need for deeper understanding of transformation, communication and leadership. And it is appropriate that an interviewee has the last word about the matter:

“In this process you will see growth – that is important to me. Communication in this transformation effort ... there can just not be anything better. It brings in a breath of fresh air ... it brings in life.”

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ANNEXURE 1

Invitation to participate in the research project



January 2004

**Invitation to participate in MPhil (Communication Management) degree research:
Communicating affirmative action during transformational change: A South African case study perspective**

Employment equity, diversity management and affirmative action are concepts currently associated with the transformation of South African organisations. Communication about these matters should be well managed.

However, this process is never simplistic. Since many South Africans hold emotionally-charged views about these concepts and policies, those responsible for the management of such organisational transformation and communication, face unique challenges. This study will explore some of the dimensions of communication management and change management in this context. The research results may contribute to solutions and lead to more in-depth research of specific themes in areas related to corporate communication, change management, human resource management and business management.

Your organisation is invited to participate in this study. All the details regarding the intended respondents and time needed from them appear in the synopsis of the project – the following 3 pages. I hope this document will suffice for discussion amongst the decision-makers in your organisation. I am also willing to meet with such individuals at their earliest convenience. (Please don't hesitate to contact me should you need more information.)

Please note that I am working at home until 30 March 2004.

Thank you in advance

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RESEARCH QUESTION

How is communication about affirmative action managed during transformational management in South African organisations?

General aim

To explore how South African organisations manage communication about affirmative action (within the context of employment equity) during transformational change.

Objectives

□ Objective 2

To describe the purpose of affirmative action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ Objective 3

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners within each of the three South African organisations about the strategic value of communication in the management of affirmative action.

□ Objective 4

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners about the strategic value of communication in the management of affirmative action across three South African organisations.

□ Objective 5

To identify the key role players (both departments and designated individuals) responsible for managing communication about affirmative action in three South African organisations.

□ Objective 6

To identify key responsibilities of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioner in managing communication about affirmative action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ Objective 7

To compare the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioner about the specific contribution of the corporate communication function in managing communication about affirmative action in each of the three South African organisations.

□ Objective 8

To identify communication management responsibilities of departmental leaders, other than the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, in managing communicating about affirmative action in each of the three South African organisations.

Objective 9

To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about affirmative action that is communicated to internal stakeholders.

□ Objective 10

To identify what each of the three South African organisations, represented by the views of the most senior Communication, Human Resources and Employment Equity practitioners, regard as the most important content about affirmative action that is communicated to external stakeholders.

□ Objective 11

To describe, by means of qualitative content analysis of corporate communication strategy documents, which content components of Thomas and Robertshaw's (1999) framework for an Employment Equity communication strategy, each of the three South African organisations communicate to various stakeholders.

□ Objective 12

To provide a general comparison of how three South African organisations manage communication about affirmative action by means of a comparative case study analysis along the inherent dimensions of Objectives 2-11.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research approach

Purely qualitative research will be conducted because of the exploratory nature of the study.

Research design

A multiple case study design, i.e. each of the three organisations researched will be viewed as an independent case study. Common themes from all three case studies will also be compared.

Sampling technique

Organisations are chosen randomly and the first three indicating their interest in (granting permission for) the project will be included. Criteria for participating organisations: Affirmative action should be an organisational policy.

Sources of evidence and data-analysis

Structured interviews with the most senior Human Resource, Employment Equity, Communication practitioners. These interviews will last about one hour each and will be recorded on audiotape. Interviews will be transcribed for qualitative analysis.

The communication strategy for affirmative action in each organisation will also be perused in order to compare this with a theoretical framework within the South African context.

ASSISTANCE NEEDED FROM PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

Firstly the researcher needs formal permission to conduct the study from the appropriate decision-makers in each organisation. Secondly, the researcher will make appointments with the most senior Human Resources, Employment Equity and Communication practitioners.

Furthermore, the researcher would like to obtain permission to peruse the communication strategy for Employment Equity, should such a document be available. This document will only be used for research purposes and will be returned to organisations.

If such a document is available on the Internet, the researcher would assume that it could be accessed without formal permission from the organisation since the Internet is in the public domain.

ANONYMITY OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

The anonymity of all participating organisations and individuals is guaranteed. Case studies will be numbered and responses will only be linked to specific case studies. The anonymity of interviewees is also guaranteed.

PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of this study will be published in the master's degree dissertation and made available to the participating organisations. Since the project was funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) the completed project will also appear on the database of this organisation.

TIMEFRAME

The **data-collection** phase should be completed by the **end of February 2004**. I would therefore appreciate it if we could set up these interviews at your earliest convenience.

ANNEXURE 2

Pilot interview schedule



**Communicating affirmative action during transformational change:
A South African case study perspective**

September 2003

Dear respondent

I appreciate your willingness to participate in my master's degree research project. The aim of this project is to explore how affirmative action is communicated during transformational change in South African organisations. The results of this study could lead to improvements in the management of communication pertaining to transformational issues.

Three interviews will be conducted with key change leaders at your organisation, i.e. the Corporate Communication Manager, Human Resource Manager and Diversity / Employment Equity Manager. The interview should last about **one** hour.

The questions of this interview schedule will be used during our discussion scheduled for next week. This is forwarded in advance in order to provide you with the scope of this discussion.

Please note that our discussion will be recorded electronically (audio tape) for verbatim transcription. Transcriptions will be numbered and analysed. The anonymity of all respondents is guaranteed. The results of each case study will be made available to participating organisations upon request.

Thank you in advance

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Section A: Administrative details

Date:	
Name of organisation:	
Name of interviewer:	
Duration of interview:	
Number of audio tapes used during this interview:	

Section B: Demographic details

Name of interviewee:	
Fictional identity of interviewee:	
Designation of interviewee:	
Number of years employed by this organisation:	
Number of years / months in current designated post:	
Highest academic qualification of interviewee:	
Age of interviewee:	
Gender of interviewee:	
Mother tongue of interviewee:	
Nationality of interviewee:	

Section C: Interview questions

1. Which role players (both departmental and designations) are responsible for managing communication about affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation?
2. Describe the process through which the most important role players assume their responsibilities for managing communication about affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation.
3. Would you describe your organisation as flexible in terms of individuals and or individuals that need to lead this transformational effort? Please motivate your answer.
4. How do people in your organisation react to the process whereby transformational leaders assume their responsibilities?
5. Your designation is traditionally viewed as central to the management of an employment equity strategy. Describe your key responsibilities in managing communication about affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation.

If not mentioned, probe about the following:

- (a) Integrating people, processes and content needs within this transformational effort
 - (b) Modelling and promoting the new mindset and values, i.e. mutual respect and tolerance and appreciating the diversity of people
 - (c) Creating opportunities through which people can exhibit their commitment and contributions to this transformational effort
 - (d) Building relationships between people
6. Describe the communication management responsibilities of other departmental / divisional leaders in communicating about affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation.
 7. Describe the most critical content components about affirmative action which are / have been communicated to internal stakeholders in your organisation's transformational efforts.
 8. Describe the most critical content components about affirmative action which are / have been communicated to external stakeholders in your organisation's transformational efforts.
 9. How would you describe the value of communication in the management of affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation?

If not mentioned, probe about the following:

- (a) Stakeholder identification
- (b) Environmental scanning
- (c) Continuous feedback about the transformational effort

10. Describe the specific contribution of the corporate communication department / division in managing communication about affirmative action during transformational change in your organisation.
11. Is there anything else you would like to add about the management of communication about affirmative action in your organisation?

Thank you again for your participation in this project.

ANNEXURE 3

Final interview schedule



**Communicating affirmative action during transformational change:
A South African case study perspective**

Dear respondent

I appreciate your willingness to participate in my master's degree research project. The aim of this project is to explore how affirmative action is communicated during transformational change in South African organisations. The results of this study could lead to improvements in the management of communication pertaining to transformational issues.

Three interviews will be conducted with key change leaders at your organisation, i.e. the Corporate Communication Manager, Human Resource Manager and Diversity / Employment Equity Manager. The interview should last about **one** hour.

The questions of this interview schedule will be used during our discussion scheduled for next week. This is forwarded in advance in order to provide you with the scope of this discussion.

Please note that our discussion will be recorded electronically (audio tape) for verbatim transcription. Transcriptions will be numbered and analysed. The anonymity of all respondents is guaranteed. The results of each case study will be made available to participating organisations upon request.

Thank you in advance

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Section A: Administrative details

Date:	
Name of organisation:	
Name of interviewer:	
Duration of interview:	
Number of audio tapes used during this interview:	

Section B: Demographic details

Name of interviewee:	
Fictional identity of interviewee:	
Designation of interviewee:	
Number of years employed by this organisation:	
Number of years / months in current designated post:	
Highest academic qualification of interviewee:	
Age of interviewee:	
Gender of interviewee:	
Mother tongue of interviewee:	
Nationality of interviewee:	

Section C: Interview questions

Question 1:

What do you view as the purpose of affirmative action at your organisation?

Question 2:

What strategic value does communication have in the management of affirmative action in your organisation?

Question 3:

Which key individuals or departments are responsible for managing communication about affirmative action in your organisation?

Question 4:

What are your key responsibilities in managing communication about affirmative action in your organisation?

Question 5:

What do you view as the specific contribution of the corporate communication department in managing communication about affirmative action in your organisation?

Question 6:

What are the communication responsibilities of other departmental leaders in your organisation in managing communication about affirmative action?

Question 7:

What is the most important content about affirmative action that your organisation communicates to internal stakeholders?

Question 8:

What is the most important content about affirmative action that your organisation communicates to external stakeholders?

Question 9:

In conclusion, is there anything else regarding the management of communication about affirmative action in your organisation that you would like to add to our conversation?