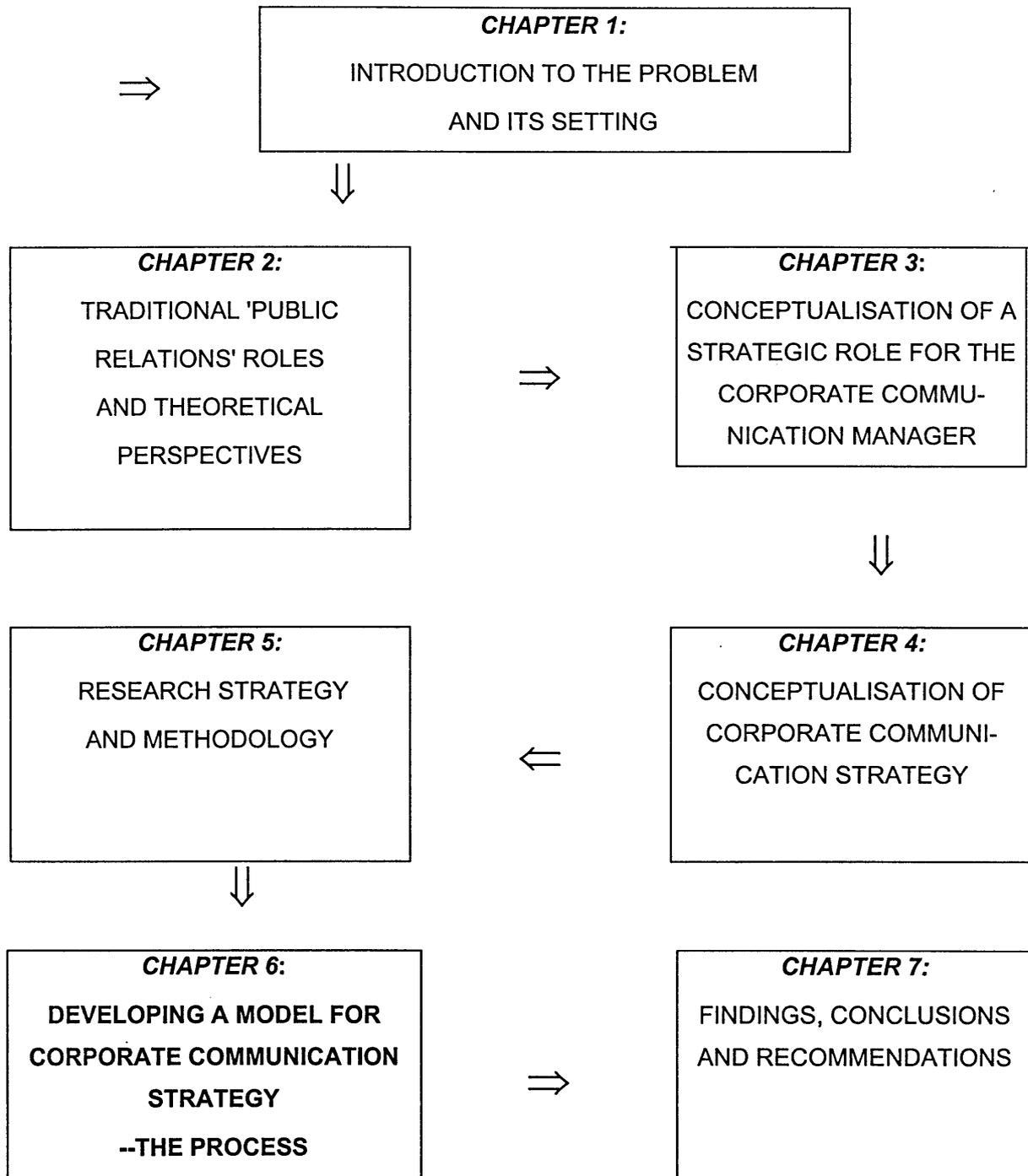


CHAPTER 6

OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT



CHAPTER 6

6. DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY—THE PROCESS

In Chapter 5, the procedures used to achieve Research Objectives 1 and 2 were detailed. Furthermore, action research as a *methodology* for achieving Research Objective 3 was described.

This chapter is dedicated to describing the action research process as implemented in achieving **Research Objective 3**. The *primary* objective of the latter is: To develop a model that can satisfactorily explain the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria, and to identify the lessons to be learnt to serve corporate communication practitioners (in the non-profit, for-profit and government sector) and corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions.

The *secondary* objectives to be achieved in this chapter are the following:

- To hypothesise a model for developing corporate communication strategy.
- To involve third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria as action researchers in the implementation of the model amongst some non-profit organisations in South Africa.
- To determine the student groups' understanding of the process of developing corporate communication strategy, *firstly* by assessing each individual group report and *secondly*, by comparing them in order to pinpoint the areas/constructs where problems are experienced, or alternatively, are (well) understood.

- To evaluate the hypothesised model, *firstly* by analysing the results of the assessment and comparison of student group reports to ascertain common problem areas/constructs; and *secondly*, to analyse the theory on which the model is based (provided to the students to assist in their understanding of the model)--as a possible reason for some of the problems experienced.
- To improve the model based on the analysis of the implementation results.
- To identify the lessons to be learnt to serve corporate communication practitioners (in the non-profit, for-profit and government sector) and corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions.
- To make the findings public through presentations at academic and industry conferences, as well as through articles in academic and industry publications.
- To attempt to make a contribution towards theory building on the little-known subject of corporate communication strategy.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 it has been suggested that the *PR manager* (as a boundary spanner) will be one of the middle managers operating on the functional level, who will play a strategic management role in the reengineered organisation. The existing theoretical and empirical role of the *PR manager*, conceptualised two decades ago, was therefore redefined by the researcher as taking the responsibility for developing a corporate communication strategy (as a functional strategy) and a strategic plan for the corporate communication function. Functional strategy, as explicated in Chapter 4 (section 1.3.3.4), involves what should be done in each of the key functional areas of the organisation, given the relative emphasis placed on, and the resources allocated to, that particular function.

It was also pointed out in Chapter 4 that few corporate communication practitioners understood the meaning of *strategy*. The key problem seems to lie in the application of strategy for corporate communication issues, i.e. what 'strategy' means in a corporate communication context. In view of the enquiries received by the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria from corporate communication practitioners requesting guidelines in the above regard, the researcher deemed it necessary that theory, as well as a model, be developed for explicating the process of formulating corporate communication strategy. According to McQuail & Windahl (1993:2), a model is a consciously simplified description of reality in a graphic form that seeks to show the main elements of any structure or process, and the relationship between these elements

Such a theory and model could be used to teach third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria (and possibly practitioners at a later stage), to practically apply the conceptualised corporate communication strategy. It is therefore the objective of this chapter to conduct a literature study, hypothesise a model, and implement and revise the model, by means of an action research project.

The following hypothesis was set in Chapter 1 to lead this investigation:

Guiding hypothesis 3

A model is a suitable tool for explicating the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

CYCLE ONE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

It needs to be pointed out that the action research project described in this chapter already started in 1997. The initial literature study and the resulting hypothesised model (Stage 1), is presented here *with all its shortcomings*, as it was provided to third year students in their 1998 Class Notes. In the ensuing discussion, these shortcomings will be pointed out.

The model (referred to as Model 1) was first implemented during the second semester of 1998 by third-year Corporate Communication students at the University of Pretoria (Stage 2). The model was improved based on the findings of the first cycle of action research (Stages 3-5). Cycle Two of the action research started during the second semester of 1999, when Model 2 was implemented by students and improved again by the lecturer/researcher, resulting in Model 3. Another in-depth literature study was conducted in the beginning of 2000, resulting in the conceptualised corporate communication strategy that was described in Chapter 4.

The final (third) version of the model presented at the end of this chapter must therefore be seen as the outcome of the first two cycles of action research. The conceptualised corporate communication strategy described in Chapter 4 represents the researcher's attempt to build theory based on the knowledge accumulated during the previous three years, while the action research project was being conducted.

6.2 THE LITERATURE STUDY: STAGE 1

Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:59) see five stages in the action research process. The course of this action research project will now be explicated according to these stages.

STAGE 1: Implementation begins with a period of research where the resources and needs of a community are systematically assessed and the necessary information to guide action is gathered (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

This stage refers to the lecturer/researcher having become aware of the need for a model to develop corporate communication strategy, through requests from corporate communication practitioners to provide examples or guidelines for developing such a strategy. The lecturer/researcher thereupon conducted the initial literature investigation in 1997 (as set out in sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.12).

The initial literature study presented below was provided to third year students in July 1998 as part of their Class Notes, representing the theory to be studied in order to be able to develop a corporate communication strategy for their selected non-profit organisations. These students were the first action research groups.

Text highlighted in this literature study indicates either areas/constructs on Model 1 which were later pinpointed by the assessment/evaluation of the students' corporate communication strategies (research reports) as having been **problem areas** or indicating **shortcomings in the theoretical explanation** (i.e. not having been comprehensive enough). These areas will be discussed in the assessment and evaluation stages (stages 3 and 4).

6.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION MANAGER AT THE TOP MANAGEMENT LEVEL

As a framework for the development of a corporate communication strategy, a description was first provided of the role of the corporate communication manager at the top management level (see 6.2.1). Of particular interest are the two concepts 'mirror' and 'window' function. The mirror or 'listening' function explicates the initial research/problem-defining stage, central to strategy development. The window/representation or 'talking' function is generally more familiar to practitioners as it has been the function of corporate communication (public relations) since its beginning.

Strategic management applies to corporate communication in two important ways. The first is the corporate communication manager's role as part of the top management team in developing problem-solving strategies for the entire organisation. The second has to do with the corporate communication department's own efforts to integrate and co-ordinate its work with that of the organisation (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992).

Communication is increasingly gaining the status of an indispensable management tool. Corporate communication (PR) managers are no longer seen as 'information conduits', but rather act as fully fledged strategic advisers to senior management (Seitel 1992:1-2). Communication managers must think strategically and demonstrate their knowledge of the organisation's mission, goals and strategies by aligning communication goals and objectives with those of the organisation.

The emphasis on the organisational mission provides the connection to organisational goals that corporate communication must have to contribute to organisational effectiveness. To be able to do so, corporate communication must

be part of the strategic management of the total organisation (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992). Trying to establish a corporate communication programme without corporate direction "is a little like driving cross country without a road map" (Webster 1990:19). Corporate communication should also manage its own programmes strategically (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992).

The corporate communication department's role in this process can be summarised as professionally carrying out the 'window' and the 'mirror' function. The 'mirror' function refers to the monitoring of relevant environmental developments and the anticipation of their consequences for the organisation's strategies and communication policies (Van Riel 1995:1-2). Large organisations usually gather large amounts of information, but much of it is lost since it is not gathered and interpreted at one collection point (White & Mazur 1995:25).

Corporate communication's value in the process of strategy development is that it is a source of intelligence regarding the environment, an early warning system that identifies issues before crisis erupts. It is the function that assists top management in interpreting and using the information. The corporate communication manager/ department is in an excellent position to provide this interpreting function, because of their wide contact with the external and internal environment and their outside view of the organisation. They have a clear understanding of each constituency's concerns, sensitivities and preconceptions being effective communicators (Winokur & Kinkead 1993:1). Managing this process of information gathering from the external, internal and task environment will necessarily involve research and a systematic approach to sources of information (White & Mazur 1995:28).

The 'window' function refers to the preparation and execution of a communication policy and strategy, resulting in messages that portray all facets of the organisation. Corporate communication managers interpret the philosophies,

policies, programmes and practices of top management to its stakeholders. In this facilitating role, they help accomplish an active outward orientation for the organisation (Van Riel 1995:2).

According to Grunig & Hunt (1984:9), corporate communication managers perform a boundary role: they function at the edge of an organisation as a liaison between the organisation and its external/internal publics. They are in touch with the real world by having one foot inside the organisation and one without. They explain to management the impact of their behaviour on public opinion and prevent them from insulating themselves.

They have real value in their ability to maintain a degree of detachment from the motives that drive other members of management and view corporate policies with a multiple vision (Mason 1974). This is often lacking in other management members since they develop an internal 'myopia' where they can only see within the short-range boundaries of the organisation (Hicks 1987). This role of the corporate communication department keeps the organisation in harmony with its environment, gives it credibility and leads to acceptance of policies.

However, to accomplish these tasks accurately, corporate communication practitioners must first know what top management and the stakeholders are thinking. Good corporate communication cannot be practised in a vacuum. It is only as good as its access to top management. Corporate communication managers must have the opportunity of making strategic inputs in the strategic planning of the organisation by taking part in decision-making. They must have firsthand knowledge of the reasons for management's decisions and the rationale for organisational policy. On the other hand, they must interpret the stakeholders to top management by giving continuous feedback. This means finding out what stakeholders really think and letting management know, whether they like it or

not. This function is only effective when the corporate communication manager reports directly to and is part of top management (Seitel 1992:10-11).

The starting point for developing a corporate communication strategy is an analysis of the organisation's internal environment e.g. the profile, vision, mission, corporate culture and corporate strategies, as well as of the external environment -- referring to the stakeholders and other external influences (political, economic, social, technological, ecological and judicial factors) which impact the organisation (Eiselen 1992).

6.2.2 CORPORATE PROFILE

In order to develop a corporate communication strategy, it is essential for the practitioner in the role of the *PR manager* to have sufficient background on the organisation's financial status and reputation in the field, as well as familiarity with its products or services and the overall competitive environment. Knowledge about the marketing, human resources, legal and other functions are also important in order to co-ordinate corporate communication efforts with those functions. Having regular interviews with key management personnel, and analysing documents such as the annual and/or quarterly reports can provide this information (Hendrix 1992).

Being knowledgeable on the delivery system for the organisation's products or services, its major suppliers, and the identity and demographics of its customers are all important aspects in understanding the organisation. Also needed is a good working knowledge of the organisation's human resources--its total work force, both management and non-management. Special attention must be given to key management people--the way in which top management views corporate

communication and their expectations for the function is very important (Hendrix 1992 :9).

The corporate communication manager should understand the formal structure of the organisation, i.e. the way it is plotted in the organisational chart and how the functions are related to one another. An informal power structure may be an even more important indication of how decisions are made. Communication is often the key to the effective working of the organisational structure (Kendall 1992:171).

However, the initial focus for developing the corporate communication strategy should always be the vision, mission, culture and strategies of the organisation (Webster 1990:18):

“To be strategic, public relations should pass one basic test: At a minimum, everything done must be aligned with the corporate vision or mission ...and must substantially contribute to achieving the organisation’s objectives. Ideally, public relations should be part of the team helping to create the corporate mission and set the objectives.”

6.2.3 VISION

A vision represents a realistic, credible and attractive future state of affairs - a condition which, in some important way, is better than that which now exists. **The vision indicates where the organisation is going and what it wants to achieve**--the goals and objectives are derived from the vision. When a vision is achieved, a new vision is developed (Eiselen 1992).

A vision is the 'big organisational picture' and must be lived every day by each individual organisational member.

6.2.4 MISSION

The mission is a definition of the organisation's role in society and the economy. The mission flows from the values of stakeholders -- the people and groups with an interest in the organisation (Digman 1990:49).

The mission is an **explanation of an organisation's identity and ambition**—the purpose for its existence, a roof under which organisational members gather. It captures in a concise way the essence of the organisation, describes the nature and scope of the work performed and communicates the business. The mission usually remains unchanged as a statement of the organisation's common and timeless cause (Eiselen 1992).

Whereas the vision is more associated with goals, the mission is associated with a way of behaving. A sense of mission is an emotional and deeply personal feeling. The individual with a sense of mission has an emotional attachment to the organisation, what it stands for and what it is trying to achieve (Eiselen 1992).

6.2.5 CORPORATE CULTURE

Deal & Kennedy (1982) define corporate culture as the set of dominant values espoused by the organisation, i.e. "*the way we do things around here*". Peters & Waterman (1982) see it as "*a set of shared values conveyed by symbolic means such as stories, myths, legends and anecdotes*". A good example of corporate culture would be "*the customer is always right*" (Moorhead & Griffin 1989:493).

The values that make up corporate culture is seldom written down - they are basic assumptions made by employees about what is acceptable and what is not. It is a powerful influence on employees because it is not explicit - it becomes ingrained in their beliefs.

An organisation's culture is similar to an individual's personality—an intangible theme that provides meaning, direction, and the basis for action. In much the same way as a personality influences the behaviour of the individual, the shared assumptions (beliefs and values) among members influence opinions and actions within the organisation (Pearce & Robinson 1997:356).

6.2.6 ORGANISATION'S STRATEGIC PLAN (CORPORATE STRATEGY)

The mission provides the basis for strategic plans. Typically, their planning horizon is five years or more. They are conceptual in nature in that they lay out general guidelines rather than detailed schedules. Strategic plans are often called long-range plans and indicate how the organisation is planning to get where it is going (Bittel 1989) “...if you you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there” (Uyterhoeven, Ackerman & Rosenblum 1977:7).

The **strategic plan** is the organisation's course regarding its strategic areas and describes the direction the organisation is taking. Key factors to consider, according to Eiselen (1992) are:

- maintaining or changing the organisation's course;
- (re)positioning the organisation regarding anticipated future developments;
- determining the impact of the new course on the organisation.

According to Arnold (1995:33), **strategy is determined by first identifying key strategic issues which are of critical importance for achieving the corporate vision and mission**, such as people, management, the product, stakeholders and the budget. This is achieved by **doing environmental analysis and issues tracking** which can be turned into a source of intelligence for top management -- to be executed in the organisation's macro, task and micro environment to be really effective in the identification of problems and issues around which publics will form:

- The *external environment* is mostly beyond the control of the organisation and is influenced by political, economic, social, technological, environmental, cultural and judicial factors.
- The *task environment* is the environment in which the organisation operates. This analysis evolves around the organisation's interaction with major players in the industry such as clients, competitors, suppliers, associates and principals.
- An analysis of the *internal environment* involves human resources, formal arrangements, structures and procedures, physical resources, culture and social structure, duties and responsibilities, technology, information and management style. This environment is largely of the organisation's own making and within management's ability to change (Pearce & Robinson 1982).

The implications of each strategic issue must be thoroughly analysed and issues prioritised before the organisation's goals and objectives are determined.

In the next section, an explanation is given by Eiselen (1992) on the meaning of corporate communication strategy.

6.2.7 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The corporate communication strategy indicates **how the organisation's strategic goals and objectives are communicated to internal and external constituents**. This implies that the **opportunities and risks of communicating** each strategic issue is determined and that the **communication strategy is derived from it**. The communication strategy should essentially reflect or mirror the corporate strategy. In that sense most communication plans are tactical in nature since they help the organisation to meet its strategic goals and objectives. However, the way in which they are determined should be strategic (Eiselen 1992).

Strategic planning is therefore a prerequisite for developing a sound communication strategy because it provides focus and direction to the communication and synergy between corporate strategy and communication. It makes communication relevant to the organisation and responsive to its needs (Eiselen 1992).

The emphasis that theories of strategic management place on monitoring the external environment and adjusting the organisation's mission to it suggest a crucial role for corporate communication in the process (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992). Apart from an adequate awareness and understanding of the external environment, the organisation must know what to do with all the incoming signals. Some kind of analytical framework is necessary to help make the information from the environment relevant for business decision making (Bartha 1994:138).

Communication goals and objectives can be developed by:

- studying **corporate goals and objectives**
- prioritising issues
- doing environmental scanning/research
- having interviews with functional managers
- **doing a SWOT analysis**
- **doing a communication audit**

6.2.8 COMMUNICATION POLICY

Most organisations develop a series of guidelines called ‘policies’ as an expression of their strategic plans (Bittel 1989:78). Organisational policies constitute a practical day-to-day set of rules for conducting business, in contrast to the longer scope of the philosophy, mission, goals and objectives continuum.

A policy is a standing plan that provides managers with general guidelines for making decisions. Its main purpose is to assure consistency among the organisation’s managers and to avoid having to make the same decision over and over again (Bittel 1989:78). It is the parameters within which planning is carried out and will necessarily reflect organisational and/or government policy.

The **communication policy** is based on the corporate mission and strategy, but is **also influenced by the corporate culture, values and norms** (Trainor 1990:15). Therefore the communication policy may differ widely from organisation to organisation. In general terms, communication policy could deal with:

- ◆ functional communication areas (internal or external communication) and specified communication programmes e.g. lobbying or media liaison.
- ◆ functional relationships between communication and other departments e.g. marketing or research.
- ◆ the structure of the communication department, hierarchical orientation and lines of command.
- ◆ communication goals and objectives.
- ◆ corporate do's and don'ts e.g.
 - only the chief executive deals with politically related issues;
 - only the chief executive deals with foreign stakeholders;
 - only the corporate communication manager may be quoted by the media;
 - advertising is the exclusive domain of the marketing department;
 - the acceptance or non-acceptance of gifts;
 - general conflicts of interest;
 - the use of confidential information.

A way of developing communication policy is to make a list of:

- what *must* be communicated;
- what *should* be communicated;
- what the organisation is *prepared* to communicate;
- what the organisation is *not prepared* to communicate;
- what is to be communicated in *special situations* such as emergencies or crises (Trainor 1990:16-17).

An example of communication policy might be a commitment to honesty and openness, transparency, access to top management, credibility, compassion, trust, integrity and a sensitivity for the diverse nature of stakeholders and publics.

The policy must be enforceable, precise and clear. Messages must be consistent and all departments must use the same standards when communicating internally or externally.

6.2.9 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The overall strategic management of organisations is inseparable from the strategic management of relationships (Dozier *et al* 1995: 27). The organisation's environment is a highly complex system of interrelated 'private' domains. Every stakeholder has its own set of values, needs, desires, wants, goals and objectives, which may be and often are significantly different from those of the organisation attempting to manage interactions with them (Blewett 1993:15).

The management of relationships is the function of the corporate communication department. Before these relationships can be managed, however, the different stakeholders of the organisation must first be identified. This should be done through research that provides a way for top management to become attuned to strategic stakeholders and publics--research can be considered the other part of two-way communication. Focus groups and surveys are as much channels of communication as are news releases, press conferences, and internal publications.

In the literature and in practice a wide variety of terminology exists to describe the constituents of the organisation. A few of these terms will now be examined, and ordered according to the systems theory and Grunig's situational theory (Steyn & Van Wyk 1996).

⇒ *From the systems theory*

a. Audience and public

These terms are not synonymous. An *audience* suggests a group of people who are recipients of something - a message or performance. An audience is thus inherently passive. The term *public* evolved to distinguish between passive audiences and active ones.

In corporate communication (public relations), the term public ('active audience') encompasses any group of people who are tied together, however loosely, by some common bond of interest or concern (Seitel 1995) and whose behaviour has consequences for an organisation (Grunig & Hunt 1984).

b. Internal and external publics

Publics are divided into two categories (Seitel 1995):

- *external* publics exist outside the organisation and are not directly or officially a part thereof, but they do have a relationship with it. Examples are the media, the community, government, consumers, competitors, suppliers and educators.
- *internal* publics share the institutional identity, e.g. management, employees, board members, etc.

c. Target public (stakeholder)

Any particular public may become the focal point for a corporate communication effort. When that occurs, the public singled out for attention is called a 'target' or

'*priority public* (Newsom, Vanslyke Turk & Kruckeberg 1996:141). Each organisation has its own publics, all or many of whom may become target or priority publics at any time.

Priority publics can be described in three ways (Newsom *et al* 1996:145):

- *nominatively*: this consists of giving the public a name such as stockholders;
- *demographically*: this involves looking at the public's statistical characteristics such as age, gender, income and education;
- *psychographically*: this examines the defining emotional and behavioural characteristics of the public and often shows how one primary public resembles another in interests, attitudes, beliefs or behaviour.

⇒ *According to the situational theory*

a. Stakeholders

An important step in developing the corporate communication strategy is to make a list of the individuals/groups who are linked to the organisation. Freeman (1984) called this list a *stakeholder map*, which usually contains groups such as owners, consumer advocates, customers, competitors, the media, employees, special interest groups, environmentalists, suppliers, governments, and local community residents.

According to Grunig & Repper (*in* Grunig 1992:124), an organisation has a relationship with *stakeholders* when the behaviour of the organisation or of the stakeholders has consequences for the other. Formative research should be done to scan the environment to identify these consequences.

b. Strategic stakeholders

Communication programmes should only be planned with the most important - the most strategic - stakeholders, the ones that are "*critical, crucial, essential, important, or vital for an organisation in the accomplishment of its mission*" (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992:123). Communication at the stakeholder stage, before conflict has occurred, is important because it helps to develop the stable, long-term relationships that an organisation needs to build support.

One method for the identification of key stakeholders is to analyse strategic linkages with groups that are critical for an organisation to survive. Esman (*in* Grunig & Hunt 1984:140) identified the following four linkages:

- *enabling linkages* (to groups that provide authority and control resources such as government regulators and stockholders);
- *functional linkages* are to groups that provide inputs (employees and unions) and outputs (consumers and graduates);
- *normative linkages* are to professional or industry associations, providing connections to similar organisations that assist in solving shared problems;
- *diffused linkages* are connections to groupings of individuals who are not part of any organisation. Minority relations, community relations and environmental relations are attempts to manage linkages with diffused groupings.

Organisations must manage enabling and functional linkages because they create consequences for the organisation--they cannot pursue their goals without them. The organisation must manage diffuse linkages when organisations create consequences for others. When diffuse publics organise, they create consequences for the organisation. For example, diffuse linkages such as environmental pressure groups would be very important for a chemical company

and would probably merit an environmental relations programme. The more turbulent an organisation's environment, the more linkages the organisation must manage with its environment and the more rapidly those linkages change (Grunig & Hunt 1984:141). These linkages should form the basis for the corporate communication department's communication programmes with stakeholders.

c. Publics

Publics form when stakeholders recognise the consequences of an organisation's behaviour as a problem and organise to do something about it. People never recognised as stakeholders before may also form a public due to an issue in the macro environment. These publics should be identified and segmented through research--by involving publics in the decision making processes of the organisation, conflict can often be managed before it turns into issues (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992:124).

A crucial distinction for segmenting people into publics is the extent to which they passively or actively communicate about an issue and the extent to which they behave in a way that supports or constrains the organisation's pursuit of its mission (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992:125).

Publics are more likely to be active when the people who make them up have a *high level of involvement*, recognise the problem and are *not constrained* from doing something about the problem. If none of these conditions apply, the group would be classified as a *non-public*, which means that it is of no concern to the organisation (Grunig & Hunt 1984).

d. Publics arise around issues

When publics make issues out of problems, they typically use the mass media to bring attention to their cause by staging events such as protests, marches, strikes, and even hunger fasts and violent demonstrations. When publicity mounts, stakeholders and even members of non-publics hear about the issue (VanLeuven & Slater 1991).

In the handling of issues, according to Bartha (1994:140), the organisation has to measure the impact of an issue on the relationship with its stakeholders. First, the problem or situation that affects the stakeholders has to be identified. Issues can be classified into three types:

- ⇒ *Universal issues*. The problems that fall into this category tend to affect large numbers of people in many walks of life. Universal issues are not permanent, but come and go mainly as a result of social and economic conditions. An increase in the price of petrol and “Mad Cow” disease are universal issues and can affect many of the organisation’s stakeholders.
- ⇒ *Advocacy issues*. These issues are usually introduced and promoted by groups claiming to represent broad public interest. They include topics such as health, environmental concerns, consumer issues, etc. These groups tend to be activists and may influence the organisation’s relationship with its stakeholders through media publicity.
- ⇒ *Selective issues*. Selective issues deal with a matter of concern in the immediate relationship between the organisation and a stakeholder, e.g. the way in which an employee was handled during a disciplinary trial. The employee then becomes an active public and creates an issue around the problem.

After identifying the issue, the following questions must be asked:

- Who is affected - which stakeholders/publics/shadow constituencies are involved?
- How are they affected?
- How will they respond - actively or passively?

e. Public opinion

According to Seitel (1995:51), public opinion is the aggregate of many individual opinions on a particular issue that affects a group of people. Stated another way, public opinion represents a consensus of the members of a public about an issue. Consensus, deriving as it does from many individual opinions, begins with people's attitude toward the issue in question.

f. Shadow constituencies

Shadow constituencies, a new breed of corporate stakeholder, are individuals and groups outside traditional corporate spheres of influence (the task environment) who may arise as a public due to an emerging issue. As they are not listed as stakeholders of the organisation, the only way to identify these publics is through the monitoring of issues -- it could be advocacy or universal issues.

These shadow constituencies might include women's organisations, minorities, gays, arts and education proponents, political groups, even homeless people and gangs (Mau & Dennis 1994:10). These individuals/groups, having little or no power, often use the power of the media to get attention and thereby wreak havoc on the image of an organisation.

Apart from the strategic stakeholders with whom the organisation strives to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship through planned communication programmes, the management of the opinions of publics emerging around issues, should form an integral part of every organisation's corporate communication strategy.

Whereas corporate communication strategy, policy and the identification of stakeholders and issues is the domain of the *PR manager*, practitioners in the role of the *PR technician* take responsibility for the implementation of communication plans, programmes and campaigns. However, there is substantial confusion in practice as to the meaning of these terms, whether they are in fact the same -- and if not, what the differences actually are. The researcher will therefore differentiate between these terms in the following section, in order that they be well understood in relation to corporate communication strategy.

6.2.10 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMMES

The focus of strategic symmetrical communication programmes is on relationships, a coming together of the organisation and its strategic stakeholders/publics around issues of mutual interest. Formative research should be done to scan the environment for identifying these consequences and to sensitise management to changes and potential threats to relationships with stakeholders (Blewett 1993:15).

In a study sponsored by the IABC Research Foundation (Grunig, *in* Grunig 1992), researchers report that the most effective communication programmes are strategically managed by knowledgeable communication managers who conceptualise and direct the programmes. Excellent communication programmes

are not an evolution of what has been done in the past, but are aimed at groups who are important to the organisation in strategic terms, as identified in the stakeholder analysis and the corporate communication strategy. Excellent practices are strategic, not historic—they are concerned with impact, not process—and aim to influence stakeholder attitudes, opinions or behaviours rather than simply put processes in motion such as news release production.

The corporate communication department should have *continuous programmes* for stakeholders. This does not mean that the same activities will be repeated year-after-year, but implies that campaigns/activities should be devised annually for the organisation's stakeholders as well as current publics. *Ad hoc* communication plans might have to be made during the year for an emerging public (previously unknown or non-existing). Should this public persist over the long term, it should be incorporated in the ongoing communication programmes.

Figure 6.1: EXAMPLES OF CONTINUOUS PROGRAMMES

Issues management	Employee relations
Change management	Media relations
Government relations/ lobbying	Customer relations
Industrial relations	Community relations
Social investment	Sponsorships
International relations	Corporate identity
Publications	Corporate advertising
Crisis communication	Communication training

Source: Own research

Whereas communication programmes are *continuous* communication efforts aimed at strategic stakeholders, campaigns (discussed in the next section) are time-limited.

6.2.11 CAMPAIGNS

According to Kendall (1992:9) the term 'campaign' in its general usage means a "*connected series of operations designed to bring about a particular result*". In the context of the field of corporate communication, one can differentiate between two types of campaigns: the *corporate communication* (public relations) campaign and the *public information* campaign.

6.2.11.1 Corporate communication (public relations) campaign

The 'corporate communication' (public relations) campaign is a concerted effort of an organisation to build socially responsible relationships with strategic stakeholders by achieving research-based goals through the application of communication strategies and the measurement of outcomes.

The corporate communication campaign planned for a month, six months or a year is much more subject to measurement of effect and tends to involve greater precision in planning and execution than a continuing programme that has no clear beginning and end. Plans for activities that have no deadlines tend to get pushed back in the scheduling of priorities.

The corporate communication campaign is an organised and integrated effort to manage certain well-focused corporate communication activities, together with their supporting communications, to achieve a more controlled result. Best results are achieved when regular activities that form part of communication programmes such as announcing decisions to the press, publishing the employee newsletter, and responding to media enquiries are co-ordinated with the concentrated effort of a campaign. For example, when the campaign theme and activities are incorporated into the newsletter, the bulletin board and other

communication, the additional notice will multiply the effect. Co-ordinating regular programmes and campaign activities enables the corporate communication function to measure the effectiveness of specific activities as well as the total effect. The campaign will also attract renewed interest in familiar programmes.

The corporate communication campaign does not need to be a one-time effort--a cycle of campaigns, each building on and profiting from previous ones, has much to recommend it over the indeterminate continuing programme. The basic elements that make up a corporate communication campaign can simply be repeated with revisions, additions, and different directions for a more effective long-range programme.

The cyclic continuing series of campaigns also has the advantage that the evaluation of one campaign can be incorporated in the research phase of the next. Research leads to adaptation of the organisation's resources to the campaign, which leads to the implementation strategy to solve the problem situation, which leads to an evaluation of the campaign (Kendall 1992:10-11).

6.2.11.2 Public communication campaign

The 'public communication campaign' tends to focus on an *immediate objective*, such as to stop smoking, control wildfires, or reduce crime, and relies primarily on *mass communication*.

The corporate communication campaign also seeks such objectives but as a means of building relationships with the organisation's stakeholders. While it may use mass communication, it relies on the complete spectrum of communication media. The difference between the two types of campaigns lie in orientation (Kendall 1992:3,6).

6.2.12 COMMUNICATION PLANS

Planning is a comprehensive process in which managers first formulate the specific objectives of an organisation and then develop the plans for attaining them.

Where *strategic plans* frame the big picture painted by the mission statement, *operational or tactical plans* focus on short-term objectives, their horizon almost always being one year or less. Operational planning provides the cutting edge for an organisation's strategic plans in that it deals with down-the-line specifics of its resources to create specific plans and schedules. The majority of operating plans are 'single use' plans (Bittel 1989:71).

Operational planning is specifically concerned with the process that converts resources into results, inputs into outputs. The emphasis is on concrete details. Forecasts of future conditions can no longer be hypothetical or general; they must settle on numbers that can be placed in schedules and budgets. Dates and times are pinned down. Facilities, equipment, and materials are designated. Personnel assignments are made.

Goals and plans are essentially inseparable. A good plan incorporates the three pivotal goal specifications into five vital elements of a plan. All plans should cover the five points *what, where, when, how* and *who*. Goals designate the "*what*," "*where*," and "*when*"; plans add to these the "*how*" and "*who*" (Bittel 1989:79).

Effective planning follows a systematic process - there are several variations of what constitutes a systematic approach to corporate communication (public relations) planning. According to Hendrix (1992:8), the corporate communication

problem-solving process involves four procedures. *First*, initial research is performed to establish the basic elements of the communication transaction. *Second*, objectives for the transaction are established. *Third*, programming -- including all the methods of communication used -- is planned and executed to carry out the objectives. *Finally*, ongoing and follow-up evaluation is conducted both to monitor and to measure how well the plan accomplished its objectives.

Cutlip, Center & Broom (1985:221) describes the corporate communication (public relations) process slightly differently as defining the corporate communication problem or opportunity through research, then devising ways for coping with it through planning. During this second step, strategy decisions must be made and plans of action set down for the specific communication plan. The third step is communication and action, and the fourth is to evaluate the whole process.

In the original Class Notes provided to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria during the second semester of 1998, another theoretical section followed the above, specifically explicating the elements of the *communication plan*. At the end of that discussion, a graphic presentation of both the hypothesised model for developing corporate communication strategy, as well as a model for developing a communication plan, was provided.

The theory and model for developing a communication plan (included in the 1998 Class Notes) does not form part of this study and will not be documented here, with the exception of the first two phases (Research and Planning) which can be viewed in Appendix 1; and the 'Model for developing a communication plan', which is included in Appendix 2. The reason for discussing the first two phases of the model for developing a communication plan is that the model is a direct follow-up on the corporate communication strategy model, indicating the

beginning of the planning phase of corporate communication. It is in the Research Phase (in the 'opportunity/ problem statement' and the 'situation analysis') that the *link* between the corporate communication strategy and the communication plan is made. This link is strengthened in the Planning Phase, where the communication plan is built around the 'goals' that were identified during the development of the corporate communication strategy.

6.2.13 HYPOTHESISED MODEL FOR DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (MODEL 1)

In Chapter 1, the following guiding hypothesis was set to direct this part of the study:

Guiding hypothesis 3

A model is a suitable tool to satisfactorily explain the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

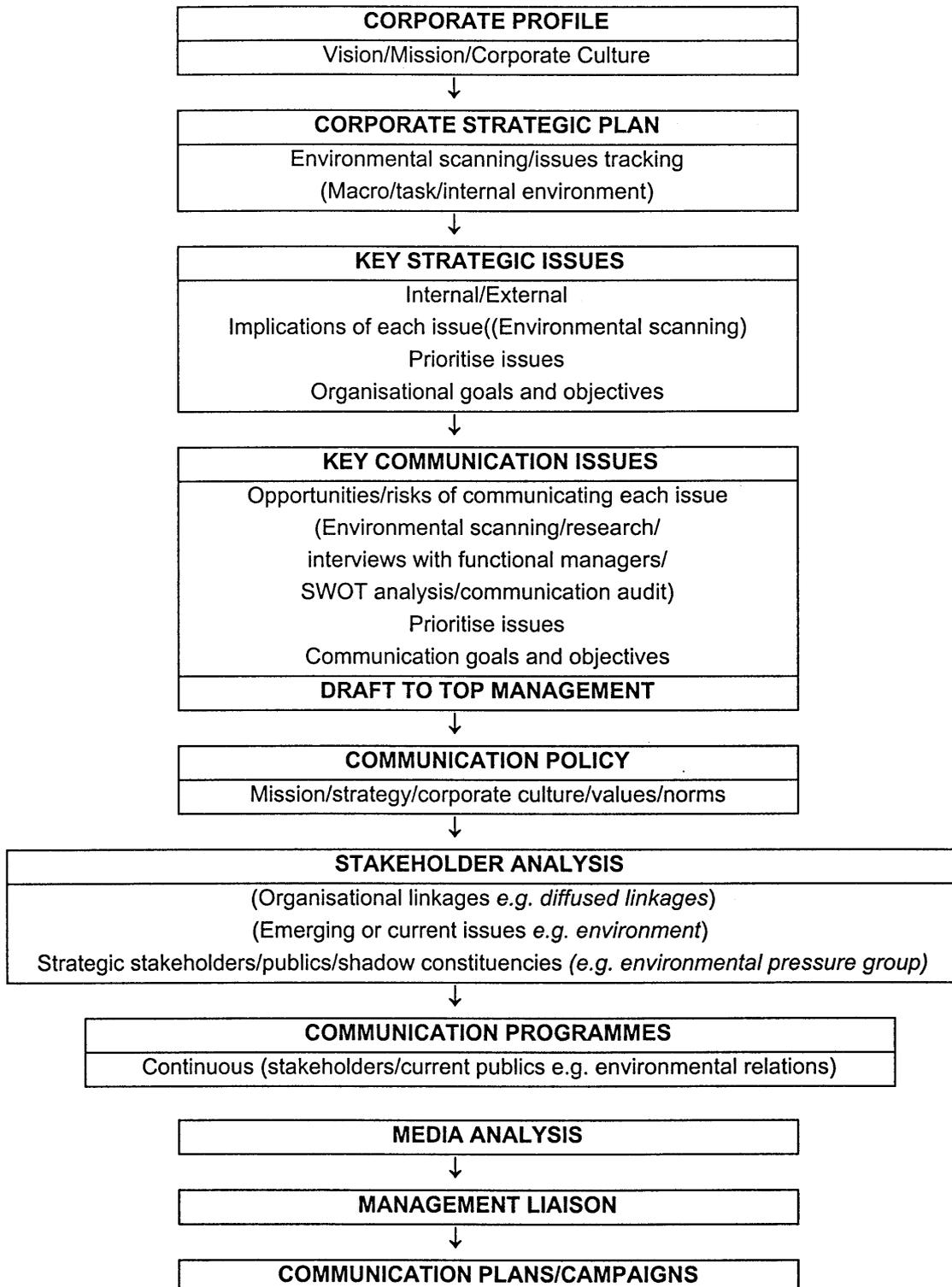
Based on the findings of the initial literature analysis and the guiding hypothesis presented above, the researcher hypothesised a model as a framework for developing a corporate communication strategy. A model, according to McQuail & Windahl (1993:2), is a general, simplified representation of reality that captures the important features but leaves out much of the detail.

The model presented in figure 6.2, will be referred to as Model 1.

Hypothesis 12: Model 1 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Hypothesis 12 is to be empirically tested in this study in stages two to five of Cycle One.

Figure 6.2: MODEL 1: DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



Source: Own research

6.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF MODEL 1: STAGE 2

STAGE 2: Some kind of action is undertaken together by the action research partners (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

Model 1 was implemented for the first time by the student researchers amongst 48 non-profit organisations during the second semester of 1998 (under guidance of the researcher, then designated leader of the third year practical assignment). The model, together with the theory on which it was based (the initial literature study documented in the previous section) was provided to third-year students as Theme One in their Class Notes for the semester.

As leader of the practical assignment, the researcher was invited by Mrs Retha Groenewald (the third year lecturer during 1998) to lecture the theory on which the model was based. Not only was it considered to be in the interest of the students that the researcher, as leader of the third year practical assignment (the action research project), also lecture the theory, but it would also increase the validity of the action research. These lectures took place over a three-week period in which fixed consulting hours were set (for a period of eight weeks). During this time, the researcher consulted the 48 students groups, whilst they were in the process of developing a corporate communication strategy for their selected non-profit organisation.

6.4 ASSESSMENT OF 1998 RESEARCH REPORTS: STAGE 3

STAGE 3: Thereafter the results of the action are to be assessed (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

According to Rensburg & Angelopulo (1996:53), 'assessment' is the phase of a project in which all relevant information is gathered and the conditions identified. The assessment begins with extensive research, investigating all aspects related to the problem/opportunity--it is a thorough situation analysis. The central criterion for selecting information to be included in the assessment phase, is its relevance to the project at hand. A conscious effort must be made to include everything that is important, but exclude superfluous information.

The 48 written research reports on corporate communication strategy, developed by the student groups and their action research partners (the non-profit organisations), were individually assessed by the lecturer/researcher during September 1998, according to the evaluation criteria, and compared in order to pinpoint common problem areas/constructs. The following evaluation form was used for this purpose (the rationale for the allocation of marks was explained in Chapter 5 -- see 5.9.5 'Evaluation'):

Figure 6.3: EVALUATION FORM 1998

*** Evaluation**

The practical project will be evaluated in three parts:

<u>TECHNICAL CARE</u>	
Introduction	5
Heading and numerical system	5
Neatness	5
Care taken with presentation/ appearance	5
	20
<u>CONTENTS OF THE PROJECT</u>	
Description of the corporate profile	8
Identification of key strategic and communication issues	15
Communication policy	4
Analysis of the media and publics	8
Communication plan	15
	50
<u>PRESENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN</u>	
Introduction/ Conclusion	5
Visual tools	5
Structure/ Format	5
Group participation	5
Persuasion/ Logical discussion	5
Creativity of ideas	5
	30
TOTAL	100

Source: Steyn B (1998)

The mark allocation on this form was slightly different from that of 1999. During 1998, it was required that student groups also present their plans to a panel of lecturers (counting 30 of the 100 marks allocated for the total project).

The only section that will be commented upon in the following assessment, is “CONTENTS OF THE PROJECT” (with the exception of the communication plan)—i.e. only the constructs that are relevant to this research (developing corporate communication strategy). The assessment will follow the headings on the evaluation form—each heading also including the other relevant constructs

on the model for evaluation purposes. (This was explained to the students in class).

6.4.1 GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROJECTS

The quality of the research reports (the corporate communication strategies) was surprising. After having marked the first 10, the researcher contacted the KOB 320 lecturer, Mrs Retha Groenewald, and requested that she externally examine the marks given to the first 10 groups (since they seemed high). Mrs Groenewald conceded to this request—her commentary upon handing it back to the researcher was that *“the student groups could have received higher marks than that which was allocated”*.

The reason for the researcher’s surprise at the quality of the projects, might be attributed to some degree of scepticism expressed by members of the Department as to the ability of third year corporate communication students understanding the strategic management process, especially the concept of *strategy*. As a rule, these concepts are normally taught to *post-graduate* students in corporate communication, at other tertiary institutions. However, the researcher was of the opinion that the KOB 320 students would be able to grasp the concepts, since they were *management* students—enrolled in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria. Corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions (both in South Africa and abroad) are usually enrolled in the humanities—therefore these concepts might be foreign to them.

Top marks allocated in 1998 were the following:

Figure 6.4: TOP STUDENT GROUPS IN 1998

GROUP 51	<i>Sungardens Hospice 1*</i>	86%
GROUP 26:	<i>Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut</i>	85.5%
GROUP 15	<i>Mountain Zebra National Park</i>	83.5%
GROUP 7:	<i>Reach For A Dream</i>	80%
GROUP 40:	<i>CBC Old Boys</i>	81%
GROUP 41:	<i>New Hope School For Specialised Education</i>	80%

*There were two student groups who did a corporate communication strategy for the *Sungardens Hospice*. The lecturer was not aware of this until marking the projects, since the second group changed organisations at the last minute—a situation which should preferably be avoided. The second group will be referred to as *Sungardens Hospice 2*.

In order to illustrate the process of developing a corporate communication strategy, the project of the top group, *Sungardens Hospice 1*, will be summarised shortly. Since the constructs on the model flow one from another, i.e. the strategic issues from the environmental analysis, the communication issues from the implications of the strategic issues, the communication goals from the communication issues, and the plan from the communication goals, it is necessary for the reader to have a holistic view of at least one project to better understand the process.

This specific group was selected, not only because they were a top group, but more importantly because they were a top group *whose members never came for consultations*. This meant that their only guideline was the model and the

accompanying theory—a situation which could provide a good indication of flaws in the model, which surely existed. The reasoning behind this conclusion was the following: This was an action research project, meaning that the lecturer/researcher was learning together with, and from, the students. After each consultation, she herself understood the process and the constructs causing problems better, and was therefore increasingly able to explain and even pre-empt problem areas. Student groups who were experiencing problems, and who visited the lecturer often (which the majority of groups did), were recipients of her increasing knowledge. However, groups who did not avail themselves of this opportunity, had nothing but the model and the theory in the 1998 Class Notes (with all its shortcomings) to guide them. Such groups are of considerable interest in achieving the objectives of this chapter.

6.4.2 TOP GROUP PROJECT: *SUNGARDENS HOSPICE 1*

Introduction

The group provided some background information—inter alia explaining the meaning of the word ‘hospice’, the beginning of the movement in London in the 1960’s, and how the first Hospice was started in SA in 1986. Thereafter, twenty features of the hospice organisation were explained, e.g. that staff was on call 24 hours a day, that they were trained to deal with the loneliness and fears of patients and family, and that care was offered in the patient’s home more often than in Hospice facilities itself.

Corporate Profile

Under this heading, the location of Hospice was explained, who its patients were, and what the Hospice Model of care entailed. Information was given on the

operations and staff complement of Hospice, and an organisational chart was provided.

Since no vision or mission statements existed, the following were suggested by the group:

Vision

“We aspire to affect a permanent paradigm shift that makes the community realise that healing a person does not necessarily mean finding a cure”.

Mission

“Hospice is a program of specialised palliative care dedicated exclusively to people facing progressive and advanced illness, which will be the most likely cause of death. This is a medically directed, nurse co-ordinated program of care responding to the physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs of the patients, family and appropriate others. Hospice exists in the hope and belief that with the appropriate care and the promotion of a caring community, patients and family may be free to attain a degree of mental and spiritual preparation for death that is necessary to them.” The different elements of the mission was hereupon further explained in detail by the group.

Corporate culture

This was stated as *“being powerfully influenced by the Roman Catholic religion, namely to give unconditional care to those in need. Although the culture is based on religious concepts, Hospice has no religious affiliations and consequently*

there are no restrictions as to whom they care for and from whom they accept help”.

Environmental Analysis

An analysis of the *macro*, *task* and *internal* environment was provided. For brevity sake, only the macro environmental analysis is indicated here:

- *“Economic environment: As interest rates continue to increase, disposable income decreases--resulting in less discretionary income that can be spent on charity.*
- *Physical environment: There is a general increase in public awareness of HIV/Aids, as well as the number of people falling ill with the virus.*
- *Socio-cultural environment:*
 - *Hospice has a social responsibility toward their community in the Pretoria East area, but individuals living outside this area will not be turned away.*
 - *There is an overwhelming fear of diseases as well as stigmas attached to terminal illnesses and death, especially ‘social’ diseases such as Aids.*
- *Legislative/regulative environment:*
 - *The abolishment of the Fund-raising Act means that no fund-raising number is required any longer in the collection of funds from the community.*
 - *R50 000 is provided by the Department of Health every 18 to 24 months, who then dictates how the money is spent.*
 - *No further subsidies from the Government.”*

(The task and internal environment was analysed in the same way).

Key strategic issues

Fourteen *internal* issues were identified and explained, e.g. “*no individuals want to assume responsibility for the fund-raising function*”. The **implications of the issues** were also explained--e.g. for the above: “*The means and methods to obtain funds are sorely neglected and as a result long term mutually beneficial relationships are forfeited as is the awareness and visibility with which these relationships are associated.*”

Thirteen *external* issues were also identified such as the following:

- “*The morbid image of Hospice results in people preferring to contribute towards the living rather than the dead*”, the implication being that people rather contribute to those who can reap the benefits for a considerable time to come.
- “*Corporate sponsors require detailed financial statements on how their sponsorships are allocated*”, the implication being that Hospice needs to find a compromise between how they allocate funds and how the sponsors see fit for the funds to be allocated.

SWOT analysis

The *strengths and weaknesses*, as well as the *opportunities and threats* of the *Sungardens Hospice*, was highlighted in this section.

Prioritising issues

The group prioritised the issues identified in terms of two issues each for the macro, task and internal environment. They then combined two issues in the task environment as the priority strategic issues that they would be addressing in their

communication plan (i.e. the most important issues to be communicated to the relevant stakeholders). The two priority strategic issues were the following:

- *“Hospice lacks awareness and visibility within the greater Pretoria community”.*

Researcher’s comments: This is indeed a **strategic issue**, of which the **implications** are that people do not know about Hospice, and therefore cannot make donations to them or use their services. The construct ‘communication issue’ should identify *what it is that should be communicated to whom to solve this problem of low awareness and lack of visibility*. The **communication issue** in this case is that Hospice must be brought to the attention of the greater Pretoria community. Once this has been identified, the **communication goals** flow naturally from it—for instance *“to convey the mission/aims of Hospice to stakeholders and others in the greater Pretoria community, who are not familiar with the concept”*.

- *“The Afrikaans community perceives Hospice to be an English institution affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church”.*

Researcher’s comments: This is also a **strategic issue**, of which the implication is that Afrikaans people would probably not make donations to Hospice, nor use its services. The **communication issue** in this case (i.e. the information that should be communicated to solve the problem), would be that Hospice has no formal affiliation with any particular group or religion. The **communication goals** flow directly from the **communication issue**, i.e. *“to inform the Afrikaans community that Hospice has no affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church, or any other religion”*; or *“to convey the message that Hospice’s doors are wide open to care for Afrikaners in need”*.

Key Communication Issues

The students stated the following as being **key communication issues**:

- *“To increase the public’s awareness of the organisation through communication with key stakeholders.”*
- *“To correct the misconception that the organisation has religious affiliations.”*

Researcher’s comments: In essence the students have the right idea as to what it is that should be communicated, although they phrased it as communication goals (the next step in the process) rather than as communication issues. To arrive at the crux of the problem, it is important to pinpoint *exactly* what it is that should be communicated. The communication issue is not necessarily the same as the communication goal—and one communication issue might also have several communication goals.

The students furthermore determined the opportunities and risks associated with **communicating the implications** of the key strategic issues to the stakeholders. This is in contravention of the model, which states that the **opportunities or risks of communicating each issue** must be identified. As **opportunity** they saw that *“an increase in awareness of Hospice could promote further financial support”*. As a **risk** they saw *“the possibility of not being able to bring about a paradigm shift in the Afrikaans community’s attitude, or not having enough money to bring about this shift”*.

Researcher’s comments: Their opportunities and risk analysis is indeed flowing from the key strategic issues as identified, and is correct. However, this did not seem to assist the student group in the identification of the key communication issues, since the latter have already been stated. The researcher has no way of knowing whether the communication issues were stated first by mistake, or whether students indeed saw the communication issues as standing loose from the opportunities/risks instead of being derived from it.

Communication objectives (attitudinal):

- *“To reverse within a year the indifferent attitudes expressed by the Afrikaans community;*
- *To educate and inform the public to form new attitudes about Hospice, by using mass media;*
- *To educate the public on terminal diseases through appropriate channels of communication”.*

Researcher’s comments: The theory on the communication plan indicates that these objectives are indeed attitudinal. However, the objectives should have been more specific—students should have set time frames and indicated how the improvement in attitude was to be measured.

Organisational goals and objectives

Upon finding that *Sungardens Hospice* did not have any **organisational goals and objectives**, the group defined the following objectives:

- *“To increase individuals’ awareness as to what Hospice is and aspires to be”.*
- *“To increase individuals’ involvement with Hospice activities and fund raising events.*
- *“To place emphasis on an individual’s social responsibility towards those in need of physical, emotional, spiritual and social support which is achieved by urging the community to identify with the values, norms and beliefs of Pretoria Sungardens Hospice”.*

Researcher’s comments: These are in fact communication goals and not organisational objectives. Furthermore, it seems *superfluous* that the students had to go through the exercise of formulating these organisational goals/objectives. (Further comment on this in Stage 4, the analysis of the model).

Draft to top management

The students suggested that *“the strategy and the logic guiding the formulation is presented to the Executive Committee to ensure that communication efforts are consistent with Hospice’s overall goals and objectives”*.

Researcher’s comments: This is good. Most other groups failed to address this construct on the model.

Communication Policy

The students suggested that *“the nature of the organisational structure dictates the need for all decision making pertinent to a crisis situation to be directed through the Board of Directors.”*

Researcher’s comments: Crisis communication theory suggests that only one director should take responsibility, not all of them.

Further suggestions for communication policy were:

- *“All fund-raising events and media relations are to be handled by the Head of Fund-raising.*
- *All medical issues must be addressed (communicated) by the Matron.*
- *The (communication about the) receipt and allocation of monetary funds is the responsibility of the Head of Fund-raising.*
- *All decisions regarding employment and the termination thereof is handled (should be communicated) by the executive committee”*.

Researcher's comments: In most of these cases, the students did not address the activities of the communication function—see researcher's corrections (indicated in brackets). Communication policy refers to '*who is allowed to communicate what to whom*'. The students, however, referred more to *organisational* policy, rather than to communication policy.

Stakeholder analysis

This analysis was done extensively, *firstly* identifying the *internal* stakeholders: organisational officers, the executive committee, two voluntary secretaries, a full-time receptionist; employees receiving compensation (e.g. occupational therapists and nurses); members of Hospice who take responsibility for support services (e.g. domestic staff), many of whom are volunteers. *Secondly, external* stakeholders were identified as patients (both in-home and those admitted to Hospice facilities); corporate sponsors (physical commodities, vehicles, cellular phones); the greater Pretoria community (Rotary, schools); the family of the patient/deceased; the media (mass, specialised and national); the government; and religious institutions. The identified stakeholders were not only listed, but described in detail.

Researcher's comments: This was an excellent analysis—students seemed to have no problem in understanding and applying the constructs.

Media analysis

This was also relatively well understood, although the group only addressed the mass media. They identified *local media* (Radio Tuks, Impact Radio, RSG Afrikaans Radio and the Record); *national media* (SAFM and the newspapers); and *specialised media* (Hospice Chronicle--the internal newsletter).

6.4.3 OTHER GROUP PROJECTS

Extracts from some other group projects will now be made. It is not practical to give a detailed account of all the projects here, nor does the study claim to be representative in any way. Rather, under each construct efforts will be concentrated on providing the norm, and thereafter mentioning a few groups who seemed to be experiencing problems, in the opinion of the researcher. The projects not mentioned were those the researcher deemed not to have major problems--these student groups seemed to understand the work, but did not go to a lot of trouble. If they did, it could reasonably be assumed that their projects might have earned good marks, and would therefore have been mentioned as an example of 'good' work.

The researcher admits the possibility that this might have been a wrong assumption, i.e. if these students had indeed done more than the minimum (like some other hardworking groups), their problems might have been more obvious. However, with the information at her disposal (and within the confines of time and the length of the study), she decided to rather concentrate on those groups who were obviously weak on certain constructs (the latter being more in line with the aim of the study).

6.4.3.1 Description of the corporate profile

This section included a discussion of the selected non-profit organisation's vision and mission statements, as well as their corporate culture--it was generally understood well. It seemed as though these management students were familiar with the constructs. Nevertheless, some problems were still experienced and will be pointed out.

Vision statements

Some groups, such as *Forever Young*, the *Red Cross* and *Bankfontein School* ignored vision statements, and received a '0' for their lack of effort. Others did not differentiate between the vision and the mission--the vision was included in the mission statement i.e. "om binne Paul Jungnickelhuis behuising en versorgingsgeleenthede te skep vir persone met gestremdheid (mission), om hulle volle potensiaal te ontwikkel en sodoende hul lewenskwaliteit te verhoog (vision). Although it can be surmised that this statement was directly transferred from the non-profit organisation's literature, it was required that the students criticise the vision (if it was theoretically incorrect) and suggest an improved version. It is therefore deduced that they did not understand the difference.

A few groups, such as the *Endangered Wildlife Trust*, changed the vision and mission around: Their vision was: "*Maintain essential support systems and ecological processes, preserve genetic diversity and utilise resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis*". (This is in fact the *mission*, as it describes the business they are in). Their mission was described as "*to conserve the diversity of species in Southern Africa*", which is indeed the *vision*, as it is more future-oriented, a desired future state of affairs.

A vision such as the following is not considered a vision, but rather an objective: "*Om gepaste verteenwoordigers in al die provinsies van Suid-Afrika te kry wat hul eie begroting kan behartig en bewustheid kan skep*" or "*Om die totale bedrag wat jaarliks internasionaal as donasies ontvang word, te verhoog na \$50 miljoen teen die jaar 2000.*"

As far as the rest of the groups were concerned, they seemed to have a good grasp of this construct. The *CBC Old Boys* group (as did many others) wrote a

vision statement where none existed: *“CBC Old Boys Club will (wants) to be the best sporting and social private club in the Pretoria area, offering the ultimate sporting facilities and services”.*

The *Melgisédek Christian Centre* had a most appropriate vision, a quote from the Bible (Luke 4:18-19): *“Om met die hulp en leiding van die Heilige Gees en in die naam van Jesus Christus, Pretoria en die omliggende gebiede se inwoners vir die Koninkryk van God, die God wat hemel en aarde geskape het, te wen.....”*

Mission statements

In looking at examples of mission statements, many groups successfully criticised the existing mission according to the theory provided. The mission of *The Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* *“Om die sukses van lede in ‘n veranderende omgewing deur betekenisvolle dienslewering te ondersteun”*, was improved to: *“Die AHI is ‘n leidinggewende multi-sektorale werkgewersorganisasie wat aktief sy lede se kennis en energie poel om welvaart in Suid-Afrika te skep. Ons streef hierdie doel na deur middel van beïnvloeding, netwerkskepping, gemeenskapsontwikkeling, internasionale skakeling, die bevordering van entrepreneurskap, opleiding en samewerking met ander belangegroepes.”*

Projects of the *Red Cross* and *Bankfontein School* did not address the construct ‘mission statement’ (they were the ones who also did not formulate a vision statement)--however, this was the exception rather than the rule. The mission statement of the *Irene Middle School*, not considered a good one, contained a lot of **superfluous/incorrect** information: *“The key objective was to create a safe and educating environment where farm workers’ children would be occupied during the day. Unfortunately, due to the political circumstances this education was below standard and inadequate. Today, their objectives have changed drastically.....”*

Another such example was the *Mountain Zebra National Park*, whose mission read as follows:

- *“Raising funds for the Cape Mountain Zebra (incorrect);*
- *Creating jobs and opportunities, on a long-term basis, for the local communities (incorrect);*
- *Creating a major conservational area of unique biological diversity (correct);*
- *Attracting domestic and international tourists (incorrect—however, this would have been correct if the organisation had been, for instance, the South African Tourism Board).*

The above were the only mission statements that were not good. All the other projects were considered passable.

Corporate culture

In general, the section on corporate culture seemed to be well answered although some groups did not discuss the construct. (The *Reach for a Dream Foundation* also did not discuss it, but included a section on values). The *Irene Middle School* was one of the few groups who did not seem to grasp the concept: *“The basic ideal of the school is ‘For the Sake of the Children’. The principle and teachers are very concerned about the welfare and education standard of these underprivileged children. Sound education is made the personal business of the Governing Body and the Parents Teachers Association who meet on a monthly basis to discuss finances, welfare and other relevant factors with regard to the children”.*

Nicor Consultants was another whose members did not understand corporate culture. Most of their description was about the history, the stakeholders and the number of customers—and not about the ‘way we do things around here’.

In spite of the problems mentioned above, most other groups described it correctly, e.g. *“The culture at Radio Tuks 1 is formal as well as informal. Each member is regarded as special and fulfils their position within the whole organisation. There is no specific dress code to be followed, which contributes to a loose structure with the exception of the general meetings and other important appointments. Members love working at Radio Tuks because they see themselves as members of a big family. The station director as well as the other directors are very open-minded and always listen emphatically to their members. The vibe and feeling projected is friendly, hopeful and positive. Beliefs at the radio station are as diverse as can be since the workforce itself is so diverse”*.

To end this section, the groups who did more than was expected on corporate profile, will be mentioned. Some included a history of their organisation and/or an organisational chart. The *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* group gave a detailed description of the advantages of membership, as obtained through their questionnaire and interviews. *Radio Tuks 2* included an organisational philosophy, a behavioural code, values and norms, disciplinary procedures as well as rules and regulations to be followed in the studio. The *New Hope School for Specialised Education* group did extremely well by discussing the history, location of the school, the identity and demographics of the customers, the management set-up, the school’s reputation in the field as well as its financial status.

The group *Sungardens Hospice 2* included a philosophy:

- *“Hospice affirms life.*
- *Hospice exists to provide support and care for persons in the last phases of incurable disease, so they may live as fully and comfortably as possible.*
- *Hospice recognises dying as a normal process and neither hastens nor postpones death.*
- *Hospice recognises grief as a normal response to loss and therefore support to the families continues into the bereavement period”.*

The groups *Mission without Borders* and *Reach for a Dream* included value statements, of which the former is mentioned: *“Values are the foundation on which we build to achieve our mission. Our values shape every thought we think and every deed we do. The values that drive our organisation are dignity, involvement, service, financial integrity, our people, our affiliates and our field”* (each of these were described in detail).

6.4.3.2 Corporate strategic plan

According to the model, this construct included the identification of issues in the macro, task and micro environment by means of an environmental analysis. In general, environmental scanning was well understood and it proved difficult to choose a good example amongst many (lengthy) discussions.

Sungardens Hospice 2 did an excellent, six and a half page environmental scan. Under the *micro* environment, they identified the following (providing a full description of each):

⇒ organisational structure:

- the executive committee and their duties;
- the management committee and their duties, and the heads of departments who fall under their jurisdiction;

⇒ financial background: the biggest sponsor and total monthly budget were *inter alia* mentioned;

⇒ the activities by which funds were raised were identified and described as being a golf day, fashion show, budget drive, wine festival, CSIR run, Hospice week, market, boxing dine, Christmas toy fair, Christmas tree of lights and Club 2000;

⇒ the manpower consisted of the volunteers, the nursing staff (home nursing care, day care, and in-patient care) and management.

As part of the *task* environment, they identified the following:

⇒ media (Pretoria News, Beeld, Rekord, Radio Impact, 702 FM and Radio Rippel);

⇒ activist groups e.g. the gay community (who have their own hospice);

⇒ educational programs (parents/friends/schools);

⇒ relationships with other Hospices in Pretoria;

⇒ financial aid.

The *macro* environmental scan produced the following:

⇒ the competition;

⇒ demographic factors (increasing young black population—AIDS; shifts in population concentrations in certain cities; and decreasing disposable income);

⇒ social and cultural factors—corporate social responsibility;

- ⇒ physical factors: climate, availability of medical supplies;
- ⇒ international factors: sky-rocketing exchange rates;
- ⇒ economic factors: spending power is a function of economic variables such as income, price, savings and credit allowance;
- ⇒ technology: research could provide a cure for AIDS;
- ⇒ political factors: government changes in attitudes and policies, political turmoil, legislation;
- ⇒ legal factors: extensive legislation governing welfare organisations:
 - Fund-raising Act (1978);
 - Social and Associated Workers Act (1978);
 - National Welfare Act (1978);
 - Medicine Act and Nursing Council.

On the grounds of the above environmental scan, a SWOT analysis was conducted.

Another good scan was done by *Paul Jungnickel Home*. Their *macro* analysis produced the following:

- ⇒ ecological factors, such as water scarcity, presenting a problem for the upkeep of the garden--an important activity for patients;
- ⇒ economic factors, such as the cut in subsidies to welfare organisations, and the income tax to be paid;
- ⇒ political factors, i.e. the relationship with unions is good and no discrimination could be discerned internally;
- ⇒ social factors, such as the perception of the Home, is a problem. A suggested solution was to obtain the services of a public relation person.
- ⇒ technology is expensive and changing fast—the costs involved create a problem for a non-profit organisation.

Important factors in the *micro* environment were:

- ⇒ communication with employees: messages from management do not always get through to employees;
- ⇒ untrained staff;
- ⇒ theft by employees;
- ⇒ the cut in government subsidies resulted in financial hardship internally;
- ⇒ the pressure from unions to continually increase the employees' salaries also put great pressure on the financial situation.

With the exception of two groups who did not do an environmental scan, no project could be criticised on their discussion of this construct.

6.4.3.3 Key strategic issues and their implications, and the identification of communication issues and goals from these implications.

From the following discussion, it will become clear to the reader that this section of the project caused the most problems for student groups. It is not surprising, considering the fact that the *thinking* process required to get to the crux of the real issue involved, as well as the correct communication issue that should be addressed, is most challenging. It is not possible for students to do this part of the project in 'parrot style'—i.e. to simply transfer information from existing literature with only little application involved. An example of the latter would be the existing mission and vision statements of non-profit organisations that only had to be checked against the theory to see whether they were in fact correct. Nor is it possible to do it simply by analysis (a process where the content is broken into smaller parts)—rather, it requires a process of *synthesis*, of making loose parts into a whole, of forming a holistic view (Robert 1997:56-57). It is putting the puzzle together that often proves the most difficult, also in practice.

The problems experienced by the students seemed to have centred on the *process* of deriving the one construct from the other, especially deriving communication issues from the implications of the strategic issues. For this reason, the researcher did not consider it meaningful to discuss these constructs in isolation, but rather simultaneously under the same heading. An effort will be made to describe the process in stages, in order to identify the biggest problem areas in the process. Cross references will continuously be made to the other related constructs in order to explain and build a picture for the reader as to why a group's interpretation was considered incorrect (and to suggest a possible correct option).

Key strategic issues

In general, most student groups did not have problems in *identifying* their selected non-profit organisation's key strategic issues. Most problems experienced were rather with *phrasing* the key strategic issue correctly in order that it may be understood as either an opportunity or a problem. The lecturer/researcher considers this an important step in the process of developing corporate communication strategy, in order that students may correctly interpret the **implications** of the issue, therefore arriving at the real **communication issue** to be addressed.

As an example we will consider the five **key strategic issues** identified by the *Mountain Zebra National Park* project, which were in essence correct but not always correctly stated. Three of these will be detailed here:

⇒ *The acquisition of land*

Researcher's comments: The real issue at this stage is not the acquisition of land (yet). However, it might become one if the Park is not successful in using communication to bring this issue to the attention of donors and other stakeholders. The real issue is the fact that the carrying capacity of the land has been exceeded—i.e. the *expansion* of the park is the real issue, since there is a lack of adequate land for current species as well as for introducing new ones. The **implications** of expansion are firstly that farmers in the area might be unwilling to sell their farms to the Park, or will be charging unrealistic prices if they do. The **communication issue** should lead from these implications, i.e. what should be communicated to the farmers as strategic stakeholders to solve this problem.

⇒ *Funding*

Researcher's comments: This does not describe what the issue concerning funding is, e.g. is the real problem *insufficient* funding, in which case the Park must try and obtain more funding--or have they already tried and not been successful? This is important to know in order to consider the implications for the stakeholders and arrive at the *real* communication issue.

⇒ The Town Council

Researcher's comments: This is not specific enough—in which way is the Council an issue? From the students' description of the issue it became clear that this is a **strategic opportunity**, since the Council is actually prepared to donate some land—“*The Town Council's possible donation of land*” would have provided a better indication of the real issue/opportunity. **The implications of the strategic opportunity** is that it would greatly assist in solving both the issues of funding and expansion of the park. A **communication issue** could therefore be

to immediately cement the relationship with the Town Council, before they changed their mind (i.e. in the event that other Council stakeholders such as squatters might hear about the issue and clamour for the same land). The **communication goals** could for instance be to convey gratitude to Council members, and to provide them with information about the importance of obtaining the land and the specific way in which it will be utilised. Should the squatters indeed make trouble for the Council, the squatters immediately become a strategic stakeholder with whom the Park should communicate. The **communication issue** in such a case would be to explain to them the job and other opportunities that would result from increased tourism in the area, and make them part of the decision making process before they turn activist.

The *Iyamceda* group built their identification of strategic issues around *people, management, products* and *budget*, as suggested in the class notes. However, their interpretation of this theory was not correct. They ended up doing no more than:

- ⇒ identifying stakeholders, rather than identifying strategic issues around *people*,
- ⇒ describing the members of *management*, rather than their strategic issues;
- ⇒ naming the *products*, rather than the strategic issues around the products;
- ⇒ stating the *budget* as a strategic issue, rather than a lack of funding or donors.

Implications of the strategic issues

Bankfontein Skool (a farm school) correctly identified their strategic issues, but they also had trouble in *phrasing them correctly*. Furthermore, they did *not specifically point out the implications of the strategic issues*, although it was *implicit* in their lengthy discussion of issues. The same was true for a number of other groups who, in their analysis and discussion of key strategic issues, often touched upon the implications of strategic issues without naming them as such.

This creates problems when they have to pinpoint the communication issues, since they are derived directly from the implications of the strategic issues.

A few examples of the strategic issues that the *Bankfontein School* student group identified are:

⇒ *transport* (students having to walk up to 20 Km, arriving late in class, teachers getting fed-up and asking the students to leave the school). The real issue is the fact that there is *no school bus*. The implications are that students arrive late and teachers become irate—this causes conflict between teachers and students. The **communication issue** in this case should centre around bringing the teachers and students together, both having the opportunity of stating their case, bringing about mutual understanding for the problem, which none of them caused. Further communication could centre around bringing the issue to the attention of those who are able to do something about it (the community, Department of Education, donors).

⇒ *legislation* (the issue is really the *new* legislation regarding religion practised at schools). The religion practised at a school is no longer automatically Christian, but rather that which is practised by the largest part of its community. The **implication/effect** of this new legislation is that the farmer on whose land the school is situated (the largest sponsor, and a Christian) is unhappy with this situation, leading to conflict. Up till now the school has been found on Christian values and norms, and most of the teachers are also Christian. The **communication issue** should centre around building understanding and respect for each others' religions between students/parents and (Christian) teachers/the owner.

⇒ *farm owner will be retiring soon* (75 years old). This is correctly phrased, although 'pending retirement of owner' could be considered better language. This issue has **major implications** for everyone involved. The **communication issue** should centre around bringing the stakeholders together and trying to find a solution to this pressing issue.

Identification of organisational goals and objectives

The *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut's* group studied the organisational goals as set out in the AHI information brochure and annual report, and listed 10 of these. Thereupon they analysed the communication strategy of the AHI, and found some small differences in the goals mentioned here and those mentioned above. In the communication strategy, they found that three organisational goals were indicated as being major. An abstract of their commentary on this analysis follows:

“Kritiek teen bestaande AHI doelstellings:

- *Die huidige doelstellings vloei, wat ons betref, nie almal direk uit die geïdentifiseerde strategiese kwessies voort nie. Verskeie aspekte wat as strategiese kwessies geïdentifiseer is, word nie in die vorm van doelstellings verwoord nie. So bv. is daar geen doelstellings ten opsigte van die toevoeging van waarde aan lede, ledewerwing oor taal- en kultuurgrense of die bemagtiging van personeel nie. Tog word hierdie aspekte as strategiese uitdagings beskou.*
- *Dit is belangrik dat die organisasie se doelstellings op 'n konsekwente wyse in alle dokumente uiteengesit moet word. Die doelstelling oor gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid verskyn byvoorbeeld in die inligtingsbrochure en jaarverslag, maar nie in die kommunikasiestrategie nie. Let ook op die konsekwente gebruik van die term 'doelstellings' versus 'oogmerke' in alle dokumente.*
- *Die gelyste doelstellings is baie omvattend. Ons stel voor dat die doelstellings aan die hand van temas wat vir 'n sekere tydperk geld, geprioritiseer word. Op dié manier word die aandag om die beurt op spesifieke doelstellings gefokus. Die organisasie kan onmoontlik tegelykertyd aandag aan al die doelstellings gee.*

This top group identified in the AHI the same problem experienced by other third year student groups in identifying the goals of their non-profit organisations. In most cases, the goals were standing loose from the strategic issues, i.e. students 'sucked them from their thumbs' or stated them by intuition—the goals were not arrived at through a systematic analysis of the strategic issues. A good example of this is the description of corporate goals provided by the *CBC Old Boys*' group:

“The organisation’s reason for existence and operation is mainly one of social responsibility. To make a place where people can come and socialise with others who have a common interest. A place where you can keep in contact with old friends with whom you grew up with at school and where business meetings can be held in a relaxed and friendly environment. The club focuses its goals on increasing prestige, their reputation, and quality of their sporting facilities as well as containing costs. Making sure that all employee attitudes are positive and that they are in agreement with management is of great importance to achieve goals as well as maintaining and increasing employee performance. The club also recognises the need for social responsibility in expanding efforts to include underprivileged people (e.g. Bramley Homes).

Goals for the season:

- *to build a competitive, healthy attitude to sports and to life;*
- *to encourage a friendly family atmosphere;*
- *to encourage membership from outside;*
- *to promote fellowship with other clubs;*
- *above all, to have fun.”*

The same trend was noticed in the project of the *New Hope School for Specialised Education* (since this project will be used as an example again later, it is attached as Appendix 3—see page 10). Although their strategic issues were identified as financial shortages; insufficient marketing of services; the concept of

mainstream education; the provision of multi-racial and multi-lingual education; and outcomes-based education, most of their organisational goals and objectives were not directly related, i.e. did not systematically flow from the issues:

“Goal: To provide multi or trans disciplinary skilled and specialist personnel to work with families, other care givers, groups and agencies in the ethnic and wider community.

Objectives:

- *training of specialised personnel;*
- *market related remuneration packages;*
- *appointment criteria;*
- *manual on multi-disciplinary character in Specialised Education.”*

Other goals mentioned were the following (their corresponding objectives can be viewed in Appendix 3, page 11):

- *“To manage the school cost effectively.*
- *To create an effectively managed school.*
- *To implement an educationally responsible extra curricular program.*
- *To provide uniquely specialised services to the education community, other than the normal services offered at schools.*
- *To create a marketing strategy to introduce the needs of the child with learning problems.*
- *Maximal provision and use of physical facilities (school and residence).”*

Researcher's comments: Except for the fact that most groups did not correctly derive organisational goals from strategic issues (a situation that could be corrected by teaching), it seems to the researcher that the construct 'organisational goals and objectives' are out of place on the model. In reviewing the researcher's suggestions/discussion of the strategic issues incorrectly phrased by the *Mountain Zebra National Park* and *Bankfontein School* earlier, it appears to be more correct that communication issues should be derived *directly*

from the implications of strategic issues. This makes the construct 'organisational goals' on the model superfluous. This is only a preliminary remark—after the discussion/assessment of the projects on the construct 'communication issues' in the following paragraphs, it should become more clear whether this is indeed so.

Identification of communication issues and goals

These two constructs will be discussed in the same section, since it is important to judge the identification of communication goals by whether they were derived from the key communication issues. We will once again consider the project of *New Hope School for Specialised Education* (see Appendix 3, page 12).

This top group followed the model by describing the opportunities/risks of communicating each strategic issue, of which the first was *financial shortages*. The *risks* they saw in communicating the fact that the school was experiencing financial shortages, were few. Most people affected already knew. The few risks they identified were the *employees fearing their jobs being cut*, and the *parents fearing an increase in school fees*. The *opportunities* identified by communicating the financial shortages, were seen as *everybody internally becoming more determined to raise funds*, and *stakeholders externally becoming aware of the fact and contributing more*.

Researcher's comments: In order to ascertain whether one arrives at the same communication goals when considering the implications of the strategic issues, the researcher will now suggest communication goals having been determined by this method. According to the researcher, the **implications** of financial shortages might be that *employees feared losing their jobs*, *parents feared an increase in school fees*, and the children received an *inferior education*. The **communication issues** regarding this strategic issue would be to communicate

with employees/parents/donors, providing them with correct information. The following **communication goals** are suggested in such a case:

- i. to *reassure employees* that no downsizing is planned or alternatively, to *communicate openly* regarding the possible loss of jobs;
- ii. to *inform parents of the increase in school fees*; or to *ask their assistance in fund-raising in order that school fees not be increased*;
- iii. to communicate the possibility of an *inferior education (less teachers, or not as qualified) both to parents and donors* in order that they might raise funds/donate money.

Researcher's comments: Even though some of the same communication issues were raised, the researcher considers the method of considering the implications of the strategic issues in arriving at the communication goals, as both easier, more specific and deriving at more valid goals--it makes one think more deeply about the implications of a strategic issue on all the stakeholders. Therefore, rather than practising persuasive communication, this method makes one consider the feelings/opinions/expectations of stakeholders about an issue before communicating with them. This is the essence of two-way symmetrical communication.

In communicating the second strategic issue, *insufficient marketing of services*, the risks were seen as *personnel fearing additional responsibilities* and becoming stressed. The *opportunities* were that *people might volunteer their services* in this regard. (For risks and opportunities of communicating the issue 'concept of mainstream education, see Appendix 3, page 13).

Researcher's comments: In repeating the exercise done with the first strategic issue, the researcher considers the **implications** of issue two to be strongest for the *donors* (they will not know about the school and therefore cannot donate money), as well as for *customers* (the parents of children needing specialised education will not know about the school and therefore cannot use the services

nor assist in raising funds—also resulting in a loss of revenue). Communication issues are therefore to identify and inform donors and customers.

Once again, the researcher is of the opinion that this method of thinking through the *implications* on all the stakeholders, leads to more precise identification of communication goals, resulting in stabilising relationships with strategic stakeholders.

The students identified the following internal goals and objectives, as well as external goals and objectives:

Internal goals:

- *"To maintain a healthy, open and effective communication environment between school members.*
- *To create a positive image for the school to counteract past negative connotation to the school's name amongst the pupils in the school."*

Researcher's comments: These goals were not specifically related to the risks and opportunities of communicating the strategic issues, as spelled out above. The researcher suggested communication goals to solve the problem on the previous page, in the discussion of the strategic issues and their implications.

Internal objectives:

- *"Implementation of workshops for promoting more healthy open and effective communication.*
- *To hold regular social gatherings to promote interpersonal relationships between staff and pupils.*
- *By having awards ceremonies for numerous school activities, for example education, carnivals, fun runs etc. this will create a sense of belonging and pride which directly improves positive attitudes toward the school and its name.*



- *To create a positive atmosphere between the teachers, which will directly affect the pupils' attitude."*

Researcher's comments: These objectives are also vague and general, not pinpointing the problem.

External goals:

- *"To implement, educate and create an awareness and sensitivity towards the school and its pupils.*
- *To communicate the school's needs to the external publics, for them to provide an efficient support system to the school."*

Researcher's comments: These communication goals are closer to solving the strategic issues of financial shortages and insufficient marketing.

External objectives:

- *"To provide the publics, through the use of various media, with as much information as possible, regarding the school's purpose for existence and any other extra programmes.*
- *To arrange events to attract external publics to get them involved in the school's activities."*

Researcher's comments: In looking at the **communication goals and objectives** identified, the student group do not seem to have derived the goals and objectives directly from the strategic issues. Especially the internal goals and objectives seem rather general, vague and unspecified. The students seem to be focusing on process objectives, i.e. on the events, workshops themselves, instead of impact objectives, i.e. how attitude/opinions will be changed.

Researcher's suggestions: The method of deriving communication goals by considering the implications of the strategic issues on all the stakeholders, still seem to be a better alternative.

A few other projects will now be discussed shortly in order to indicate the kinds of problems experienced by groups. The pages in the group projects which contains the full discussion on these constructs, are included in the appendices, for the reader's perusal.

⇒ *Mission without Borders* (Sending sonder Grense = SSG)

On page 8 of their assignment, this group identified five strategic issues: awareness; corruption and credibility; politics, culture and religion; suitable representatives; and the economy (see Appendix 4, page 8). On the next page they discussed the *economy; corruption and credibility; and suitable representatives* as their 'key communication issues'. However, what they were in effect discussing *were not communication issues*, but rather the implications of their strategic issues (see lecturer/researcher's comments on the assignment in this regard). On page 11, they again discussed *awareness* (as their priority strategic issue) which strictly speaking, is the communication issue. It must be noted that there are times when a lack of awareness is a strategic issue—in such cases, the strategic and communication issue will be the same. Although the communication objectives stated by the group were in fact communication *goals*, it was nevertheless clear that they understood the kind of information that had to be communicated to solve the strategic issue.

⇒ *Birchleigh High School*

This group identified 11 strategic issues, but did not phrase them in a way that indicated what the issues really were. Thereupon they identified the implications of their first strategic issue. Under the heading 'key communication issues', this group showed that they had a reasonable understanding of what should be communicated to the different stakeholders to solve each of the three priority strategic issues (see Appendix 5, page 4).

⇒ *Radio Tuks 1*

This project was done by one person, repeating the subject. (However, since the project was new, it was the first time he had to develop a corporate communication strategy according to the model provided). The student indicated considerable understanding of the issues at hand. Two external and three internal issues were identified, followed by an in-depth discussion of the issues and its implications--issues were then prioritised. Under the heading 'key communication issues' (they were in fact key strategic issues) the issues were further discussed, and the threats and opportunities in communicating them, were analysed. Communication goals and objectives were then identified for the most important strategic issue (see Appendix 6, pages 5-12).

Researcher's comments: Most other groups had considerable problems understanding the construct 'communication issues', and how it was derived from the implications of the strategic issues. Examples will now be provided to illustrate this phenomenon.

⇒ *Trans Oranje School for the Deaf*

The next group whose strategic and communication issue analysis is attached, is Nicor Consultants. Their identification and description of the strategic issues of the School for the Deaf were excellent, although they had the same problem as many others in not phrasing the strategic issues clearly. They could also not identify the communication issues, communication goals (or communication activities) separately, although most of the information needed to do so, was contained in their discussion (see Appendix 7, pages 4-9).

⇒ *Tuks Jool*

In essence, the strategic issues identified by this group were correct, although they were also not stated clearly. Under the heading 'key communication issues' (which was incorrect), they conducted a SWOT analysis and prioritised their key

strategic issues--being *external image, motivation of committees and transformation*. Now followed another discussion of these strategic issues, still not identifying the communication issues, nor the goals/objectives (see Appendix 8, pages 9-13 for researcher's comments and suggestions).

⇒ *Radio Tuks 2*

Under the heading "SLEUTEL KOMMUNIKASIE VRAAGSTUKKE" the group discussed internal and external issues. These were in fact key strategic issues, and not communication issues. Once again most of the information was contained in their discussion, but the students were not able to differentiate between a strategic issue, the implications of the strategic issue, and the resulting communication issue(s). There was a discussion under the heading "KOMMUNIKASIE-IMPLIKASIES" and another for "DOELSTELLINGS EN DOELWITTE") (which were in fact **communication** goals and objectives). The above indicates confusion amongst the students as far as these constructs are concerned (see Appendix 9, pages 7-9).

⇒ *Paul Jungnickel Home*

This group identified their **key strategic issues** in the *macro* environment under headings such as ecological, economic, political, social and technological factors. They also identified key strategic issues in the *micro* environment such as government subsidies, unions, transfer of messages, untrained staff and theft. Under the heading 'key communication issues', the group in fact discussed the implications of the strategic issues, rather than the communication issues. They did not identify communication issues, nor communication goals. Under the heading 'objectives', they identified some organisational and some communication goals in the macro and micro environment, without differentiating between the two (see Appendix 10, pages 4-10).

⇒ *Neobirth Crisis Pregnancy Centre*

Four strategic issues were identified and discussed. The implications of these issues were implicit in the discussion, but not spelled out. A SWOT analysis was then conducted, followed by a heading 'corporate communication strategy'. Under the latter, goals and objectives were set—some were *organisational* goals and objectives, and others *communication* goals and objectives. The group did not (or was not able to) differentiate between the two (see Appendix 11, page 8-14).

Researcher's comments: It is clear from the above analysis (and also from the many hours of consultations that the researcher had with student groups) that the construct 'communication issue' caused confusion amongst student groups, both average as well as top groups. Students were, in most cases, not able to identify the communication issues from the implications of the strategic issues. They therefore also had problems in identifying the communication goals, which is logical since this flows directly from the communication issues.

6.4.3.4 Draft to top management

New Hope School for Specialised Education was one of few groups that included this section. "The proposal thus far, has been presented to Mr J Stapelberg and the governing body of the school. They have agreed with the strategic issues we have identified, as well as the implications thereof."

Researcher's comments: This is exactly why this construct was included on the model, namely to obtain top management buy-in and support.

6.4.3.5 Communication policy

Communication policy, in general, was not as well understood as previous constructs such as the corporate profile and environmental scanning. Some groups ignored the construct, while others did not grasp the model). The *Endangered Wildlife Trust* described communication policy as follows:

“Mission: To conserve the diversity of species in Southern Africa.

Strategy: Initiate and fund projects that make a significant contribution to the maintenance of biodiversity.....

Corporate culture: The Trust has a basic organisation structure from which they work. Normally the structure is very flat and flexible.....

Values and norms: The Trust aims at doing everything in correlation with their mission and goals as ethical as possible.....”

Researcher’s comments: This was the wrong interpretation of the model, possibly caused by students who did not consult the theory provided, but only followed the model. Communication policy basically explains *who may communicate what to whom*.

Another group who made the same mistake as the previous, was *LifeLine*:
“Volgens die Ashridge Mission model kan daar ‘n beleid opgestel word vir LifeLine. Wat die model bespreek is Doelwitte, Waardes, Strategieë en Standaarde en Optrede (Jefkins, Public Relations: 1998). Die beleid word saamgestel uit doelwitte wat voortvloei uit die missie en visie van die organisasie. Na die beleid opgestel is word daar gewerk aan die korporatiewe kultuur, waardes en norme. Die missie, doelwitte en kultuur is alreeds bespreek.”

Researcher’s comments: This group did not seem to understand the essence of communication policy.

On the other hand, the following two examples indicate that these (average) groups seemed to understand the basic concept very well: *“Iyamceda is verbind tot eerlike, deursigtige en kredietwaardige kommunikasie en die bekendmaking van inligting aan die gemeenskap, publiek en donateurs. Alle inligting wat deurgegee word, is tot die uiterste bevoordeling en vervulling van die diverse behoeftes en leemtes in die kindergemeenskap van S.A. Ons wil soveel as moontlik, met soveel as moontlik, publieke en gemeenskappe kommunikeer om ons behoeftes bekend te maak en relevante inligting deur te gee.....”*

“Paul Jungnickelhuis se kommunikasiebeleid kan kortliks saamgevat word as ‘n beleid wat ten alle tye die eerlikheid en opregtheid hoog op prys stel. Daar is vir topbestuur niks belangriker as om met die sleutel publieke eerlik en reguit te wees nie, dit sluit veral ouers en naaste familie van die inwoners in. Vir die Huis is hulle beeld baie belangrik en juis daarom probeer hulle om die positiewe kant bo te hou, maar sal ook die negatiewe na vore laat kom, wanneer nodig.....Die Huis se kommunikasiebeleid skiet egter tekort aan ‘n plan wat tydens krisis tye gevolg kan word. Daar word verwys na die voorval toe ‘n man aan ‘n hartaanval in sy kamer beswyk het. Die verpleegster was teenwoordig tydens die voorval. Skaar drie ure later word gerugte versprei dat die man aan ‘n stuk brood verstik het in die eetsaal. ‘n Voorstel word gemaak dat die bestuur die feit dat van die inwoners verstandelike beperkte vermoëns het, in gedagte moet hou en juis in sulke situasies pro-aktief moet optree om die tipe van gerugte wat versprei word te voorkom. Verder sal ons voorstel dat die topbestuurder alleen in noodgevalle of krisissituasies die kommunikasie hanteer, juis omdat die persoon baie goed met mense kan werk, so ook met die media.”

6.4.3.6 Stakeholder Analysis

In general, the stakeholder analysis was done very well—most groups spent a page or two (if not more) on this construct. Every group seemed to understand what stakeholder analysis is all about. There were only two groups who could be criticised, and that was on the grounds of their analysis being too short/incomplete (in comparison with all the other groups). *Neobirth* did little more than dividing their stakeholders into *external* (government, media, community and donors) as well as *internal* (volunteers, secretaries and receptionists). *Priority publics* was seen to be *firstly* women with unwanted pregnancies that needed counselling, that wanted abortions or just had abortions, and that had nowhere else to go. *Secondly*, individuals who were aware of Neobirth and the importance of such a centre for the community, and were willing to make donations.

Researcher's comments: This was a typical example (referred to earlier by the researcher) of a group that gave the impression of understanding the theory, but who went to the minimum trouble. They seemed to grasp the essence of stakeholder analysis, but no detailed explanation/examples were given nor methods of analysis suggested.

LifeLine was the other group that did not seem to have made an effort on the stakeholder analysis. For a project that earned 68% in total, this was a surprisingly incomplete analysis. One could only speculate that a specific group member was given the responsibility for stakeholder analysis (and for communication policy), since the standard of these two sections were much below the rest. A word for word account of their stakeholder analysis was the following: “*Alle groepe mense wat betrokke is by die organisasie word ontleed en in kategorieë geplaas vir verwysings. Die belangegroepe wat ons gevind het was: Werknemers en vrywilligers, die owerheid wat LifeLine reguleer, donateurs,*

die media waardeur LifeLine homself ontbloom, die teikengroepe wat LifeLine dienste aan verskaf, en LifeLine Internasionaal.”

Having to choose one from the many good examples of stakeholder analysis, proved difficult. *New Hope School for Specialised Education* did an excellent two-page analysis, according to the ‘organisational linkages’ concept. They identified *enabling* linkages with the government and sponsors, *functional* linkages with employees and unions (groups who provide an input), pupils (groups who provide an output) and *normative* linkages with similar institutions. Their strategic stakeholders were identified according to theory--*internally* they were the employees, and *externally* the trade unions, government, media, possible sponsors, parents and children—all these stakeholder groups were described in detail (see Appendix 3, pages 15-17).

Melgisédek Christian Centre did a four-page analysis by, *inter alia*, providing background on the reasons for why their stakeholders were in need of their services. They brought in new theory on the factors and trends which influenced their customers. The *Reach for a Dream Foundation* did a four-page analysis, identifying their priority stakeholders by means of the PVI-index (Potential Vulnerability and Impact). They categorised them nominatively, demographically and psychographically. The group discussed volunteers, Dream Children and their families, donors/sponsors, the media and members of the medical profession (nursing staff, doctors and specialists, social workers and potential volunteers), in detail.

Nicor Consultants were responsible for the following excellent stakeholder analysis of the Trans Oranje School for the Deaf. Firstly they identified the *external* publics:

- ◆ “staat:
 - geografies—distriksrade (N3), onderwysamptenare van Gauteng, nasionale regering

- ◆ borge en skenkers:
 - demografies: sakemanne met gemiddelde tot hoë inkomste potensiaal, persone en ouers met ‘n hoë inkomste potensiaal
 - geografies: besighede in en om Pretoria, groot maatskappye met bekende naam
 - psigografies: maatskappye wat wil bydra tot die gemeenskap, wat bewus is van hul sosiale verantwoordelikhede

- ◆ media
 - geografies: plaaslike koerante soos bv. Rekord en Pretoria News wat gemeenskapsforum bladsye bevat; groter provinsiale koerante soos Beeld om bv. die Opedag daarin te adverteer; televisie, tydskrifte en radio bv. Radio Tuks wat 11.00 in die oggende ‘n gemeenskapsforum het wat skoliere en studente trek; Radio Jakaranda het soms praatjies oor dowes; en Trans Oranje Skool trek volwassenes.

- ◆ kerke
 - geografies: kerke om Trans Oranje Skool, kerke in groter Pretoria.

- ◆ gemeenskap
 - ◇ kinders:
 - demografies: tussen ses en 13 jaar
 - geografies: in skole rondom Trans Oranje Skool en in Pretoria
 - psigografies: maklik leerbaar en toeganklik, dra alles aan ouers oor
 - ◇ jong volwassenes
 - demografies: tussen 14 en 20 jaar
 - geografies: hoërskole, universiteite en teknikons in Pretoria
 - psigografies: kan eie opinies vorm, skep waardestelsel en kan houdings vorm teenoor die dowe
 - ◇ volwassenes
 - demografies: 21 tot 60 jaar
 - geografies: werksaam in en om Pretoria
 - psigografies: self ouers, kan begrip hê vir ouers met ‘n dowe kind
 - ◇ bejaardes
 - demografies: 61 tot 90 jaar
 - geografies: woon in en om Pretoria

- psigografies: *kleinkinders, is baie maklik oorreedbaar, het meer tyd om na iemand te luister en kan empatie hê*
- ◆ *dowe gemeenskap*
 - demografies: *alle ouderdomme*
 - geografies: *in en om Pretoria*
 - psigografies: *is self doof, kan dus die dowe leerder se situasie verstaan en kan empatie hê met daardie persoon*
- ◆ *arbeidsmark*
 - demografies: *alle gegradueerdes en sakemanne van besighede (groot en klein)*
 - geografies: *in en om Pretoria werksaam*
 - psigografies: *moontlik bereid om dowe persoon in diens te neem en om finansiële ondersteuning te bied aan Trans Oranje Skool*
- ◆ *Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie*
- ◆ *hospitale en klinieke*
 - geografies: *in en om Pretoria*

The same detailed analysis was also conducted to identify *internal* publics (pupils, teachers, family and friends), as well as for publics in the *task* environment such as other schools for the deaf, alumni of the Trans Oranje Skool, and DEAFSA (Deaf Federation of SA).

Researcher's comments: The students applied a marketing segmentation technique, which was relevant and well done--a lot of thought went into the analysis.

6.4.3.7 Media analysis

In general, the media analysis was sufficient—but not as well done as the stakeholder analysis. Some groups ignored the construct, while others such as the *High School Birchleigh*, did only the minimum:

- “*Intern: Omsendbriewe, vergaderings en inligtingsaande;*
- *Ekstern: Persverklarings, omsendbriewe, nuusbriewe, oueraande/ massavergaderings, email/fakse vir regering en vakbonde.*”

The *Paul Jungnickel Home* also expended little effort: “*Binne die organisasie word daar van die volgende media’s gebruik gemaak: ‘n Interkomstelsel wat die hoofgebou en woonareas verbind. Dit sluit in die eetsaal, werkswinkel, gange en buitekant. Hierdie luidsprekers is nie baie duidelik nie en ‘n deel van die boodskap gaan verlore. Daar is ‘n inligtingsbord binne die eetsaal. Telefone, ‘n faksmasjien en selfone word ook gebruik, asook 10 rekenaars wat nie regtig aan hul behoeftes voldoen nie. Daar word veral gebruik gemaak van ‘n riermtelegram.*”

One of the many groups who did a reasonable analysis of the media, was *Tuks Jool*. Their *internal* analysis identified the post box of each member of a Rag committee as a medium, as well as bulletin boards. *Externally* the strategic stakeholders were the donors—an in-depth description was given of the procedures involved in contacting and managing donors, i.e. the use of telephone, fax and letter. The quarterly newsletter ‘Die Joler’, as well as a bi-annual publication ‘Die Joolnuus’ was mentioned. Rag representatives of each residence/house was said to communicate rag news interpersonally. The mass media identified were *inter alia* the publication ‘Die Joolblad’ (general public); a Website (national and international communication); as well as Radio Tuks. Specialised media were seen to be the notices sent to houses and businesses in the vicinity to apologise for the noise during Rag Week; the faxes sent to donors to keep them up to date on happenings; and the letters sent to receivers of Rag funding to inform them about payments made.

An excellent media analysis was done by *Reach for a Dream Foundation*, who discussed controlled media (print, audio-visual, interpersonal, folk/oramedia) as well as uncontrolled communication. The *Endangered Wildlife Trust* also did well with the following:

Figure 6.5: ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST MEDIA ANALYSIS

MAINSTREAM	SPECIALITY	OWN	INTER-PERSONAL
Current Media			
1. Business Day 'After Hours	1. Keeping Track	1. Endangered Wildlife	1. Gyps Snips
2. The Star	2. Radio Safari	2. A Vision	2. Talon Talk
3. Mail & Guardian	3. 50/50	3. Wildlife College Prospectus	3. Newsletter from groups
4. Sunday Times	4. Die Boer/ The Farmer	4. Pamphlets	4. Meetings
5. The Sowetan	5. www.wildnetafrica.co.za	5. Info booklet—Eagles and farmers	5. email
6. Sawubona/ Sunday Independent		6. Internet http://www.ewt.org.za	
7. Saturday Star		7. Videos	
8. 702			
9. Highveld Stereo			
10. Classic FM			
11. City Press			
Potential Media			
1. Beeld	1. Panorama		
2. Die Rapport	2. National Geographic		
3. Huisgenoot	3. Custos		
4. Radio Jakaranda	4. Landbou Weekblad		
5. Radio Tuks			
6. Radio Oranje			
7. KFM			
8. Radio Sonder Grense (RSG)			

6.4.3.8 Management liaison

CBC Old Boys was one of the few groups who included this section: “*Management liaison involves the different channels of communication which exists between members, employees, professional coaches and management. Within the CBC Old Boys Club a number of different managers are consulted regarding certain issues.*” Now followed detailed communication channels for how certain matters were brought to the attention of certain managers, e.g. “*Replacement and repair of sports equipment are brought to the attention of the various managers of their respective sports by the captains or coaches of Bowls, Cricket, Soccer, Hockey, squash, Marathon*” etc.

Researcher’s comments: This was not what was required. The idea was rather to discuss the development of the corporate communication strategy with top management, to obtain their opinions, further suggestions and support.

Endangered Wildlife Trust also included this construct: “*We had a meeting with the management of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and we had discussions about the project and what it entails. They gave us their full consent to do the project for their organisation.*”

Researcher’s comments: This could be seen as the first step in the liaison with management, but should not have been the only.

The *LifeLine* group saw the following reasons for management liaison:

- *“Kommunikasie is ‘n fundamentele komponent van bestuur;*
- *Bystand en ondersteuning van topbestuur is noodsaaklik dat die kommunikasieplan moet slaag;*
- *Bestuurders is die sleutel tot sukses;*

- *Gereelde evaluasie moet plaasvind om effektiwiteit te verseker.*

Kommunikasiekanale wat werknemers kan gebruik om met die bestuur te liaison, sluit in interpersoonlike kommunikasie, groepvergaderings of byeenkomste en persoonlike kommunikasie." LifeLine seemed to have a better idea of what was required in this section.

However, the best example came from *Sungardens Hospice 2*, who described in one full page the three meetings they had with the management team. The first meeting was to introduce themselves and explain the project. During the second and third meetings, a questionnaire was presented to obtain information from several people, and documentation was provided to the group.

6.4.3.9 Communication programmes

Even before the evaluation of the model, while the theory was still being lectured, the researcher discussed the model with her colleagues. All were in agreement that communication programmes should be the last construct on the model, together with communication plans/campaigns. Programming takes place at the implementation level and is not part of the strategy. The constructs communication plans/campaigns were in fact only shown on this model to give students an indication of where they fitted in, but is not considered an integral part of the corporate communication *strategy* model.

Students were therefore advised in class that the construct 'programmes' should move right down, as the last construct on the strategy model. Communication plans/campaigns/programmes will not form part of this discussion, although some students did discuss programmes on their reports.

6.4.3.10 Conclusion

The aim of Stage 3 was to assess the projects, give examples of where students did or did not understand the constructs, by comparing them with one another.

Based on the assessment, it is the opinion of the researcher that the following constructs on the model were understood well by student groups:

- the corporate profile (including the vision, mission and corporate culture);
- environmental scanning (in the macro, task and micro environment);
- the identification of strategic issues;
- stakeholder analysis.

Some groups experienced relatively minor problems with communication policy and media analysis.

Almost all the groups experienced problems with the following:

- phrasing a strategic issue correctly;
- identification of the implications of strategic issues;
- setting corporate goals and objectives;
- identifying communication issues from the implications of strategic issues;
- deriving communication goals and objectives from communication issues.

Most groups did not address the following constructs:

- draft to top management;
- management liaison.

Groups were told in class that they did not need to address the constructs 'communication programmes/plans/campaigns' as part of the corporate communication strategy model. The constructs actually formed part of the communication plan, but were included on the strategy model to provide an indication of where they fitted in.

In Stage 4, the model and theory will be evaluated, based on the assessment of the group projects.

To end this section on the assessment of the group projects, it was thought fitting to include the following:

Figure 6.6: PREFACE TO GROUP 5's PROJECT

THE IYAMCEDA CHILD WELFARE ORGANISATION

When we approached "IYAMCEDA" (as a not-for-profit child welfare organisation) to develop a communication strategy and plan for them, we saw it as just another practical project that had to be done in order to obtain our degree!

How our views have changed after studying the institution's activities and projects. Observing the absolute commitment of the volunteers at close range, seeing how they gave of themselves and their time to improve life for others, it also became vitally important to us to assist IYAMCEDA through an improved communication approach (which included a communication strategy and plans), to achieve their goals, vision and mission.

We quickly realised that if IYAMCEDA applied this strategy and resulting plans that we developed for them, they will be able to improve communication and build lasting relationships with churches, the general public, communities and other welfare organisations. They will be better equipped to communicate important needs and inform stakeholders about planned activities, thereby receiving support and successful implementation of plans.

If IYAMCEDA can succeed in this, they will have fulfilled their mission--"Improved child welfare and care for the children of South Africa" will have become a reality!

(The above preface to Group 5's IYAMCEDA project was translated by Benita Steyn from Afrikaans.)

6.5 EVALUATION OF MODEL 1: STAGE 4

STAGE 4: A further period of research (of an evaluative nature) is initiated (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

In December 1998, the results of the individual assessment and comparison of projects (completed during Stage 3), were analysed. The aim of Stage 4 was to try and find explanations for common problem areas in the student group projects—looking for flaws in the model (e.g. misleading information that appeared on the model itself) or identifying insufficient/incorrect theoretical explanations provided to students in the 1998 Class Notes (together with the model).

6.5.1 CORPORATE PROFILE

This construct seems to have been well understood by the students. The theory in the class notes also seems to have been sufficient and well understood—it will therefore be included unchanged in the next year's class notes.

6.5.1.1 Vision and mission

Except for the fact that some groups could not differentiate between a vision and a mission, or changed the meaning of these two constructs around, no other problems were evident. More theory will be added to the class notes on both these constructs in an effort to clarify the difference between vision and mission. Examples will also be provided in class.

In order to prevent confusion, the researcher studied the theory on vision and mission in the third year Business Management text book to ascertain whether the theory provided in the Communication Management class notes were in accordance with this subject—this was found to be the case.

6.5.1.2 Corporate culture

Few problems were experienced by the students concerning the construct corporate culture. The theory provided seems to have been sufficient to explain the meaning of the construct.

6.5.1.3 Student contributions

Some group projects were creative, adding more information than was requested. A few described the values and the corporate philosophy of their non-profit organisations. Theory on these two constructs will be added to the 1999 Class Notes under 'corporate profile'.

6.5.2 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Under this heading, most student groups did an excellent environmental scan, identifying issues in the macro, task and internal environment. Many also did a SWOT analysis here, summarising the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities/threats that were identified by the environmental scan.

Lecturer's contribution: While preparing for the theoretical lecture on this aspect of the model, the researcher/lecturer came upon theory explaining the different levels of strategy--enterprise, corporate, business, functional and operational level (Digman 1990). This theory will be added to the 1999 Class Notes--since it is an important distinction that will assist students in understanding where corporate communication strategy, as a functional organisational strategy, fits into the picture.

Two other sources consulted by the researcher (Robert 1997; and Mintzberg 1994) pointed to the fact that 'corporate strategy' and 'corporate strategic plan' were different concepts. Since the 1998 Class Notes equated corporate strategy with the organisation's strategic plan, the relevant theory will be changed accordingly. Theory will also be added to explain the strategic management process (strategic thinking, strategic planning and implementation) in more detail, as well as the concept of strategy.

Based on the above, the model will be changed as follows:

- Enterprise and corporate strategy will be added to the corporate profile.
- The construct 'corporate profile' will be changed to 'internal environment', which now has a much broader scope.
- The construct 'corporate strategic plan' will no longer appear on the model (what was in effect described by the students under this heading was the construct 'environmental scanning').
- Since scanning is conducted in order to identify the key strategic issues, 'environmental scanning' will be placed under the construct 'key strategic issues'.

6.5.3 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

Students did fairly well in identifying and prioritising key strategic issues—they also had no problem in differentiating between internal and external issues. A problem they did experience was in *phrasing* these issues so that the problem/opportunity became evident. Attention will be given to explaining this during lectures, and exercises will be given during practical periods.

Students had problems in phrasing the ‘implications of each strategic issue’. Since this emerged as a key construct during the assessment stage, it will be emphasised by making it a separate heading on the model.

Based on the assessment of the group projects, the construct ‘organisational goals and objectives’ will be removed from the model. Since it seems preferable to derive communication goals directly from the communication issues, it is superfluous to identify organisational goals and objectives as well—it only leads to confusion.

The researcher noted that some groups only identified *communication* issues in their projects, and no *organisational* issues. Since chief executives saw their corporate communication managers/practitioners as only setting and achieving *communication* goals, and no *organisational* goals (see Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem), it appears imperative that a construct be added to the model to obligate students to also identify organisational issues (from which communication goals will be derived).

It is suggested that the construct ‘key strategic issues’ be adapted as follows on the model:

- The construct macro/task/micro environment will be moved from 'corporate strategic plan' to environmental scanning/issues tracking, and further be broadened by adding PESTE. This is an acronym for political, economic, social, technological and ecological environment—many students described their scanning in terms of these macro environmental factors that impact the organisation.
- The 'implications of the strategic issue' will be moved to become a separate heading on the model.
- The construct SWOT analysis will be moved from where it is placed under 'key communication issues' on the model to this heading.
- Organisational and communication issues (as strategic issues) will be differentiated on the model.

Theory will be added to the class notes to explain the following constructs:

- the difference between 'issue' and 'strategic issue';
- environmental scanning and issues tracking;
- the different types of issues/strategic issues.

6.5.4 KEY COMMUNICATION ISSUES

This was the construct on the model which created the biggest problem for student groups. Upon studying the model and the theory upon it was based (provided to students in their class notes), it was evident to the researcher why this occurred. Reasons were the following:

- Communication issues should flow from the implications of strategic issues. However, inspection of the class notes showed that there was in effect no theory to explain *exactly how* communication issues are to be derived from strategic issues.

- The only reference to the determination of communication issues was “*opportunities and risks of communicating each strategic issue is determined and the communication strategy derived from it*”. However, as seen during the assessment stage, this did not always lead to the same, nor the correct, communication goals.
- The constructs mentioned under this heading as obtained from the initial literature study--namely environmental scanning/ research/ interviews with functional manager/ SWOT analysis/ communication audit were not helpful in determining communication issues, and should be eliminated.
- The model seems to be presenting *two options* for arriving at communication goals:
 - The first option is to follow the construct ‘**key strategic issues**’ on the model: namely to identify key strategic issues (internal and external), as well as their **implications**--then to prioritise the issues and **identify organisational goals**. This is indeed what some students had done. However, once having arrived at this point, nothing remains but to derive *communication* goals directly from the organisational goals (i.e. to **skip the next construct ‘key communication issues’**). If one is already at the (organisational) goals stage, it is too late to put oneself in the stakeholders’ shoes to find out how they are feeling and what the problem is that should be communicated about—i.e. to arrive at the communication issues. At this stage the goals have already been decided upon by top management or other managers and they only remain to be communicated.

This is probably the closest to the way it has been working in practice, namely that top management decides on issues and goals, and the communication function does no more than to communicate it (i.e. no strategic contribution is made). If this is indeed what is happening in practice, it might provide some explanation for the feelings/ opinions/ expectations of stakeholders being ignored—for organisations not

practising two-way symmetrical communication, but rather two-way asymmetrical communication (persuasion).

- The second option is to follow the elements of the construct '**key strategic issues**' on the model: namely to identify key strategic issues (internal and external), as well as their implications--then to prioritise the issues. However, to *skip* the organisational goals and go directly to the construct '**key communication issues**'. The latter is identified by considering the **implications of the strategic issues on the stakeholders**, i.e. by identifying what the issue is that should be communicated about--this is the key **communication issue**.
- The construct 'communication issues' is right at the centre of the above dilemma. A few groups followed the first option, a few the second option—but most (even some top groups) were caught in the middle by trying a combination of the two, which led to general confusion. In light of the assessment of the student projects (and the researcher's comments during Stage 3); the interviews conducted with student groups; and comments/questions by students during lecturing the researcher has decided that the second option provides the more correct (and also the easiest) way to determine 'communication issues'.

It is imperative that theory be added to the 1999 class notes to explain the identification of communication issues, as spelled out above. The model will be modified as follows:

- the opportunities/risks of communicating each issue will be eliminated;
- environmental scanning/ research/ interviews with functional managers/ SWOT analysis/ communication audit will be eliminated;
- the implications of the strategic issues will be moved to become a separate heading on the model and be equated to *being* the 'communication issues'. (Whatever effect the strategic issue has *on the stakeholder*, that is what should be communicated about.)

- the different types of communication issues will be explained.
- communication issues will be moved to a separate heading.

6.5.5 COMMUNICATION POLICY

Some students could not differentiate between corporate policy and communication policy. Inspection of the theory indicated that 'corporate policy' was explained as an introduction to communication policy. It will be removed and placed under a separate heading in the class notes (as part of the corporate profile--following vision/ mission/ corporate culture. It will also be explained in more detail. The remaining theory (only on communication policy) should now be more clear.

The terms mission/ strategy/ corporate culture/ values/ norms which appears under the construct 'communication policy', will be eliminated from the model.

6.5.6 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Students did very well on their stakeholder analysis. The theory provided was extensive and might have assisted in this regard. One change that will be made to the model—following students' suggestions during a class discussion—is to move this construct towards the beginning of the model, right after the corporate profile. Strategic issues and their implications on the stakeholders cannot, or should not, be identified before a stakeholder map for the organisation has been drawn up (and any other techniques for identifying strategic stakeholders have been used, e.g. organisational linkages).

6.5.7 MEDIA ANALYSIS

Students in general seemed to understand the concept, although an *in-depth* media analysis was conducted by few. Groups also seemed to concentrate on the mass media, ignoring other types of media which might be more appropriate for non-profit organisations considering their financial constraints.

In the 1998 Class Notes, no theory on this construct was provided in the research paper that was prescribed as the core source for this part of the curriculum. The reason was that students were to study media relations right after the module on 'corporate communication strategy', in time to assist them in doing their projects. However, it seems necessary from the assessment of the projects that theory should be added to this section. An *overall* media analysis is considered as being important in the strategy formulation process of the corporate communication function, of which the outcome is corporate communication strategy.

The different types of media will be added to the model, as an indication to students that they should consider other than the mass media as well.

6.5.8 COMMUNICATION PROGRAMMES/PLANS/CAMPAIGNS

As explained in Stage 3, this construct was placed on the model to indicate the planning phase of corporate communication (which started directly after this section with theory and a model for developing a communication plan), as opposed to the strategy phase.

In order to make this more clear, the model will be changed as follows:

- A new construct 'develop a strategic communication plan' will be added as the last construct on the model, incorporating communication programmes/ plans/ campaigns. (The theory will remain unchanged).

In the following section, the improved model will be presented.

6.6 THE IMPROVED MODEL: STAGE 5

STAGE 5: Depending upon the results of the research, it may be necessary to develop or completely redesign the original action undertaken (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

Earlier in the study, the following guiding hypothesis was documented (set in Chapter 1 of the study):

Guiding hypothesis 3

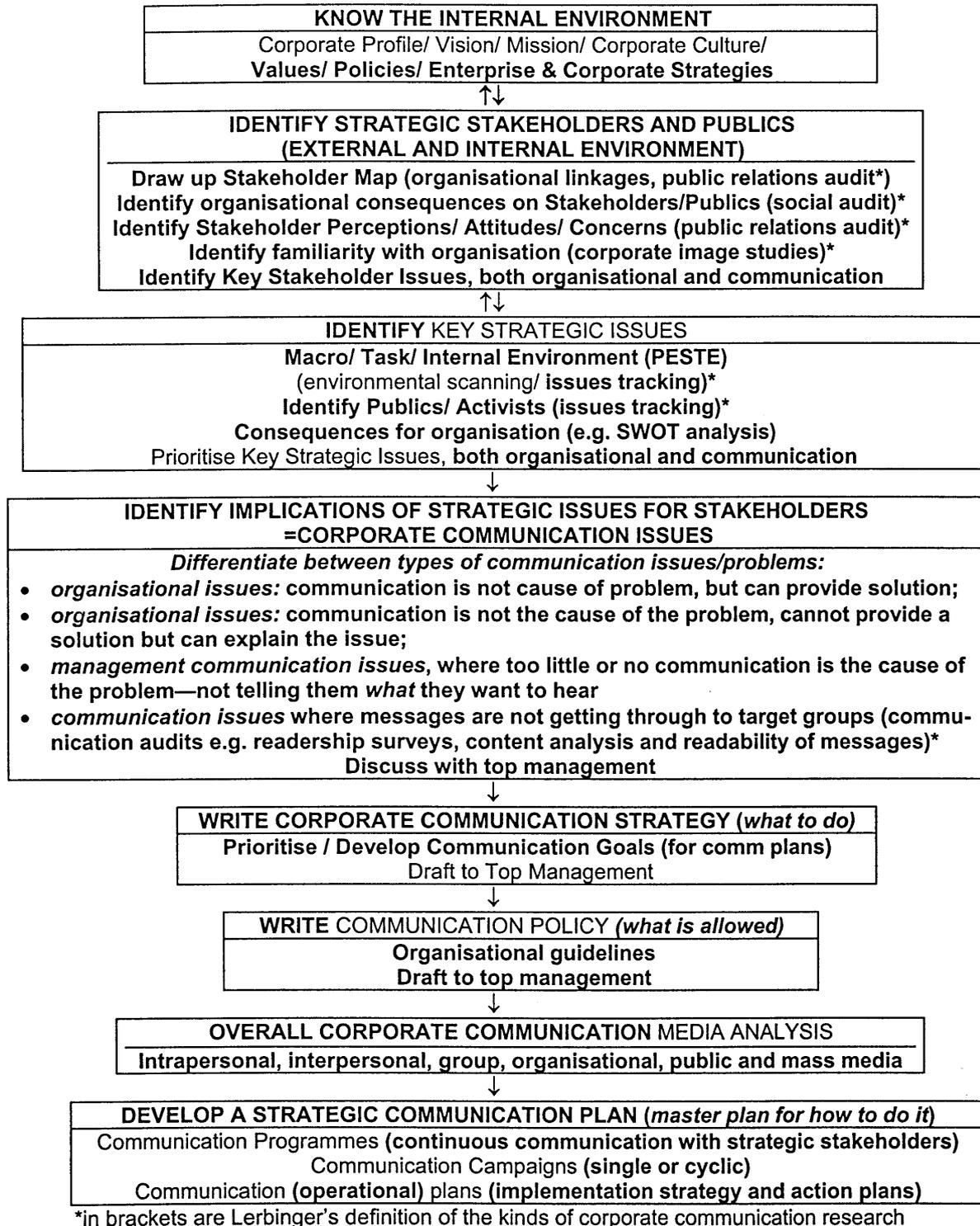
A model is a suitable tool to satisfactorily explain the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Based on the findings of the literature analysis and the guiding hypothesis presented above, the researcher revised Model 1 (see Fig. 6.2, discussed under section 6.2.13). Model 2 was hypothesised as a (new) framework for developing a corporate communication strategy. The following hypothesis is stated to replace Hypothesis 12:

Hypothesis 13: Model 2 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Model 2 can be viewed on the next page (Figure 6.7). New constructs/changes are indicated on the model in **boldface**. These changes resulted from the common problem areas pinpointed in the first cycle during assessment (Stage 3) and evaluation (Stage 4). Model 2 will be included in the 1999 Class Notes, together with the greatly extended theoretical background. The latter will be documented in Stage 1 of Cycle Two of the action research project. Hypothesis 13 is to be empirically tested in stages two to five of Cycle Two.

Figure 6.7: MODEL 2—DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



CYCLE TWO OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

6.7 THE LITERATURE STUDY: STAGE 1

STAGE 1: Implementation begins with a period of research where the resources and needs of a community are systematically assessed and the necessary information to guide action is gathered (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

In the second cycle, the '*community*' no longer refers to corporate communication practitioners/non-profit organisations and their need for a model to provide guidelines (as in Cycle 1: Stage 1), but to third-year corporate communication students and their information needs as far as understanding the model is concerned.

Prompted by the common problems that student groups experienced with the model's constructs (mainly caused by insufficient theoretical explanations), the researcher conducted a further literature investigation in January 1999. This had now become important, after a decision was taken by the Department of Marketing and Communication Management during a strategic thinking session to institute a new module at the third year level, called Strategic Communication Management. Whereas the hypothesised model for developing corporate communication strategy and the research paper on which it was based constituted only the *practical assignment* of third year corporate communication students during 1998 (executed as part of an action research project), it was now to become the *core* of the new seven-week third year module.

This was an exciting outcome of Cycle 1 of the action research project—however, the biggest problem was the fact that there were no suitable text books

to form the basis of this course. In an international evaluation of the corporate communication courses in the Department of Marketing and Communication Management, Prof Larissa Grunig of the University of Maryland, USA confirmed this by saying: *"The study guide for KOB 361 suggests one of the most challenging courses for undergraduates...I agree that no suitable text exists for teaching this class. We, too, rely on selected readings and our own research"* (L Grunig 2000). The researcher was therefore given the task of putting together Class Notes for the new course in Strategic Communication Management, as she was also to lecture it in 1999 (in addition to carrying the responsibility for the practical project, as during 1998). The syllabus for this course was the following:

Figure 6.8: 1999 SYLLABUS -- STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

	<p><i>THEME 1: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Unit 1.1: The strategic management process • Study Unit 1.2: Strategy • Study Unit 1.3: Corporate communication strategy • Study Unit 1.4: The communication plan
	<p><i>THEME 2: COMMUNICATION RESEARCH</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Unit 2.1: The basics of research • Study Unit 2.2: Environmental scanning
	<p><i>THEME 3: STAKEHOLDERS, PUBLICS, ACTIVISTS AND ISSUES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Unit 3.1: Stakeholder management • Study Unit 3.2: Publics and activists • Study Unit 3.3: Issues management

Study Unit 1.1: The strategic management process

The 1999 Class Notes for Study Unit 1.1 consisted of information contained in Chapter 3 of this study. For brevity's sake, it will not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that, as background to understanding the model (based on the theoretical needs identified by the evaluation in Stage 4), information was provided to students on the strategic management process--*strategic decision making, strategic thinking, strategic planning and implementation*, the different *levels* of strategic management, and *middle management's role in strategy formulation*. (In order to understand the action research process, it is important to note that this information *first* formed part of the 1999 Class Notes, i.e. of the action research project. Thereafter, Chapter 3 and 4 of this study was written *from* the 1999 Class Notes).

Study Unit 1.2: Strategy

The Class Notes for Study Unit 1.2 consisted of information contained in Chapter 4 of this study. Once again, it will not be repeated here. As background to understanding the model, information was provided to students on the concept *strategy*, and *the role of the corporate communication manager* in the organisation's strategy formulation process. The concepts *environment* and *boundary spanning* were also introduced, as described in Chapter 3 of this study.

However, what will be documented here as it is not described elsewhere in this study, is the theoretical explanation added to the initial literature study—and therefore to the 1999 Class Notes--under the heading **STARTING POINT FOR DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**. This was a direct result of the assessment and evaluation stages of Cycle 1.

6.7.1 VISION

A vision is the *big organisational picture* that must be lived every day by each individual organisational member. It communicates that which makes the organisation special and unique, and sets it apart from the competition.

6.7.2 MISSION

The starting point in formulating an organisation's strategy is its mission or purpose—the definition of the organisation's role in society and the economy. The mission flows from the values of stakeholders, the people and groups with an interest in the organisation, including the public and the government (Digman 1990:49).

6.7.3 CORPORATE VALUES

Corporate values are sets of real beliefs that determine standards of practice (teamwork, customer service, respect for the individual, etc.). The commitment and energy of organisational members are fuelled by the values that drive the organisation.

Defining an organisation's values in the mission statement helps to face issues squarely and to make policy decisions. These values serve as a code of ethics for operating the business and as criteria against which organisational members can test future decisions. It ensures that there are no significant differences between internal and external messages (Askew 1997).

6.7.4 CORPORATE PHILOSOPHY

The organisation's philosophy is an orientation that lies behind the mission statement. Philosophy, according to the American Heritage dictionary, is "a *system of motivating concepts and principles, a viewpoint*" (Kendall 1992:169-170). Corporate philosophies and culture are derived from the corporate values. They are guiding principles that drive organisational behaviour--guiding principles for employee involvement, empowerment, customer service, quality control, continuous change and improvement, community involvement, etc.

6.7.5 CORPORATE CULTURE

An organisation's culture is similar to an individual's personality—an intangible theme that provides meaning, direction, and the basis for action. In much the same way as a personality influences the behaviour of the individual, the shared assumptions (beliefs and values) among an organisation's members influence opinions and actions within the organisation (Pearce & Robinson 1997:356).

6.7.6 CORPORATE POLICIES

Researcher's comments: Previously this was the introduction to communication policy. Since this created some confusion amongst students, it was moved to this section, together with the other strategic management concepts. The last paragraph was added to differentiate corporate policy from procedures and rules.

Most companies develop a series of guidelines called 'policies' as an expression of their strategies (Bittel 1989:78). Policies are guiding principles for behaviour that furnish an underlying and continuing basis for specific actions. They define philosophy, provide direction and establish guidelines. However, policies should

allow some alternatives for a particular situation. They should not be too detailed and rigid, since that would limit the flexibility of an organisation.

Organisational policies constitute a practical day-to-day set of rules for conducting business, in contrast to the longer scope of the philosophy, mission, goals and objectives continuum. Policies may be formalised statements, or exist as conventional understandings.

The policy is a standing plan that provides managers with general guidelines for making decisions. Its main purpose is to assure consistency among the organisation's managers and to avoid having to make the same decision over and over again (Bittel 1989:78). These broad guidelines for decision making permit management to delegate authority--it is the parameters within which planning is carried out, and will necessarily reflect company and/or government policy.

Policies are different from procedures and rules:

- *procedures* are specific series of tasks to be followed in performing work or accomplishing an activity, e.g. how a budget is to be completed, when it is to be submitted and how it will be reviewed. Procedures are therefore detailed steps to carry out policies.
- *rules* are specific requirements that often relate to employee conduct, for example 'no smoking in office building'. Rules are most specific and detailed, and deviations from rules are not allowed.

Study Unit 1.3: Corporate communication strategy

Under this heading, there were major changes/additions to the theory that accompanied Model 2, as compared to the initial literature study in Cycle 1.

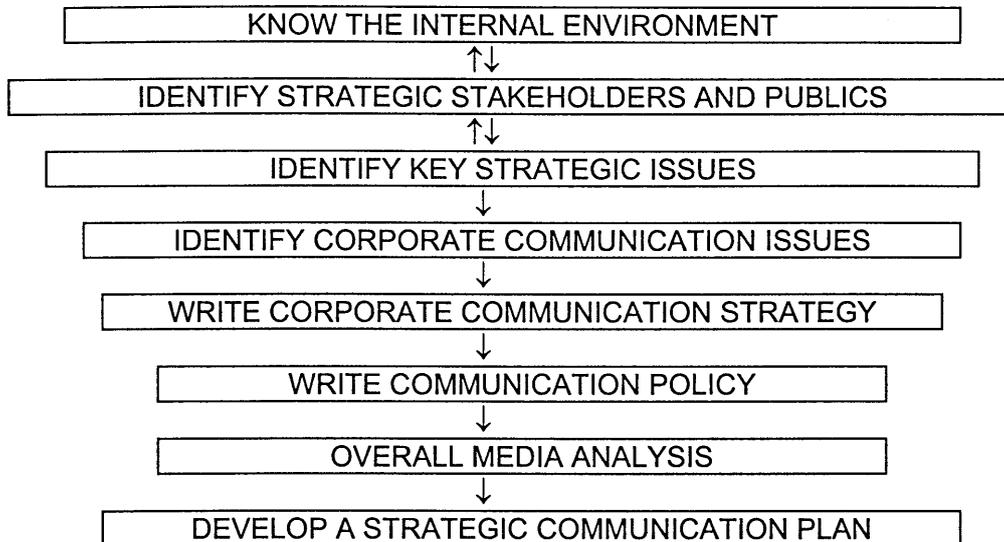
6.7.7 STEPS IN FORMULATING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

As in the strategic management process, the corporate communication management team needs to formulate corporate communication strategy by means of a *thinking* process. They need to take the whole picture into account and think through the qualitative aspects of the business and the environment it faces, before starting the communication *planning* process. Communication strategy establishes a framework or profile against which ongoing decisions are tested--it reviews and questions the direction taken by the corporate communication function. It produces a profile that can be used to identify the right problems to solve and to prioritise areas/issues for which communication plans/programmes are developed.

The corporate communication strategy is the framework for the strategic communication plan and the operational communication plans/programmes—it attempts to determine **what the corporate communication function should be doing** in support of the enterprise and corporate strategies. The strategic and operational communication planning is the type of thinking that helps to choose *how* to get there. This is done under leadership and supervision of the corporate communication *manager*, but executed or implemented by corporate communication *technicians*.

The corporate communication strategy should essentially reflect or mirror the enterprise/corporate strategy. Strategy formulation and strategic planning in the organisation is therefore a prerequisite for developing a sound corporate communication strategy because it **provides focus and direction to the communication** and creates synergy between the corporate strategy and the communication strategy. In supporting the corporate and enterprise strategy, the corporate communication function becomes relevant to the organisation and responsive to its needs – thereby contributing to organisational effectiveness.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (FUNCTIONAL STRATEGY)



MODEL 2 WAS SITUATED IN THIS LOCATION IN THE 1999 CLASS NOTES

After the graphic presentation of the model, a discussion of each major step followed.

Know the internal environment
Corporate Profile/ Vision/ Mission/ Corporate Culture/ Values/ Policies Enterprise / Corporate Strategies

To make communication relevant in the organisation's strategy formulation process, the corporate communication manager should be intimately familiar with the organisation's internal environment, before developing the corporate communication strategy. (Please refer to study themes 1 and 2, where the above-mentioned concepts were explained in detail).

Identify strategic stakeholders and publics (external and internal environment)
Draw up Stakeholder Map (organisational linkages, public relations audit) Identify organisational consequences on Stakeholders and Publics (social audit) Identify Stakeholder Perceptions/ Attitudes/ Concerns (public relations audit) Identify familiarity with organisation (corporate image studies) Identify Key Stakeholder Issues (organisational and communication)

This step was explained in much the same way as in the initial literature study in Cycle One (which was quite comprehensive), and will not be repeated here.

Identify key strategic issues
Macro/ Task/ Internal Environment (PESTE) (environmental scanning/ issues tracking) Identify Publics/ Activists/ Shadow Constituencies (issues tracking) Consequences for organisation (SWOT analysis) Prioritise Key Strategic Issues (organisational and communication)

In study unit 1.2, strategy formulation was seen to concern the relationship of an organisation to its environment. **Strategy is determined by first identifying key strategic (major) issues which are of critical importance for achieving the corporate vision and mission**, and turn this into a source of intelligence for top management. Being part of the team that identifies the key strategic issues facing the organisation, is part of the strategic role of the corporate communication manager. It is here that the strategic link between corporate strategy and the communication function is made.

These strategic issues could be anything from a new competitive strategy necessitating fundamental changes in attitudes and behaviour to restructuring, downsizing, cost improvement, the acquisition of new businesses, or important shifts in the external environment such as technological innovations, social trends, new legislation, development of activist groups, etc.

Strategic issues are identified by doing environmental analysis and issues tracking, incorporating the effects of environmental changes into corporate

decision making, and formulating new strategies (i.e. deciding *what* to do). Issue identification should be executed in the organisation's macro, task and micro environment to be really effective in the identification of problems and issues.

Identify implications of strategic issues for stakeholders = corporate communication issues
Differentiate between types of issues:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>organisational issues</i>--communication is not the cause of the problem, but can provide a solution; • <i>organisational issues</i>--communication is not the cause of the problem, cannot provide a solution, but can explain the issue; • <i>management communication issues</i>—caused by too little or no communication--not telling employees <i>what</i> they want to hear about; • <i>communication issues</i>—messages aren't getting through to target groups—<i>how</i> it is packaged is wrong (communication audits e.g. readership surveys, content analysis and readability of messages)
Discuss with top management

In arriving at corporate communication issues for which communication programmes/plans should be developed, the **implications that key strategic issues** have for strategic stakeholders and publics must first be analysed.

In order to do this, communication practitioners need to understand the business issues that the organisation faces, and be expert in **using communication to help remove barriers to success**. Rather than trying to get communication further up senior management's agenda, the communication manager should be **linking communication with what is already at the top of that agenda**. Top management is interested in their business problems, not in communication problems. They are more interested in solving their own operational problems and may not readily see the connection between communication and their problems—especially when they are measured not on the levels of their communication but on attaining key goals. Communicators need to connect communication to that which should be changed and provide it as a solution to

top management in achieving their business goals (Quirke 1996). These changes to be made can include the organisation's behaviour when it has negative consequences for the organisation's internal and external stakeholders.

Communication is but a means to an end, and that end is helping managers to improve business processes, and the performance of people in those processes. A communication strategy should support the business strategy, and should help an organisation compete more effectively. By talking in terms only of communication processes without identifying the underlying business problem, communicators risk imposing inappropriate solutions (Quirke 1996).

Many communication professionals and/or members of top management blame communication for failing to reach communication goals when other factors should be blamed. Even more problematic is seeking communication solutions when they are not adequate. It is therefore imperative to identify whether a problem can be solved by communication efforts alone, by communication in conjunction with other measures or by other measures only.

In differentiating between the types of communication issues/problems, attention must be paid to the following:

- ***organisational issues*** where communication is not the cause of the problem, but can provide a solution (e.g. transformation or affirmative action);
- ***organisational issues*** where communication is not the cause of the problem, cannot provide a solution, but can explain the problem (e.g. budget cuts).
- ***management communication*** issues, where not enough or no communication with employees is the cause of the problem (not telling them *what* they want to hear e.g. where the organisation is heading, or giving them the information they need to do their jobs);

- **communication issues** where messages are not getting through to the stakeholders, since the way in which messages are packaged are incorrect (using wrong channels, using difficult language, etc.).

In order to set impact objectives for communication programmes/plans and campaigns, it is important to **find the real cause of the problem**, and not address symptoms. This necessitates an analytical process where the communication practitioner must think through the problem, before deciding on communication action.

This is not a simple process. According to Mintzberg (1987), the real challenge in crafting communication strategy lies in

"detecting the subtle discontinuities that may undermine a business in the future. And for that, there is no technique, no program, just a sharp mind in touch with the organisation's stakeholders and issues. Such discontinuities are unexpected and irregular, essentially unprecedented. They can be dealt with only by minds that are attuned to existing patterns yet able to perceive important breaks in them".

<p>Write corporate communication strategy (what to do)</p>
<p>Prioritise Issues Develop Communication Goals Draft to Top Management</p>

A corporate communication *strategy* indicates the direction that an organisation needs to take with regard to its stakeholders/publics. It determines in broad terms what needs to be done to create a competitive position with regard to stakeholders, that is compatible with overall enterprise/corporate strategy.

This direction is obtained from the **strategic issues and their implications for strategic stakeholders, which form the corporate communication issues** to be addressed by the corporate communication function.

In order to write the corporate communication strategy, **these corporate communication issues must be prioritised and communication goals be developed that would solve organisational and communication problems.** This is the corporate communication strategy, the basis for all activities, the logic behind the communication programmes/plans/campaigns to be developed by communication technicians.

Write communication policy (<i>what is allowed</i>)
Organisational guidelines for communication with stakeholders based on the mission/ corporate strategy/ corporate culture/ values Draft to top management

The theory for communication policy has already been documented in Cycle One, and will not be repeated here.

Overall communication media analysis

The purpose of the overall media analysis is to investigate the different communication media available that might be suitable for the specific organisation and its stakeholders. Broad guidelines as to the different kinds of media that might be considered are provided at the end of this study unit. This includes intrapersonal and interpersonal media, group or organisational media, public or mass media channels. More unknown types of media such as folk media, private media, etc. are also explained.

Researcher's comments: The guidelines were extracted from Rensburg (*in* Lubbe & Puth 1994). It inter alia included the following:

- controlled and uncontrolled communication;
- internal organisational communication media (print, audiovisual, interpersonal);
- mass communication media (press, broadcast media, public and trade exhibitions);
- private created and folk/oramedia.

<p>DEVELOP A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN <i>(master plan for how to do it)</i></p>
<p>Communication Programmes (continuous communication with strategic stakeholders/current publics)</p> <p>Communication Campaigns (single or cyclic)</p> <p>Communication (operational) plans (implementation strategy and action plans)</p> <p>Draft to top management</p>

The theory on communication programmes, campaigns and plans remained unchanged from the initial literature study, as presented in Cycle One.

Study Unit 1.4 The communication plan

The information remained the same as in the original literature study. However, it was documented in the same way as the previous study unit on corporate communication strategy, i.e. by first presenting the model for developing a communication plan, and thereafter explaining each element of the model.

Study Unit 2.1: The basics of research

The rest of the study units in the 1999 Class Notes provides the 'tools' that the third-year corporate communication students need to be able to develop a corporate communication strategy (and plan) for an organisation.

The strategic management of corporate communication is not possible without a knowledge of research. Therefore a literature study was conducted on this topic-- in Study Unit 2.1, students are *firstly* introduced to the research process and *secondly*, to the two types of corporate communication research:

- environmental scanning; and
- evaluation research.

In relating research to the development of a corporate communication strategy, Lerbinger's (1977) classification of corporate communication research was provided to students. Because the classification is of particular interest to this study--it was used to suggest a type of research for each step on the model (indicated in brackets on the model)-- it is documented here:

- *Environmental monitoring* is research to detect trends in stakeholders' opinions and in the social-political, economic, technological, ecological and juridical environment. It is used to keep track of what is going on 'out there'. Environmental monitoring is the mainstay of corporate communication and is often referred to as 'assessing the corporate climate'.
- *Social auditing* is research similar to environmental monitoring. Social audits determine the consequences the organisation has had on its stakeholders and the extent to which the organisation must correct those consequences. The

primary purpose is to examine, catalogue, systemise and measure the organisation's performance as a corporate citizen—e.g. are the organisation's manufacturing procedures conducive to a healthy environment? Is the organisation more than just a system of inputs and outputs designed for the sole purpose of making maximum profit?

- *Public relations auditing* is research to define stakeholders/publics and to determine how they perceive and evaluate the organisation. According to Pavlik (1987), there are two basic types of corporate communication (PR) audits—audience identification and corporate image studies.

⇒ *Audience identification*:

- identifies relevant stakeholders/publics (does the organisation have an effect on a stakeholder/public, or does the stakeholder/public affect the organisation);
- evaluates the organisation's standing with each relevant stakeholder/public—the focus is on perceptions, attitudes, and involvement with the organisation;
- identifies issues of concern to those stakeholders/publics;
- measures the power of each stakeholder/public (extent of the resources e.g. financial, human).

⇒ *Corporate image study* (an extension of the PR audit):

- determines the familiarity of each public with the organisation;
- determines the attitudes of each stakeholder/public toward the organisation;
- determines the personality characteristics each stakeholder/public associates with the organisation.

- *Communication auditing*

This is research to evaluate corporate communication programmes/plans, to find out whether messages did actually get through to the receivers of the messages. It includes readership surveys, content analysis of messages, and measurement of the readability of messages. These evaluative methods are used for pre-testing messages or to measure public relations objectives.

Pavlik (1987) sees communication auditing as research assessing communication activities--widely used to study the readability and readership of corporate newsletters, and other routine communication, such as annual reports and press releases.

Study Unit 2.2: Environmental scanning

Since environmental scanning is considered an essential research tool in the development of corporate communication strategy, an extensive literature study was conducted--one study unit was dedicated to this topic. The information on which it is based, is contained in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.4), and will not be repeated here.

Study Unit 3.1: Stakeholder management

Study Unit 3.2: Publics and activists

Study Unit 3.3: Issues management

Since the management of stakeholders and issues are considered to be the core function of corporate communication, the researcher considered it imperative to conduct an extensive literature study on these topics.

The information which was supplied to students in Study Unit 3.1, is contained in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.5.3), as well as in Chapter 4 (4.3.5). Publics and activists (Study Unit 3.2) are discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.2), as well as in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.2). The literature study on issues management (Study Unit 3.3) is contained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.6).

As can be seen from the syllabus as contained in the 1999 Class Notes, an extensive literature study was conducted on all the major constructs of the hypothesised model (Model 1) and its improvement (Model 2).

6.8 IMPLEMENTATION OF MODEL 2: STAGE 2

STAGE 2: Some kind of action is undertaken together by the action research partners (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

Model 2 was implemented by student researchers amongst 46 non-profit organisations during the second semester of 1999. The model, together with the theory on which it was based, was provided to third-year students as part of their 1999 Class Notes. Whereas the initial literature study on developing a corporate communication strategy and the hypothesised model which resulted from it, comprised only one theme in the 1998 Class Notes/curricula (Cycle One of the action research project), the whole curriculum for the new module on Strategic Communication Management was built around it.

The theory was lectured by the researcher/lecturer during a seven-week period. Fixed consulting hours were set (for a period of 12 weeks) during which the lecturer consulted the 46 students groups, whilst they were in the process of

developing a corporate communication strategy for their selected non-profit organisation.

For the work plan that was provided to students as a guideline for doing their research projects, see **section 5.9.4 in Chapter 5**.

6.9 ASSESSMENT OF 1999 RESEARCH REPORTS: STAGE 3

<p>STAGE 3: Thereafter the results of the action are to be assessed (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).</p>
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The 46 written research reports on corporate communication strategy, developed by the student groups and their action research partners (the non-profit organisations), were individually assessed by the lecturer/researcher during September 1999 according to the evaluation criteria, and compared in order to pinpoint common problem areas/constructs. The following evaluation form was used for this purpose:

Figure 6.9: EVALUATION FORM 1999

TECHNICAL CARE	
• Table of contents, numerical system	5
• Language use and editing	5
• Bonus (neatness, special presentation, outside cover, etc.)	5
	15
CONTENTS OF THE PROJECT	
• Description of the corporate profile (vision, mission and corporate culture)	8
• Overall stakeholder analysis (internal and external)	10
• Identification of key strategic issues, environmental scanning and SWOT analysis	14
• Identification of key communication issues (implications of key strategic issues)	8
• Communication policy	5
• Overall media analysis	5
	50
CONTENTS OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN	
• Situation analysis and objectives (derived from the strategy)	6
• Specific stakeholders/target publics	5
• Messages	4
• Implementation strategy and activities (action plans)	10
• Scheduling	5
• Evaluation research	5
	35
TOTAL FOR PROJECT	100

6.9.1 GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROJECTS

In the opinion of the researcher, the standard of the projects was considerably higher in 1999 than during the previous year. Whereas only six groups averaged of 80% and higher in 1998, this year there were 13 groups who achieved it. The top group, *Business Against Crime*, achieved a near perfect score with 98%, while the second group, the *Christelike Maatskaplike Raad (CMR)*, was not far behind with 97%. (The researcher went through these projects two times, but found it difficult to subtract any marks).

This situation might have been caused by a combination of the following five factors: *Firstly*, an announcement of a R 2 500 cash prize for the top group was made in class. *Secondly*, it was also announced that the top group would have the opportunity of presenting their project at the first PRISA Student Conference on October 1, 1999. *Thirdly*, it seemed as though the two top groups had gone into competition with each other. *Fourthly*, the two top groups spent an extraordinary amount of time with the researcher/lecturer, coming for consultations as many as seven or eight times, perfecting their projects. *Fifthly*, they also met very regularly in their groups. (As is evident from the 'Schedule of Meetings' included in the *Business Against Crime* project, this group met four times during July; 13 times during August; and 13 times during September).

Groups in general experienced almost no problems with the description of the constructs 'corporate profile' (vision, mission and corporate culture); 'environmental scanning and SWOT analysis', and the overall 'stakeholder analysis' (internal and external). The constructs 'communication policy' and 'overall media analysis' which caused some problems during the previous year, was well described this year. A contributing factor might have been the theory added to the explanation of the model, as well as the emphasis placed on these constructs during lectures and consultations. Since the constructs mentioned above were explicated in detail in Cycle One: Stage 3, the discussion will not be repeated here. However, in order that the reader may benchmark the quality, the top project--*Business Against Crime*--is included in its entirety in Appendix 12).

This assessment stage will therefore focus on the constructs with which students experienced the most difficulty during 1998 (the previous year), namely the following:

- *phrasing* key strategic issues in order that the problem/opportunity becomes apparent;
- *deriving* key communication issues from the strategic issues; and
- *setting* communication goals.

Efforts will be concentrated on determining whether there was any noticeable improvement in these areas during the second cycle.

It needs to be mentioned that these specific constructs were emphasised in the assignment as described in the study guide (presented at the beginning of the Class Notes), as well as during lectures, practical classes and especially during consultations with individual groups. The relevant section in the study guide, the 'Research Assignment', is extracted here:

Develop a Corporate Communication Strategy for any non-profit organisation. Apply the theory in Theme 1—use the model as a framework.

Develop the corporate communication strategy by first drawing up a *stakeholder map* and identifying strategic stakeholders and publics. Thereafter describe **five strategic issues** faced by the organisation, identified through environmental scanning and a SWOT analysis. Clearly **differentiate between strategic issues** caused by wrong or no communication, and those organisational issues (not caused by communication) for which good communication can provide a part of the solution. Now identify and describe the **key communication issues** resulting from the five strategic issues, **by analysing their implications** for the organisation's strategic **stakeholders** and publics, both internal and external.

6.9.2 IDENTIFY KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

As in 1998, almost no problems were experienced with the *identification* of the issues. There were also much fewer problems with the *phrasing* of the issues than during the previous cycle. A contributing factor might have been the requirement set by the researcher/lecturer in class that students first had to *describe* the strategic issues in their projects to understand them well, before pinpointing its implications. To view the norm, the reader is referred to this particular section of the top project *Business Against Crime* (see Appendix 12, pages 13-20), as well as the number two project, *Christelike Maatskaplike Raad*, which is also attached (see Appendix 13, pages 19-28).

Examples of the few projects that experienced problems with *phrasing* the issues, will now be given (the lecturer's correction appears in brackets)—the first being the *DBV (Dierebeskermingsvereniging)* group's key strategic issues:

- “*Bewustheid en verwronge persepsies*” (Lae bewustheid en wanpersepsies);
- “*Korrupsie*” (...onder werknemers veral);
- “*Donateurs en die ekonomie*” (Gebrek aan voldoende fondse);
- “*Pretoria Stadsraad tender*” (Gevaar om Pretoria Stadsraad tender te verloor);
- “*Media*” (Negatiewe beriggewing in nasionale pers reflekteer op Pretoria DBV tak).

The MPO (Melkprodusente Organisasie) phrased their strategic issues as follows:

- “*Regering*” (Regering sny subsidies);
- “*Werknemers*” (Personeeltekort);

- “*Inmenging van boere*” (Onnodige inmenging van boere in bestuursaangeleenthede);
- “*Die vraag na melk het gedaal*” (...as gevolg van swak publisiteit en gebrek aan fondse om beeld reg te stel);
- “*Generiese opvoeding*” (Boere se finansiële ondersteuning nodig vir generiese opvoeding).

Researcher's comments: In the discussion which followed these groups' identification and implications of issues it was clear that they understood what the strategic issues were—their only problem was in *phrasing* them correctly so that the problem/opportunity was evident.

In considering the other subconstructs under this heading, no problems were experienced with 'environmental scanning in the macro/task/internal environment' or the 'SWOT analysis'. Minor errors were made by groups such as *The Council for the Blind (SANCB)*, who identified 'suppliers' and 'customers' as issues in the *internal* environment, whilst in reality they should have been classified as issues in the *task* environment. However, for purposes of this research it was not an important error—much more important is the fact that they were *able to identify* these strategic issues in the first place.

6.9.3 IDENTIFY IMPLICATIONS OF STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR STAKEHOLDERS = CORPORATE COMMUNICATION ISSUES

This construct was an improvement on the 1998 model, although certain problems remained/new ones were created. In considering the projects, the researcher/lecturer will comment and give examples of the way in which student groups approached this construct on the model.

6.9.3.1 Identify implications of strategic issues for stakeholders

Quite a few groups discussed the implications of their strategic issues for different stakeholders extensively. One issue from each of the following two groups will be detailed here:

⇒ The *Trinity Presbyterian Church Lynnwood*

“Strategic issue: *There are not enough counsellors within the congregation.*

Implications for the Minister: *It is impossible for the Minister to single-handedly meet all the counselling needs of his congregation. If more counsellors aren't brought in to assist the Minister, he will end up neglecting his other tasks and duties. It is therefore necessary to get members of the Church involved in the counselling programme.*

Implications for the congregation and community: *These parties suffer from the lack of counselling facilities. They rely on the Church to provide this service and it will be to their detriment if it is not adequately provided.*

Solution: *Three members of Trinity Church will complete a Christian Counselling Course in November 1999. This course is run under the auspices of Vista University and is presented by a clinical psychologist. The Trinity members who have completed this two year Advanced Certificate, will be qualified to offer counselling to people in need. They will also offer a one year course in Christian Counselling to the congregation in 2000. The increased number of people being equipped to offer counselling will make it possible to serve the members of the congregation and the wider community by assisting them in their various areas of needs.*

It is vitally important to get as many people from the congregation involved in the proposed counselling programme as possible. It is necessary to encourage members to participate in the Christian Counselling course, so that they themselves can offer counselling to other members.”

Researcher's comments: This last paragraph was the communication issue (that which should be communicated about), although the group did not name it as such. This group's analysis provided an excellent example of the reasoning to be followed in order to be able to set the correct communication goals, derived from the communication issue (based on the strategic issue).

⇒ *The National Zoological Gardens of South Africa, Pretoria*

This group did an excellent 8-page analysis, where they described four strategic issue in detail, classified them according to type, did a SWOT analysis on each issue to determine the implications of the issue, and then described the communication issue, goals, objectives and action plans for all four issues. An example of the analysis of one issue is the following:

“Strategic issue: *The Johannesburg Zoo {a major competitor} has better/more extensive media coverage than the National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria.*

Implications of the issue: *The perception is created that the Johannesburg Zoo is more involved in the community, and therefore can rely on more community involvement in its programmes, than the National Zoo. It has the potential of diminishing the awareness of the work done and the excellent international reputation of the National Zoo, Pretoria in the eyes of the public and potential sponsors and donors.*

Communication issue: *What must be communicated to the media to ensure increased positive exposure of the National Zoo in relation to the Johannesburg Zoo.*

Communication goal: *To increase media exposure of the National Zoo by 50% in 2000 in selected major regional and national publications.*

Communication objectives and action steps”: Four of these were detailed in this excellent project.

Researcher's comments: This was correct. The only criticism is that the communication issue should have been more specific by pinpointing *exactly what* must be communicated.

The reader is referred to Appendix 12 (pages 15-20) and Appendix 13 (pages 19-26) for an excellent example of the way in which the two top groups identified the implications of their issues for each of their strategic stakeholders.

There seemed to be only one group that did not understand the implications of the strategic issues on the stakeholders at all. (Although not all the groups described the implications under this specific heading as such, they all referred to it either in the description of the strategic issues, or in differentiating the strategic issues, or in arriving at the communication issues).

⇒ Pretoria DBV (Dierebeskermingsvereniging)

Researcher's comments: The type of error made by these students was unique--no other group did this, nor did questions in this regard come up in class or during consultations. However, it must be taken into consideration that they might have been the only group to be confused by the different constructs in this one section of the model (in the following section, the researcher admits this to have been a mistake). These students did not seem to have thought through the matter, as most other students must have done, but took the different constructs literally. The crux of the students' confusion seemed to lie in the fact that they considered the 'implications of the strategic issues on the stakeholders' that which should be differentiated into organisational and communication issues. This is evident when considering their analysis.

“IMPLIKASIES VAN STRATEGIESE VRAAGSTUKKE OP BELANGEGROEPE

- *Tipes kommunikasie-vraagstukke*

Die implikasies van strategiese vraagstukke op ‘n organisasie se belangegroep kan gedifferensieer word volgens vier verskillende tipes vraagstukke. Hierdie onderskeiding word gebruik om die wortel van die vraagstuk-probleem te herken en kommunikasie te gebruik om die hindernisse tot sukses te verwyder. “

Thereupon they described the classification as it appeared in the Class Notes, e.g. organisational issues (two types), management communication issues and communication issues. Their analysis of their first strategic issue looked as follows:

“IMPLIKASIES VAN (LAE) BEWUSTHEID EN VERWRONGE PERSEPSIES OP BELANGEGROEPE

BELANGE-GROEP	TIBE VRAAGSTUK	IMPLIKASIES
<i>Werknemers</i>	<i>Organisatories (1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gebruik nie “word of mouth” nie.</i>
<i>Donateurs</i>	<i>Organisatories (1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nie bewus van feit dat enigiemand kan skenk nie.</i> • <i>Donasies slegs op voorwaarde.</i> • <i>Verweg (?) verkondiging van donasie</i>
<i>Pretoria Stadsraad</i>	<i>Bestuurskommunikasie</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nie bewus van DBV se afhanklikheid van tender nie.</i>
<i>Gemeenskap</i>	<i>Kommunikasie</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nie bewus dat enigiemand kan skenk nie.</i> • <i>Sien DBV as goedkoop veeartsenydiens.</i> • <i>Weet nie wat DBV alles doen nie.</i> • <i>Besef nie waarde van DBV nie”.</i>

Researcher’s comments: It is the strategic issue that is to be classified, not the implications of the issue on the stakeholders.

6.9.3.2 Corporate communication issues

It was evident from the projects and the consultations with student groups that they found the terminology of this construct (and its subconstructs) confusing. Possible reasons for the students' confusion could be:

- Firstly, the use of 'corporate communication issues' in the heading was confusing in view of the fact that the rest of this construct was actually about differentiating between types of '*strategic issues*'.
- Secondly, the term *communication issues* in the subconstruct 'Differentiate between types of *communication issues/problems*' might also have been confusing since it in fact referred to the heading *corporate communication issues (as an abbreviation)*, rather than to the fourth type of communication issue 'where messages are not getting through to stakeholders'.
- Thirdly, the term '*corporate communication issues*' used in the heading, as a generic term for that which should be communicated about, created confusion in view of the fact that '*communication issues*' was one of the subconstructs indicating 'type of strategic issue'.
- Fourthly, as will be seen during the discussion of the subconstruct 'differentiating between types of issues', another (fifth) type of issue will be added to the typology namely '*corporate communication issues*'. The latter makes the use of the construct 'corporate communication issues' in the heading impossible in future.

Researcher's comments: The rationale for having placed the construct 'Identify implications of strategic issues for stakeholders = corporate communication issues' on the model was to point out that the **implications of the strategic issues** for the stakeholders were really the essence of that which the *corporate communication function* should be communicating about, i.e. the '*corporate communication issues*'. However, in such a case the 'implications of strategic issues' should have been a separate construct from 'differentiate between types

of {corporate} communication issues' (i.e. differentiate between the types of *strategic issues* that should be *communicated* about). The aim of the latter construct was to point out the difference between types of strategic issues, i.e. to ensure that students not only addressed communication issues in their communication plans (as indeed happened during the first action research cycle, and also happens with practitioners), but that they also addressed organisational issues. The aim of the former construct is to identify corporate communication *strategy*, i.e. the direction that the corporate communication function should take. It is therefore suggested that the construct 'identify implications of strategic issues for stakeholders = corporate communication issues' be modified by removing "= *corporate communication issues*" from the model.

⇒ DBV Pretoria

This example was detailed under the previous heading 'implications of the strategic issues'. It is obvious that this group was the most confused by the terminology.

⇒ *Jakaranda Kinderhuis*

This group was totally confused (and not only by the terminology, it seems):

- Although they stated the strategic issues correctly, they skipped the heading 'KOMMUNIKASIEVRAAGSTUK' (communication issue) and went straight to 'DOEL' (goals). However, the example given was not a goal, but rather the communication issue.
- Under the heading 'DOELWIT' (objective), they stated goals.
- 'AKSIEPLANNE' (action plans) was formulated correctly.
- Their last heading was 'IMPLIKASIE VAN DIE VRAAGSTUK' (implications of the issue), which should have started the analysis, because it actually assisted in arriving at the goals and objectives.

The rest of the groups had some of their headings wrong as a result of the terminology, but must have understood the work or sorted it out for themselves, because their analyses were correct.

6.9.3.3 Differentiate between types of issues

Positive impressions were that students, to a large degree, understood the ‘different types of issues’--not only did they classify them correctly as organisational or communication issues, but they also indicated whether the issues appeared in the *macro*, *task* or *internal* environment.

⇒ *SANCB*

This group was one of the many who did environmental scanning and classified their strategic issues under the heading ‘KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES AND SWOT ANALYSIS’, according to issues in the *macro* environment (political, economic, technological), *task* and *internal* environment (in addition to the strategic issue typology).

“Macro Environment

⇒ *Political: The changes in the government since the election in 1994 have had large direct and indirect effects for all the institutions for the disabled.*

- *Currently the government has suspended state aid of four million for the workshop for three months. The subsidies for the blind society have dropped from 20% to 10%.”* (The group identified this as an **organisational issue** where communication is not the cause of the problem, cannot provide a solution, but can **explain** the problem to stakeholders involved.)

<p><u>Researcher’s comments:</u> This is correct, although communication can also be used as a solution—i.e. when instituting lobbying efforts with government.</p>

- “A proposal by the government is to mainstream all education. This means that the blind, deaf and mentally disabled will be placed in the same class as 'normal' students. This will result in the disabled children being left behind. The blind society is currently lobbying against this proposal.” (The group identified this as an **organisational issue** where communication is not the cause of the problem, but can provide a **solution**.)

Researcher's comments: This is correct.

- “The introduction of the state lottery has forced the dissolution of the Viva Scratch Card although they will still continue raising money in other ways. Twenty percent of the proceeds of the lottery will go to welfare organisations. The society was getting R100 000 monthly from Viva but this has dropped to R100 000 annually.” (The group identified this as an **organisational issue** where communication is not the cause of the problem, cannot provide a solution, but can **explain** the problem.)

Researcher's comments: This is correct, if the intention is to explain this to strategic stakeholders such as donors.

⇒ “Technology

- A disadvantage caused by technology is that the society's logo can be scanned and placed on fake money collection forms e.g. raffle tickets. Money that belongs to the society is therefore landing in the wrong hands. The image of the society is tarnished, as raffles are not in line with the image they wish to have.” (The group identified this as an **organisational issue** where communication is not the cause of the problem, but can provide a **solution**).

Researcher's comments: This is correct.

The reader is referred to Appendix 12 (pages 15-20) to view the classification of the strategic issues of the top group, *Business Against Crime*.

The correct classification of this and other groups were done in spite of the problem referred to above, where the subconstruct 'differentiate between types of communication issues/problems' should have read: 'differentiate between types of *corporate* communication issues/problems'.

Researcher's comments: Most students seemed to have recognised this as an error/incomplete explanation and correctly described their organisational or communication issues--possibly because this was mentioned in class and emphasised during consultations. Another redeeming factor was that there were two other places in the model where the *types of strategic issues* were indicated as being both organisational *and* communication issues, and not only communication issues (see last sentence under 'Identify strategic stakeholders and publics', as well as the last sentence under 'Identify key strategic issues')—a fact which should have (and did) alert most students.

However, there were groups who had some trouble in classifying the strategic issues according to type.

⇒ *NeoBirth Pregnancy Crisis Centre*

This was a top group who identified and phrased most of their strategic issues correctly, but made a few mistakes in classifying the following:

- Under the heading '*Tekort aan strategiese beplanning*', the group described a situation where there was a substantial amount of informal communication in the organisation, but no strategic planning as such. Thereupon they classified the issue as a **management communication** issue.

Researcher's comments: This was in effect an **organisational problem** (at the top management level), where communication was not the cause of the problem, but could become part of the solution. This will be the case if communication is either used to communicate the lack of strategic planning to the top manager (a very tricky communication situation); or to communicate the problem to other

managers so that they could all bring up the subject together; or if used to bring about understanding of the strategic planning process, once a decision has been taken to start doing it.

- Under the strategic issue '*Gebrek aan delegering deur bestuur*', the group described a situation where top management spent their time on tactical issues because they did not trust volunteers enough to delegate these matters to them. The implication of this was that it demotivated the volunteer workers, because they did not feel involved nor trusted. The group identified this as an **organisational issue** caused by a lack of communication.

Researcher's comments: This is not totally correct. If lack of two-way communication channels (i.e. a lack of opportunity for feedback on volunteers' dissatisfaction) caused the problem, it is a management communication issue. However, if this situation is caused by the autocratic management styles of top management, it is indeed an organisational issue, where communication can either help to explain the issue, or might help to provide a solution if other employees/managers communicated the need for delegation to top management (once again a tricky communication situation).

⇒ *SANCB*

Although this group differentiated correctly between types of strategic issues, they had trouble with the following one:

- "*Since the elections the concentration of the organisation has also shifted from higher education for the blind white people to the general welfare of the previously disadvantaged populations. The same amount of money is being distributed amongst a larger group therefore leaving them with more basic services that they are offering.*" (The group did not classify this issue).

Researcher's comments: This is an organisational issue, where communication cannot provide a solution, but can explain the issue—e.g. the reason can be provided to blind white people for why they can no longer be educated by the *SANCB*. This issue also provides an opportunity (as a

corporate communication issue = new category) for the SANCB to communicate with their (new) strategic external stakeholders, namely the previously disadvantaged population.

In general, however, groups did not seem to have major problems in differentiating between the issues. The biggest problem experienced will be explained in the next paragraphs.

6.9.3.4 Some strategic issues were classified incorrectly, or not at all.

Researcher's comments: After an analysis and comparison of the projects, the researcher came to the conclusion that these issues belonged to a class not identified on the model—issues that could be ascribed to *corporate communication* problems, i.e. 'where no or not enough communication with *external stakeholders*' was the problem. This class will be added to the revised model (Model 3).

⇒ *The Council for the Blind (SANCB)*

This was one group who probably identified such issues, but could not classify them (since the particular classification was not yet on the model). Although most of their other issues were classified correctly-- see earlier discussion--they did not classify these issues (probably because they understood the typology well enough to realise that these issues did not fit into the typology at all).

“Political:

- *In respect to affirmative action the society is in line with these requirements as the blind people themselves are employed within the organisation. Most of the people working for the society are women as they are not as set into going into the corporate world; therefore the quota is being reached.”* (The group identified this as an **organisational issue** where communication is

not the cause of the problem, but can provide a **solution**—they did not explain how.)

Researcher's comments: This is correct only if the communication issue is seen to be informing other groups who are discriminated upon as to why they are not being employed. However, this is also a good example of an issue that could have been classified as a **corporate communication opportunity**—informing the government and donors (as strategic external stakeholders) that quotas are being met, obtaining goodwill and funding.

“Technology

The technology is changing quicker and quicker and it is becoming cheaper and more accessible to the average individual. Typed material on computers can now be printed in Braille by special Braille printers. This enables the blind to have access to e-mail, giving them a better quality of life.” (The group classified this as a **management communication** issue.)

Researcher's comments: This is not correct—it is a **corporate communication** opportunity, where enough or the right communication can improve relationships with strategic stakeholders

- *“Laser surgery is being used to remove cataracts. The partially blind and the blind's sight is being restored by these operations.”* (The group classified this as a **communication issue**, where messages are not getting through to stakeholders.)

Researcher's comments: This will only be correct if messages are indeed being sent but are not getting through because of wrong channels, language etc., not getting through. More likely, however, is that messages are not being sent. As explained elsewhere in their project, the real issue is that the small fee of R40 being charged by (donor) doctors might be misinterpreted by clients as being poor quality medical care or poor service. This makes it a **corporate communication issue** (no communication with strategic external stakeholders).

From the above analysis it can be seen that the *SANCB* group mostly classified their issues correctly, except for the category that did not yet exist—*corporate communication issues*.

⇒ *MCC Consultants*

A (top) group who also classified most of their issues correctly, except for the ones that in fact belonged to the new type (*corporate communication issues*), was the students who did a corporate communication strategy for UNESCO:

- Their one strategic issue was identified as “*Lack of awareness of UNESCO’s purpose and role in a democratic South Africa*”. (It was classified as a **communication issue**, where messages were not getting through to stakeholders.)

Researcher’s comments: Once again, if messages were indeed being sent, but not getting through because of incorrect channels for instance, this would indeed be correct. However, if not enough communication with external stakeholders was the problem, this would be a **corporate communication issue**.

- Another strategic issue was “*Absence of constructive feedback from strategic stakeholders resulting in an ambiguous perception of how effective UNESCO’s efforts have been*”. (The group identified this as a **management communication issue** with too little communication.)

Researcher’s comments: In reality, this is a **corporate communication issue**, with too little communication with external stakeholders and of a lack of a mechanism for feedback.

- The issue of “*Difficulty in leveraging resources worldwide*” was explained as the Pretoria office not being able to leverage intellectual information from other member state offices, particularly Latin America. (The group classified this

issue as being both an **organisational** issue as well as a **management communication** issue.)

Researcher's comments: It is indeed an **organisational issue** where communication could both provide the solution and explain the issue to head office abroad. It could also be seen as a **management communication** issue from the point of view that the responsibility to communicate this type of information lies with UNESCO's head office abroad, and they should be communicating this to all their branch offices (e.g. their employees). However, it could also be seen as a **corporate communication** issue from the point of view of the Pretoria office, who should communicate the problem to other UNESCO stakeholders.

⇒ The *SPCA Centurion*

This group did a good analysis by spelling out the implications of strategic issues, classifying them according to type, and setting communication goals. This was all done correctly, except for the following:

- The strategic issue identified was "*Lack of Centurion Town Council support*", which was classified as a **management communication** issue since there was little communication between the SPCA and the Town Council.

Researcher's comments: This is in effect a **corporate communication issue**, where there is too little or no communication with a strategic external stakeholder.

6.9.4 WRITE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Under this heading, students were supposed to *prioritise* communication issues and *set* communication goals.

⇒ Not many groups prioritised the communication issues--the *Voortrekkers* was one of the few who did. Theirs was an excellent analysis where they first prioritised the key strategic issues, described the implications and arrived at the communication issues. They then described the communication issues and pointed out the implications for internal and external stakeholders. Under the heading 'KORPORATIEWE KOMMUNIKASIE STRATEGIE' (corporate communication strategy), they prioritised the communication issues with a further description thereof. These were:

- *“Wanpersepsie van die oningeligte publiek.*
- *Ondoeltreffende aanwending van kommunikasiemiddele.*
- *Mededingende voordeel deur strategiese posisionering in regering (lobbying).*
- *Verouderde siening van aktiwiteite deur verkeerde boodskap.*
- *Bewustheid en verstandhouding deur samewerkingsooreenkomste.”*

The group came to the conclusion that solving these five communication issues, would solve the major strategic issue of lack of awareness. Thereafter the group set communication goals for each communication issue:

“KOMMUNIKASIEDOELWITTE (this translation is wrong—it should be *KOMMUNIKASIEDOELSTELLINGS = COMMUNICATION GOALS*)

Die bereiking van die volgende doelwitte (it should be ‘doelstellings’) is noodsaaklik vir die oplossing van die kommunikasievraagstukke:

- *Persepsie van die publiek oor die Voortrekkers te verander:*
 - *bewusmaking van Afrikaners oor bestaan van Voortrekkers;*
 - *inligting aan publiek te verskaf oor beginsels van die Voortrekkers;*
 - *moedig deelname aan, kry diverse kulture betrokke.*
- *Interne kommunikasie:*
 - *daarstelling van oop kommunikasiekanale;*

- *terugvoering rakende Voortrekker aangeleenthede moet deurlopend plaasvind;*
- *heersende kommunikasiemiddele moet effektief aangewend word;*
- *kort en kragtige inligting uitruiling (om informasie oorlading te voorkom).*
- *Regeringskakeling*
 - *om aktief betrokke te raak by regering deur in wandelgange te boer;*
 - *verslae oor voltooide aktiwiteite moet opgestel word en aan regering oorhandig word;*
 - *uitnodiging aan die regering om prestige funksies en aangeleenthede by te woon;*
 - *die Voortrekkers moet betrokke raak by regeringsfunksies en aktiwiteite (bv. inhuldiging van die president).*
- *Verouderde siening van die aktiwiteite van die Voortrekkers regstel:*
 - *deurlopende kommunikasie deur lede aan alle belangegroeppe sodat negatiewe siening oor aktiwiteite uitgeskakel word;*
 - *reël aanloklike aktiwiteite om potensiële lede te werf.”*

Researcher's comments: Although the wording of the goals were not always one hundred per cent correct, this group had a very good understanding of setting communication goals that were derived from the communication (and strategic) issues.

It is clear that describing communication issues in detail makes it much easier to set communication goals. However, the researcher is going to remove the subconstruct 'prioritise the communication issues' from the model since it might be unnecessarily confusing for third year students to do so (in view of the fact that they also have to prioritise the strategic issues). It probably would be more apt to require this refinement on the postgraduate level.

Researcher's comments: In practice, however, it would still be a good idea to prioritise the communication issues, especially if it is done by someone who understands the model for developing communication strategy well. The reason is that a strategic issue would not necessarily always have major communication implications. It could happen that a minor strategic issue could have major implications on the stakeholders, and that such an issue should receive urgent attention from the communication function.

For more examples of excellent communication goal setting, the reader is referred to Appendix 12 (pages 16-20) and Appendix 13 (pages 20-27) to peruse these sections of the two top projects.

⇒ Quite a few groups described the communication issues under the heading 'CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY'—one of them being the *Acestes Taekwon-do Klub*. Their strategic issue—which they incorrectly described under the heading "KOMMUNIKASIEVRAAGSTUK" (communication issue)—and also phrased incorrectly, was "mededingers" (competitors). They incorrectly classified the issue as an **organisational issue** where communication can explain the issue—however, using communication to obtain information on competitors' styles, was in fact an opportunity.

Researcher's comments: In spite of the incorrect analysis, their use of 'corporate communication strategy' to describe the communication issues (repeated by some other groups), might provide the answer to the problem that the term 'communication issue' has created.

⇒ A few groups were successful in setting communication goals (their communication issues were implicit in their discussion although they did not spell them out under a heading), e.g. the *NAHYSOSA (National Association of Hellenic Youth Students of South Africa)*:

Strategic issue: This was described as the membership of the club being severely limited by the fact that Greeks do not make up a large percentage of the SA population.

Communication goal: *"To gain more support from a wider spread of the Greek communicaty in South Africa"* (the lecturer added: by informing them of the advantages and aims of the club).

⇒ Many groups did not set communication goals, even though they described the implications of the strategic issues well, and arrived at the correct communication issues (e.g. the SANCB, the *Trinity Presbyterian Church Lynnwood, Radford House*). A few **communication issues** of the latter group were:

- *"By communicating with Radford House's stakeholders as to the direction the school wishes to pursue, and its plans to get there, communication will provide corporations with all the information necessary for them to approve sponsorships.*
- *Communicating to parents as to the school's needs shall further aid with the expansion of the school."*

Researcher's suggestions for a **communication goal** for the above two communication issues: To communicate the direction the school wishes to pursue to potential and current sponsors (including the parents).

- *"By communicating and joining with other private schools, Radford House will be in a stronger position with regards to lobbying than if it were going about it alone."*

Communication goal suggested: To build relationships with other private schools and lobby jointly against restrictive legislation.

As can be seen from the communication issues described by the *Radford House* group, they knew exactly what had to be communicated. It would have

been a small step further to actually set the communication goals. It is unclear why they did not do so.

Researcher's comments: It can only be surmised that these groups did not find it important to do so, because it seemed obvious from the rest of their analysis that they understood the constructs well enough to have been able to do so. This provides a reason for making communication goals a separate construct on the model, in order to emphasise its importance. It is of no use if students can develop a corporate communication strategy, but does not pay attention to setting communication goals--which are in effect the cornerstone of the communication plan.

⇒ Some groups did not know how to set communication goals, even though their strategic issues analysis was good. The group *Live and Let Live*, for example, described the following:

“Strategic issue: *Legislation concerning company 1% levy.*

Implication: *A white paper bill has been passed concerning company profit. Companies are to donate 1% of their profits towards charitable and/or non-profit organisations. This would mean a great deal, however the Child Welfare is not aware of this bill at present. If the organisation kept on ignoring the act, they may end up losing a great amount in permanent donations, which could help the welfare to function effectively.*

Communication issue: *Build and maintain relations with the government, thus the Child Welfare will be better informed about government legislation and regulation.”*

Researcher's comments: Up to here it is correct.

“Communication goal: *Government will be better informed about the Child Welfare and vice versa.”*

Researcher's comments: This is not correct. It should have been phrased as "To establish regular contact with government officials in order that Government be better *informed about the Child Welfare and vice versa.*" Their other communication goals were also phrased incorrectly.

6.9.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of Stage 3 was to assess the projects, give examples of where students did or did not understand the constructs, by comparing them with one another.

Although the constructs that did not present problems during Cycle One were *not described* again in Cycle Two, they were of course *assessed* by the researcher—this was the first step in the assessment stage: Marks were given to each group, shared by all group members, as the mark for their practical projects. It was based on this part of the assessment that the researcher considered it unnecessary to document the description of these constructs again, since they were even better executed than during the first cycle. It can therefore be said that the researcher considers the following constructs on the model to be well understood by practically all the student groups:

- the corporate profile (including the vision, mission and corporate culture);
- environmental scanning (in the macro, task and micro environment);
- the identification of strategic issues;
- stakeholder analysis.

Since students experienced hardly any problems with the following constructs during 1999, they can now be added to the above list:

- communication policy;
- media analysis.

Although almost all the groups experienced problems with *phrasing* the strategic issues correctly during 1998, there was a major improvement in this area in 1999. Even the identification of the implications of strategic issues is considered to have been done fairly well this year.

The construct 'communication issues' was once again problematic for many student groups, and needs to be improved. (This particular section of the model is to a considerable extent responsible for the situation). 'Deriving communication goals from communication issues' was another construct that leaves room for improvement.

In Stage 4, the model and theory will be evaluated, based on the assessment of the group projects.

6.10 EVALUATION OF MODEL 2: STAGE 4

<p>STAGE 4: A further period of research (of an evaluative nature) is initiated (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).</p>
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In December 1999, the results of the individual assessment and comparison of projects that was done during Stage 3, were analysed. In Stage 4 the aim was to try and find explanations for common problem areas, by looking for flaws in the model or finding possible insufficient/incorrect theoretical explanations in the Class Notes, that was provided to students together with the model. As in Stage 3, this discussion will mainly focus on the 'identification of key communication issues from the implications of the strategic issues'. However, other minor changes to the model will also be indicated, in **boldface**.

6.10.1 KNOW THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The model and theory for this section remains unchanged. The only improvement suggested is to substitute 'Know the internal environment' with 'Analyse the internal environment'.

ANALYSE THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
Corporate Profile/ Vision/ Mission/ Corporate Culture/ Values/ Policies/ Enterprise/ Corporate Strategies

6.10.2 IDENTIFY STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLICS

As suggested during the previous evaluation stage, this construct was moved to second position on the model. Since it worked well to have done so, this construct remains unchanged (both the model as well as the theory), except for the following minor changes (indicated in **boldface** on the model):

IDENTIFY STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLICS (EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT)
Draw up Stakeholder Map (organisational linkages, public relations audit*) Identify organisational consequences on Stakeholders and Publics (social audit)* Identify Stakeholder Perceptions/ Attitudes/ Concerns (public relations audit)* Identify stakeholder familiarity with organisation (corporate image studies)* Identify Key Stakeholder Issues (both organisational and communication)

6.10.3 IDENTIFY KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

Changes to be made to the model as far as this construct and its subconstructs are concerned, are the following:

- The 'Key strategic issues' should not only be identified, but also **explained**.
- 'Identify Publics/Activists' will be extended with '**that emerge around issues**'
- '**Identify**' will precede 'Consequences for organisation' (e.g. SWOT analysis).

- The construct 'Identify key strategic issues' will be merged with the construct 'Differentiate between types of communication issues/problems'.
- 'Both organisational and communication' will be eliminated after: Prioritise Key strategic issues.
- The latter will become 'Differentiate between types of **strategic issues**', consisting of both organisational and communication issues.
- One more type of issue will be added to the classification of strategic issues, namely:
 - **corporate communication issues, where too little or no communication with external stakeholders is the problem.**
- The word '**tactical**' will precede communication issues; and 'getting through' will be substituted by '**not reaching**'.

IDENTIFY AND EXPLAIN KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES
Macro/ Task/ Internal Environment (PESTE) (environmental scanning/ issues tracking)* Identify Publics/ Activists that emerge around issues (issues tracking)* Identify consequences for organisation (e.g. SWOT analysis)
Prioritise Key Strategic Issues <u>Differentiate between types of strategic issues:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>organisational issues</i>: communication is not cause of problem, but can provide a solution; • <i>organisational issues</i>: communication is not the cause of the problem, cannot provide a solution but can explain the issue; • corporate communication issues, where too little or no communication with external stakeholders is the problem; • <i>management communication issues</i>, where too little or no communication between managers and employees (internal) is the cause of the problem--not telling them <i>what</i> they want to hear • (tactical) communication issues where messages are not reaching target groups (communication audits e.g. readership surveys, content analysis and readability of messages)*

Theory and examples will be added to the Class Notes.

6.10.4 IDENTIFY IMPLICATIONS OF STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR STAKEHOLDERS = CORPORATE COMMUNICATION ISSUES

This construct will be modified to 'Identify the implications of **each** strategic issue'. (The equation with corporate communication issues will be eliminated). **This is to be done for each (strategic) stakeholder.** The brackets around strategic indicate that some stakeholders will *become* strategic through identifying the implications—others would already have been identified as strategic previously.

IDENTIFY THE IMPLICATIONS OF EACH STRATEGIC ISSUE
For each (strategic) stakeholder

Theory and examples will be added to the Class Notes.

6.10.5 WRITE THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- This construct will be changed to '**Decide on** the corporate communication strategy' and will be explained as '*what* must be communicated to *each* stakeholder to solve the problem or capitalise on the opportunity'.
- The subconstruct 'prioritise (communication) issues' will be eliminated from the model, since the rationale is considered to be too advanced for students at the third year level.
- The subconstruct 'develop communication goals' will be moved to become a separate construct, in order to emphasise it more--many students ignored it in their projects.
- The subconstruct 'draft to top management' will become a separate construct on the model, in order to emphasise its importance.

DECIDE ON THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

<i>What must be communicated to each stakeholder to solve problem/capitalise on opportunity</i>

Theory and examples will be added to the Class Notes.

6.10.6 COMMUNICATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Because of its importance as the link between the corporate communication strategy and the communication plan, 'communication goals' will become a separate construct on the model. (Communication goals identified during the development of the strategy become the goals around which communication plans are to be developed during the planning phase).

SET COMMUNICATION GOALS (around which communication plans are developed)

Derived from the corporate communication strategy
--

Theory and examples will be added to the Class Notes.

6.10.7 WRITE COMMUNICATION POLICY

Only minor changes will be made to the model (see **boldface**). The theory will remain unchanged, but examples will be added to the Class Notes.

COMMUNICATION POLICY (<i>what is allowed/ by whom</i>)

Organisational guidelines for communication
--

6.10.8 DRAFT TO TOP MANAGEMENT

To draw attention to this important construct (since most students ignored it), 'draft to top management' will become a separate heading on the model. Theory will also be added to the Class Notes for 2000, as well as examples.

DRAFT TO TOP MANAGEMENT
Obtain management support and buy-in for each step

6.10.9 OVERALL COMMUNICATION MEDIA ANALYSIS

This construct will remain unchanged on the model. The substantial amount of theory that was added during the previous evaluation stage resulted in students having conducted satisfactory media analyses under this heading (some even in-depth analyses).

OVERALL CORPORATE COMMUNICATION MEDIA ANALYSIS
Intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organisational, public and mass media

6.10.10 DEVELOP A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN

This construct will remain the same on the model and the theory unchanged.

DEVELOP A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN (<i>master plan for how to do it</i>)
Communication Programmes (continuous communication with strategic stakeholders)
Communication Campaigns (single or cyclic)
Communication plans (implementation strategy and action plans)

6.11 THE IMPROVED AND FINAL MODEL: STAGE 5

STAGE 5: Depending upon the results of the research, it may be necessary to develop or completely redesign the original action undertaken (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

The following guiding hypothesis was set in Chapter 1 of the study:

Guiding hypothesis 3

A model is a suitable tool to satisfactorily explain the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

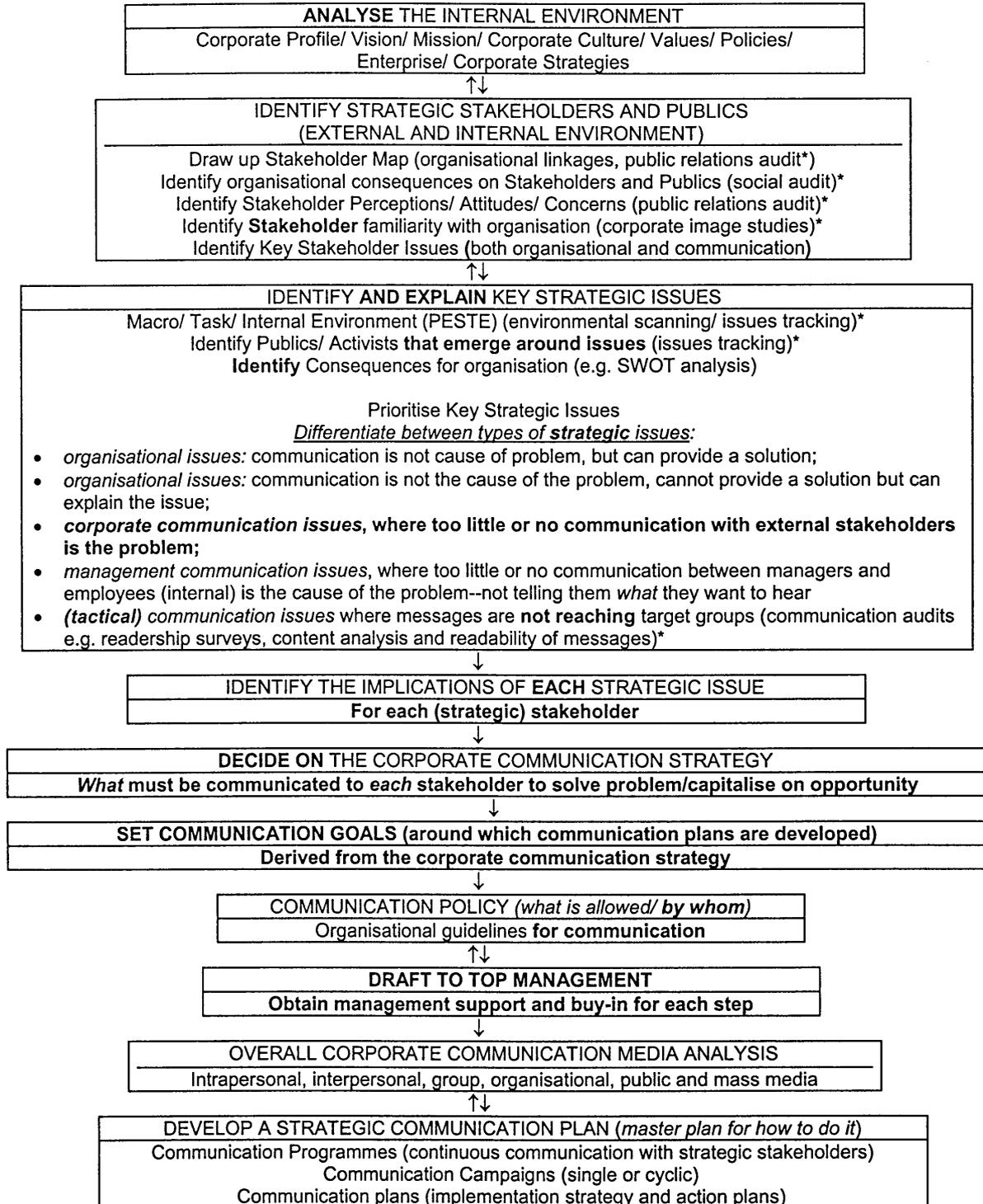
Based on the findings of the literature analysis and guiding hypothesis presented above, the researcher revised Model 2 and hypothesised Model 3 as a framework for developing a corporate communication strategy. The following hypothesis is stated to replace Hypothesis 13:

Hypothesis 14: Model 3 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Model 3, as the final version of the model for purposes of this study, will be lectured in the second semester 2000, during Cycle Three of the action research project. New constructs/changes to the model are indicated in **boldface**, and can be viewed on the next page (Figure 6.10). These changes resulted from the common problem areas pinpointed during assessment (Stage 3) and evaluation

(Stage 4). The model will be included in the 2000 Class Notes, together with minor additions to the theory. The latter will be documented in Stage 1 of Cycle Three of the longitudinal action research project. Hypothesis 14 is to be empirically tested in stages two to five of Cycle Three (which does not form part of this study).

Figure 6.10: MODEL 3--DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



*in brackets are Lerbinger's definition of the kinds of corporate communication research

CYCLE THREE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

6.12 THE LITERATURE STUDY: STAGE 1

STAGE 1: Implementation begins with a period of research where the resources and needs of a community are systematically assessed and the necessary information to guide action is gathered (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

Once again, the 'community' will be regarded as the third-year corporate communication students. The theoretical background to be obtained through a further literature study will be added to the 2000 Class Notes. This literature study has not yet been conducted, and will not form a part of this study.

6.13 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL: STAGE 2

STAGE 2: Some kind of action is undertaken together by the action research partners (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:59).

Model 3 will be implemented in the government sector, starting July 2000.

6.14 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED IN CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, Research Objective 3 has been achieved: A model has been developed that can satisfactorily be used as a tool for explicating the process of *developing corporate communication strategy* to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria. The lessons that have been learnt in the process that could serve non-profit organisations, industry and corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions have been discussed throughout the chapter by pointing out the mistakes made, and the problem areas/difficulties encountered. It seems that there are some similarities between the problems experienced by the students and the weaknesses of practitioners indicated by chief executives/senior communication executives in Chapter 1, under the 'Statement of the Problem'. This point will further be discussed in Chapter 7.

The first secondary objective (under Research Objective 3) was achieved by:

- hypothesising a model for developing corporate communication strategy (Model 1), based on the initial literature study presented in Cycle One as the first step in the action research process.
- hypothesising a model for developing corporate communication strategy (Model 2), based on the implementation, assessment and evaluation of Model 1.
- hypothesising a model for developing corporate communication strategy (Model 3), based on the implementation, assessment and evaluation of Model 2.

The other secondary objectives achieved were the following:

- corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria were involved as action researchers in the implementation of the model amongst some non-profit organisations during Cycle One of the action research process (Empirical Objective 1);
- student groups' understanding of the process of developing corporate communication strategy was determined—*firstly*, by assessing each individual group report and *secondly*, by comparing the projects with one another in order to pinpoint the areas/constructs where problems were experienced, or alternatively, were (well) understood (Empirical Objective 2);
- the hypothesised model was evaluated, *firstly* by analysing the results of the assessment and comparison of student group reports to ascertain common problem areas/constructs; and *secondly*, by analysing the theory on which the model was based as a possible reason for some of the problems experienced;
- the model was twice improved based on the analysis of the implementation results;
- the findings (the revised model) was made public through a presentation at an academic and an industry conference (in May 2000); an article in an academic journal and industry publications are to follow towards the end of 2000.
- an attempt towards building theory on the little-known subject of corporate communication strategy was made, with the assistance of the third year corporate communication students and their action research partners.

6.15 CONCLUSION

As in the strategic management process, the corporate communication management team needs to formulate a corporate communication strategy by means of a *thinking* process -- taking the whole picture into account and thinking through the qualitative aspects of the business and the environment it faces before starting the communication *planning* process.

The corporate communication strategy forms the framework for the strategic communication plan and the operational communication plans/programmes/campaigns that flow from it. The strategy attempts to determine *what* the corporate communication function should be doing in support of the enterprise and corporate strategies. The strategic and operational communication planning assists in choosing *how* to get there. This is done under leadership and supervision of a practitioner in the role of the *PR manager*, but executed or implemented by practitioners in the role of *PR technicians*.

The model for corporate communication strategy that was developed in this chapter, is intended first and foremost as a guideline that can be used by lecturers to explain to corporate communication students the process of developing a corporate communication strategy for an organisation. It is also intended for implementation by these students in the execution of projects of which the aim is to provide practical experience in this process.

By having to implement the model for developing corporate communication strategy, third year students are obliged to go through the strategic thinking process, together with the leaders of their selected non-profit organisations. This presents an excellent opportunity for students to experience firsthand the process involved in developing a corporate communication strategy for an

organisation—obtaining skills that will provide a competitive advantage to them, both as a *PR technician* in an entry position and later in the role of the *PR manager*.

However, there seems to be no reason why this model cannot be used by corporate communication practitioners who have to develop a corporate communication strategy for their organisations, and who have no other knowledge or guidelines for doing so. This is suggested on the condition that they take into account that no research has been conducted to validate the use of the model either by *practitioners*, or in the *government, educational or for-profit sector*.

In actual fact, use of the model by individual corporate communication practitioners has already commenced (Model 2). Upon request, the researcher/lecturer has made the model available to practitioners in an information technology firm, a tertiary educational institution, a corporate communication consultancy, and a mining house.

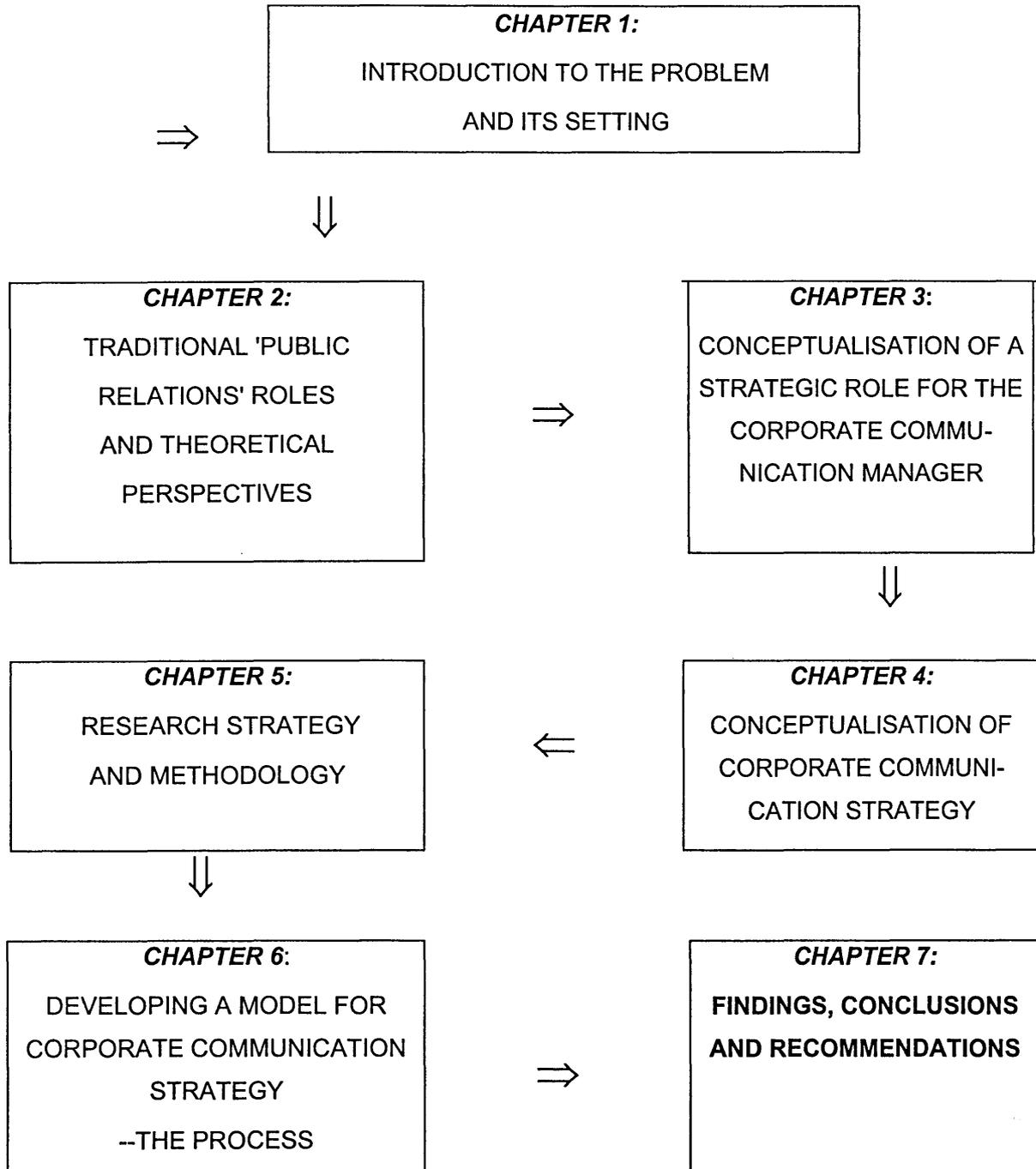
In the latter case, the development of a corporate communication strategy (based on Model 2) was given to the corporate communication practitioner of the mining house as an examination project in the honours subject Strategic Communication Management 780—with a view to her possible admission to the masters degree in Communication Management. The completed project was assessed according to the same criteria used for the third year corporate communication practical projects. The practitioner seemed to experience problems with the same constructs as the students had—possibly pointing to flaws in the model (which undoubtedly exist), but possibly also an indication of the areas where problems are experienced in practice.

The implementation of the model by other corporate communication practitioners is not impossible--approximately 20 practitioners and consultants requested the paper delivered by the researcher on the subject of corporate communication strategy at a local conference in May 2000. (The model was included in the paper). It seems clear that interest from industry in a model (or other guidelines) for developing corporate communication strategy has not subsided.

In the next (and final) chapter, the major findings and conclusions of this study will be stated and related to the research objectives. Recommendations and suggestions for further research in this regard will also be made.

CHAPTER 7

OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT



CHAPTER 7

7. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

In this final chapter, the findings, conclusions and recommendations with respect to the problem and research objectives are stated. The study's limitations are explicated and recommendations for further research are made.

7.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

In Chapter 1, the problem was introduced namely that chief executives perceived their corporate communication managers/practitioners as being reactive and not playing a strategic role in the organisation. A possible contributing factor was mentioned, namely that corporate communication practitioners might not be trained for such a role, and that theory as to what constituted such a role, is not explicitly stated in the literature. The following research questions were posed and guiding hypotheses set to investigate this situation:

Research Question 1

Is there a need for the corporate communication (public relations) manager to play a strategic role at the top management level of the organisation (the role of the *PR strategist*) and if so, what does this role entail?

Guiding hypothesis 1a

The chief executive is not satisfied with the role played by the corporate communication manager.

Guiding hypothesis 1b

The chief executive expects the corporate communication manager to play a strategic role at the top management level.

Research Question 2

What is the meaning of the concept '*strategy*' in the context of corporate communication (i.e. *corporate communication strategy*) and how does it differ from a *communication plan*?

Guiding hypothesis 2

The chief executive expects the corporate communication manager to develop a corporate communication strategy for the organisation.

Research Question 3

How can the process of *developing corporate communication strategy* satisfactorily be explicated to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria, and what lessons can be learnt to serve corporate communication practitioners (in the non-profit, for-profit and government sector), and corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions?

Guiding hypothesis 3

A model is a suitable tool to satisfactorily explain the process of developing corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

The concept of 'strategic management roles in corporate communication' was generated in chapter 1, as consisting firstly of the *PR strategist* role (a role at the top management or macro level of the organisation), constituting the activities performed in executing the 'mirror' function of corporate communication. Secondly, it consists of the *PR manager* role (a role at the meso or functional level of the organisation), constituting certain activities performed in executing the 'window' function of corporate communication.

Furthermore, the delimitations, assumptions, and importance of the study was explicated, and a synopsis of the research strategy and methodology was provided.

7.2 TRADITIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In Chapter 2, the theoretical underpinnings for the study were provided. The concept of 'role' was explicated, the historical origins of 'public relations' roles were explored, and the relationship between research and 'public relations' roles were indicated. Furthermore, the relationships between major constructs were defined within the framework of the *Systems theory* and the *Excellence theory*.

The chapter concluded with the findings of the Excellence Study (Dozier *et al* 1995), namely that there are two prerequisites for excellent communication in an organisation: The first is knowledge to play the manager role, especially knowledge of strategic management and two-way symmetrical communication. The second is that shared expectations must exist between top management and senior communicators on what constitutes communication management, and what the role of communication in the organisation should be.

7.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF A STRATEGIC ROLE FOR THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION MANAGER (THE ROLE OF THE *PR STRATEGIST*)

7.3.1 FINDINGS

In Chapter 3, Research Objective 1 was achieved--the primary objective having been to conceptualise the role of the *PR strategist*, a strategic role for the corporate communication (public relations) manager at the macro or top management level of the organisation. The theoretical background for such a role was provided and it was conceptualised as follows:

The corporate communication manager's involvement at the top management or macro level is seen as acquiring strategic information on the stakeholder environment by means of research techniques such as environmental scanning, issues identification and analysis. This entails identifying the organisation's strategic stakeholders and their concerns, and determining the consequences of organisational decisions/behaviour on them; also identifying and monitoring issues around which publics/activists emerge before they erupt into crises (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig 1992), and anticipating their consequences for organisational strategies and policies. Van Riel (1995) describes these activities as the 'mirror' function of corporate communication.

Furthermore, to present this strategic information to top management as input in the organisation's strategy formulation process (Robbins 1990), ensuring that the information is considered and used. In managing the organisation's interdependencies with the stakeholder environment, in being a liaison between

the organisation and its stakeholders, uncertainty and conflict is reduced and relationships with strategic stakeholders are stabilised. In this strategic role, the corporate communication function's contribution towards organisational effectiveness is maximised (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, *in* Grunig 1992).

Secondary Objectives achieved in Chapter 3 were the following:

⇒ An analysis of the relevant literature on public relations was carried out. The constructs for the role of the *PR strategist* were determined as being the mirror function (information acquisition/processing), boundary spanning, environmental scanning, stakeholders, publics, activists and issues. The activities constituting the role of the *PR strategist* were spelled out by means of the following operationalisation:

- Doing environmental scanning in the macro, task and micro environment;
- Analysing the organisation's linkages to key stakeholders, drawing up a stakeholder map;
- Assisting in the identification of key strategic issues through issues monitoring and analysis;
- Identifying the publics and activist groups that emerge around issues;
- Analysing the consequences of corporate behaviour and external events/trends/issues on strategic stakeholders and publics;
- Determining stakeholder concerns, sensitivities, feelings and attitudes towards the organisation;
- Forecasting the behaviour of stakeholders/publics/activists and its consequences for the organisation;
- Feeding this strategic intelligence into the organisation's strategic thinking and planning process for the purpose of strategic decision making, thereby contributing towards the organisation's strategy formulation.

⇒ It was determined, by means of an analysis of the relevant literature on strategic management, that a need exists at the top management level for a role of which the constructs are the following: the environment, boundary spanning, environmental scanning, stakeholders and issues. Since these are also the constructs of the role of the *PR strategist*, the role needed at the top management level was equated to the role of the *PR strategist*.

⇒ Precise hypotheses for empirically testing the role of the *PR strategist* in a follow-up study were generated. They are the following:

Hypothesis 1: The chief executive (CEO) expects the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function to play a strategic role at the top management level of the organisation, i.e. the role of the *PR strategist*.

Hypothesis 2: The role of the *PR strategist* consists of gathering and interpreting strategic information on the stakeholder environment, to be used in the organisation's strategy formulation processes.

Hypothesis 3: CEO expectations for the most senior manager/ practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly higher in the role of the *PR strategist* than his/her perceptions of the performance in this role.



Hypothesis 4: CEO expectations for the role to be played by the most senior manager/ practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly higher for the *PR strategist*, than for the *PR manager*.

Hypothesis 5: CEO role expectations for the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly higher in the role of the *PR strategist*, than in the role of the *PR technician*.

Hypothesis 6: CEO perceptions of the performance of the most senior manager/ practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly lower in the role of the *PR strategist* than in the role of the *PR manager*.

Hypothesis 7: CEO perceptions of the performance of the most senior manager/ practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly lower in the role of the *PR strategist* than in the role of the *PR technician*.

⇒ Items for empirically measuring the role of the *PR strategist* in a follow-up study were developed. The following nine measurement questions are suggested:

Identify key stakeholders (through research) that can enhance or constrain achievement of the organisation's mission (Kreps 1990; Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, <i>in</i> Grunig 1992; White & Mazur 1995).
Act as advocate for key external stakeholders by explaining their views to top management (Dozier <i>et al</i> 1995).
Explain to top management the impact of their behaviour, obtained through research, on key external stakeholders such as the media, investors, communities (Grunig & Hunt 1984:9).
Initiate dialogue with pressure groups limiting the organisation's autonomy, e.g. environmentalists or consumer advocates or legislators (L Grunig 1992).
Reduce uncertainty in strategic decision making by interpreting the external environment to top management (Dozier 1990; Dozier <i>et al</i> 1995:12-13; Van Riel 1995).
Develop strategies for building sound relationships between the organisation and key stakeholders (Dozier <i>et al</i> 1995).
Act as 'early warning system' to top management before issues erupt into crises (Dozier <i>et al</i> 1995).
Identify organisational problems that communication can solve, e.g. reduce employees' fears or uncertainty during rationalisation/ mergers (Steyn 1999).
Determine employees' information needs through research (Winokur & Kinkead 1993:1).

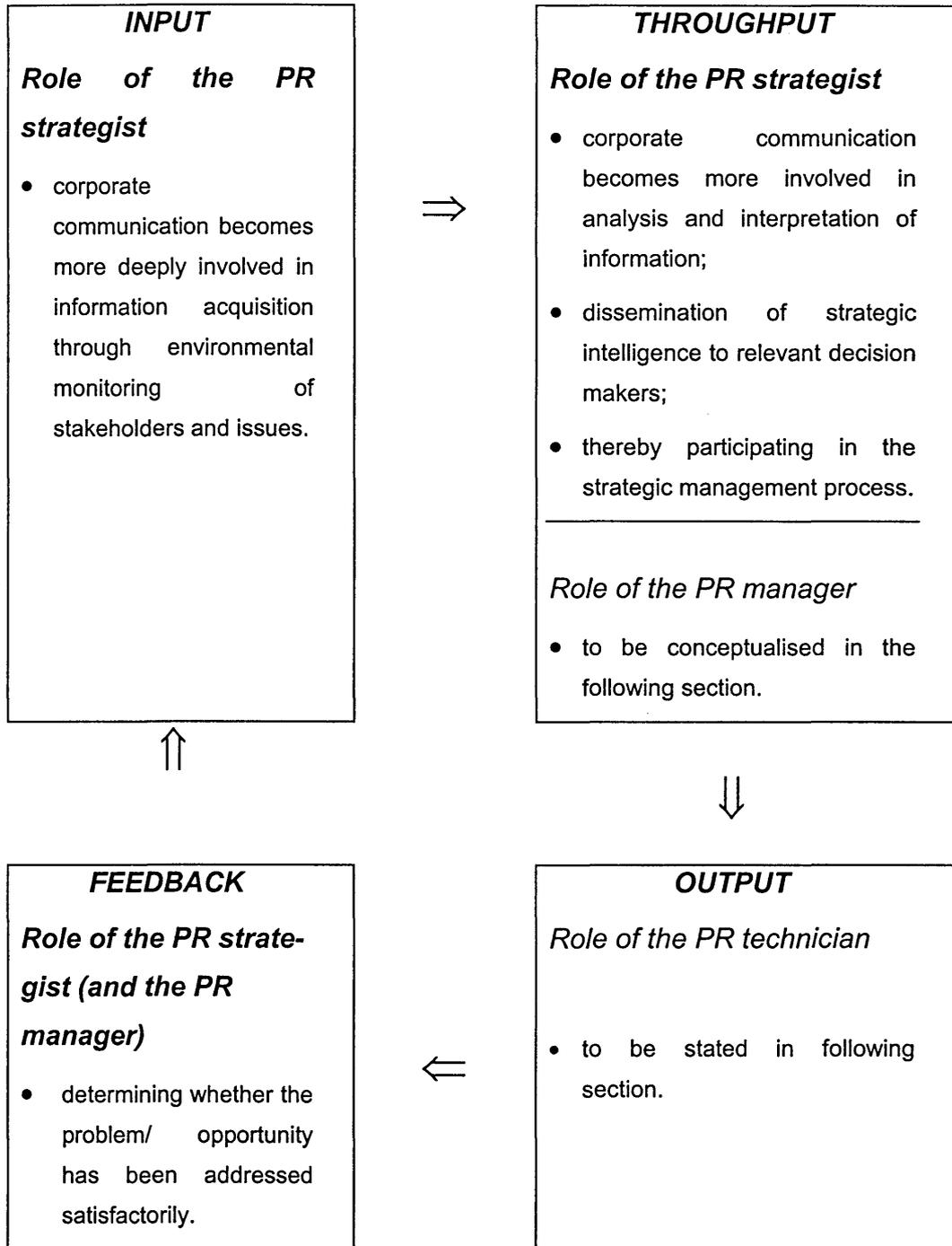
7.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In relating the role of the *PR strategist* to the systems approach, the researcher suggests that the systems approach to corporate communication be broadened and that corporate communication become more deeply involved in the organisation's information acquisition phase (input) through environmental scanning and boundary spanning activities.

Furthermore, that the throughput phase is extended to include analysis and interpretation of information, as well as dissemination of strategic intelligence by corporate communication to relevant decision makers--thereby participating in the strategic management process.

The following diagram is presented in relating the role of the *PR strategist* to the systems theory:

Figure 7.1: SYSTEMS APPROACH TO THE ROLE OF THE PR STRATEGIST



Source: Own research

7.4 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

7.4.1 FINDINGS

In Chapter 4, Research Objective 2 was achieved--the primary objective having been to conceptualise *corporate communication strategy*.

Corporate communication strategy provides the focus and direction for an organisation's communication with its stakeholders. It is the thinking or the logic behind the corporate communication function's actions, the *what* rather than the *how*--the outcome of a strategic thinking process by senior communicators and top managers with regard to the identification and management of stakeholders and issues.

Corporate communication strategy is a pattern in important decisions and actions with regard to communication, and determines *what* should be communicated to avoid conflict and obtain win-win solutions in relationships with strategic stakeholders. It is developed within the context of the organisation's vision, mission, corporate culture and policies, goals and objectives (the internal environment), but focuses on an assessment of the external environment. The process of developing corporate communication strategy provides the strategic approach needed by organisations to identify, and manage communication with, strategic stakeholders.

The corporate communication strategy makes the corporate communication function relevant in the strategic management process through its focus on communication with strategic stakeholders, using communication as a solution to

organisational problems. It provides the vital link between the enterprise/corporate/business strategies and the corporate communication function, aligning communication goals to the organisational mission.

Secondary objectives achieved in Chapter 4 were the following:

⇒ A corporate communication *strategy* was differentiated from a communication plan. The former is seen as the thinking process performed by senior communicators and top managers, identifying *what* needs to be communicated. The latter is seen as operationalising the strategy, i.e. breaking it down into steps that can be implemented.

⇒ An operational definition for the process of developing a corporate communication strategy was provided. It can be seen as a process of:

- analysing the organisation's internal and external environment;
- drawing up/refining the stakeholder map by identifying strategic stakeholders and their concerns, and the consequences thereof for the organisation;
- identifying the organisation's key strategic issues, either through environmental scanning/issues analysis; or by analysing current/proposed organisational strategies;
- considering the implications of these strategic issues, specifically focusing on the consequences thereof for the organisation's strategic stakeholders;
- identifying *what must be communicated* to strategic stakeholders to manage their concerns or the consequences of the strategic issues (i.e. to solve the problem or capitalise on the opportunity presented by the strategic issue)—this is the essence of corporate communication strategy;
- deriving communication goals from the corporate communication strategy, providing a framework for the strategic communication plan;

- contributing to the achievement of organisational goals by providing the link between communication plans and the corporate strategy.

⇒ Precise hypotheses for empirically testing the role of the *PR manager* (a strategic role for the corporate communication practitioner at the functional or departmental level of the organisation), and the role of the *PR technician* (an implementation role at the micro or programme level) were generated. They were the following:

Hypothesis 8: CEO role expectations for the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly higher in the role of the *PR manager* than his/her perceptions of the performance in this role.

Hypothesis 9: CEO role expectations for the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly lower in the role of the *PR technician* than his/her perceptions of the performance in this role.

Hypothesis 10: CEO role expectations for the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly higher in the role of the *PR manager*, than in the role of the *PR technician*.

Hypothesis 11: CEO perceptions of the performance of the most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the corporate communication/public affairs function are statistically significantly lower in the role of the *PR manager* than in the role of the *PR technician*.

⇒ Items for empirically measuring the role of the *PR manager* were developed.

The following 10 measurement questions are suggested:

Develop corporate communication strategy which supports corporate strategy (Steyn 1999).
Take responsibility for the success or failure of corporate communication strategy (Steyn 1999).
Take responsibility for the success or failure of corporate communication plans (Dozier <i>et al</i> 1995:11)
Develop corporate communication plans, e.g. crisis or employee communication or media plans (Grunig & Hunt 1984).
Manage the implementation of corporate communication plans (Grunig & Hunt 1984).
Evaluate functional tactics e.g. the channels used to reach communities (Grunig & Hunt).
Manage the public relations budget (Robbins & De Cenzo 1998; Floyd & Wooldridge 1994).
Develop functional tactics to effectively communicate organisational messages to stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt 1984).
Translate communication goals into communication activities (Digman 1990).
Monitor the performance of corporate communication practitioners or sub-divisions (Robbins & De Cenzo 1998; Floyd & Wooldridge 1994).

⇒ Items for empirically measuring the role of the *PR technician* were also developed (an implementation role at the programme or micro level). The following six measurement questions are suggested:

Produce audio-visual materials for presentations (based on Groenewald 1998a).
Generate publicity e.g. write media releases (based on Groenewald 1998a).
Keep a media clipping service (new item).
Edit public relations materials e.g. speeches or the annual report (based on Dozier, <i>in</i> Grunig 1992:334, as well as on Groenewald 1998a).
Write articles for the organisation's publications (based on Dozier, <i>in</i> Grunig 1992:334, as well as on Groenewald 1998a).
Organise special events e.g. open houses or exhibitions or gala evenings (based on Groenewald 1998a).

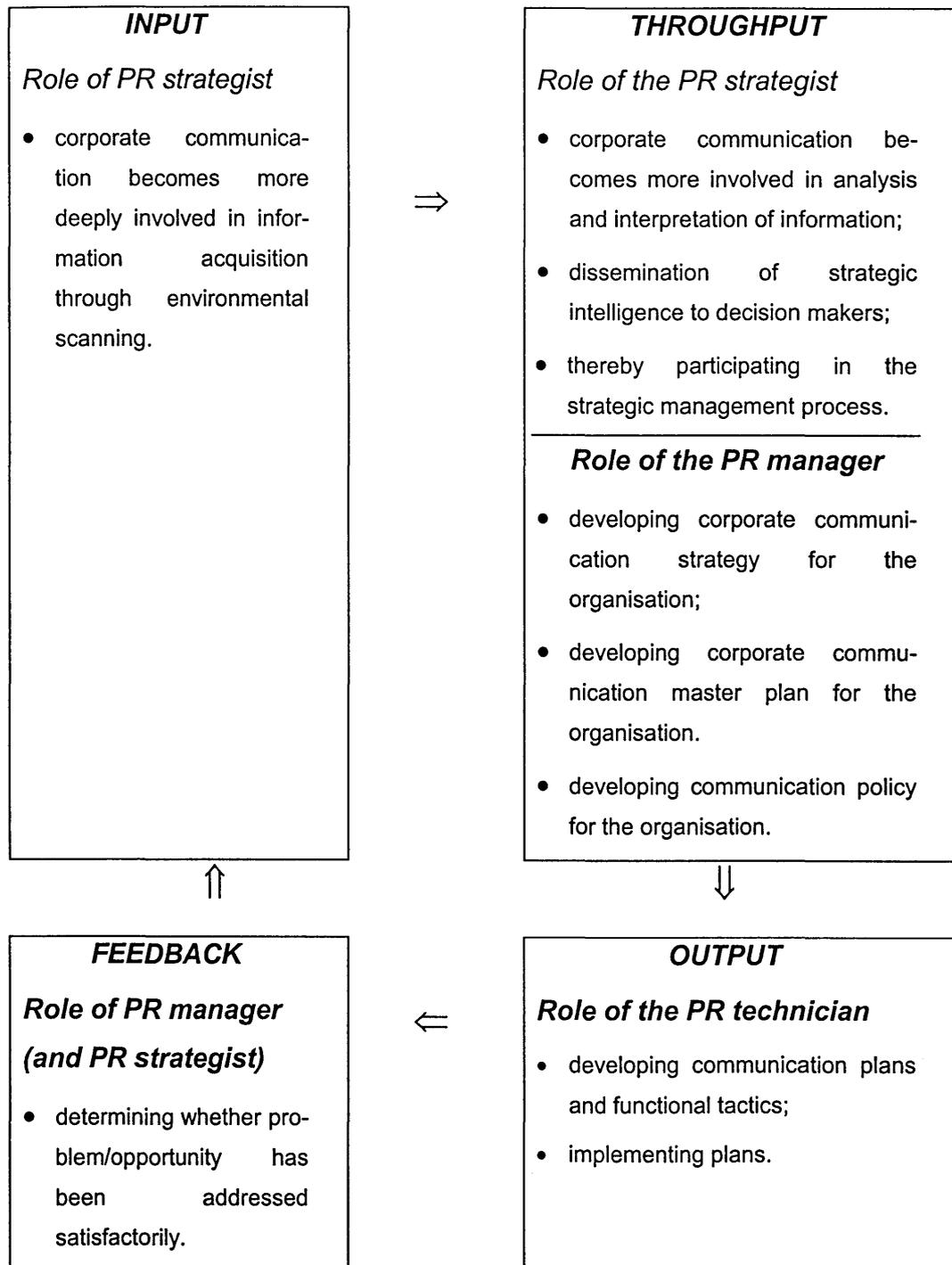
7.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that the systems approach to corporate communication be broadened to accommodate the role of the *PR manager* in developing a corporate communication strategy for the function.

This is to be done by broadening corporate communication's participation in the *throughput* phase to also include the development of a corporate communication *strategy* as a focus for the corporate communication function--identifying the organisation's key strategic issues and their implications for the strategic stakeholders (thereby determining *what* should be communicated to stakeholders to solve problems or capitalise on opportunities).

Based on the corporate communication strategy, it will then be a natural progression to develop a master plan for the corporate communication function's activities, as well as a communication policy for the organisation to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. This can graphically be presented as follows:

Figure 7.2: SYSTEMS APPROACH TO CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (THE ROLE OF THE PR MANAGER)



Source: Own research

7.5 DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY—THE PROCESS

7.5.1 FINDINGS

In Chapter 6, Research Objective 3 was achieved--the primary objective having been to develop a model that can satisfactorily explain the process of *developing corporate communication strategy* to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria, and to identify the lessons to be learnt to serve corporate communication practitioners (in the non-profit, for-profit and government sector) and corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions.

The first secondary objective achieved in Chapter 6 was the following:

⇒ Based on the initial literature study, a model for the process of developing corporate communication strategy was hypothesised and tested qualitatively:

Hypothesis 12: Model 1 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Model 1 was found not to be an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria. Thereupon

Model 2 was hypothesised, based on the assessment and comparison of student projects implemented in 1998, as well as the evaluation of the model and accompanying theory:

Hypothesis 13: Model 2 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Model 2 was found not to be an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria. Thereupon Model 3 was hypothesised, based on the assessment and comparison of student projects implemented in 1999, as well as the evaluation of the model and accompanying theory:

Hypothesis 14: Model 3 is an effective tool for satisfactorily explicating the process of developing a corporate communication strategy to third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria.

Model 3 has been hypothesised for the purpose of being tested in the longitudinal action research project among third year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria, during the second semester of 2000.

Further secondary objectives achieved in Chapter 6, were the following:

⇒ Third-year corporate communication students at the University of Pretoria were involved as action researchers in the implementation of Models 1 and 2 amongst some non-profit organisations in South Africa.

(This secondary objective also represented the achievement of **Empirical Objective 1**, that was set in Chapter 5 for the student researchers--it was referred to as **Project 1** in the discussion on action research as methodology).

⇒ The extent to which each student group understood the process of developing a corporate communication strategy, was determined--*firstly* by assessing each student group report done during 1998 and 1999 individually, and *secondly* by comparing them in order to pinpoint the common problem areas/constructs where problems were experienced, or alternatively, were (well) understood;

⇒ Models 1 and 2 were evaluated, *firstly* by having analysed the results of the assessment and comparison of student group reports, in order to ascertain common problem areas/constructs; and *secondly*, by having analysed the theory on which the models were based as a possible reason for some of the problems experienced.

(The above two secondary objectives represented the achievement of **Empirical Objective 2** that was set in Chapter 5 for the lecturer/principal researcher—it was referred to as **Project 2** in the discussion on action research as methodology).

⇒ Models 1 and 2 were improved based on the analysis of the implementation results.

The third version of the model (and the final one for the purpose of this research report) can be viewed on the next page (figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3: MODEL 3--DEVELOPING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



⇒ It is proposed that the lessons learnt from the implementation of Models 1 and 2 (by corporate communication students at UP amongst the non-profit sector), will also serve corporate communication practitioners at other non-profit, for-profit and government sector organisations, as well as corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions. There seems to be no reason why Model 3 (twice-improved) cannot be made available to practitioners and other students for theoretical or implementation purposes, nor why such implementation will not meet with the same relative success as that achieved by UP students and their action research partners in the non-profit sector.

⇒ The findings (in the form of Model 3) were made public through a presentation at an academic and an industry conference in May 2000. Articles in industry publications will follow later in the year.

⇒ A contribution towards theory building on the little-known subject of corporate communication strategy will have been achieved by the publication of an academic article (which will be submitted to the academic journal *Communicare* in September 2000, for consideration). Furthermore, by the publication of a text book/management reader based on this research script. (This book, titled "*Corporate Communication Strategy*" is being written at present, to be published by Heinemann in December 2000).

7.5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

- ⇒ That Model 3 be made available to corporate communication practitioners at other non-profit organisations, to private and government sector organisations, as well as to corporate communication students at other tertiary institutions.
- ⇒ That the findings of the action research (especially Model 3) be published as soon as possible -- in industry publications, academic journals and also in the form of a text book/management reader.
- ⇒ That the findings of the action research be presented at an international conference.
- ⇒ That a series of workshops be held to introduce the model and its theory to practitioners, possibly in co-operation with professional associations such as PRISA and the IABC.
- ⇒ That a short course be developed to introduce Model 3 and its theory to practitioners, possibly through the PRISA Education and Training Centre, or alternatively through Business Enterprises@Tuks.
- ⇒ That the theory and model on developing corporate communication strategy be introduced to practitioners at the Communication Management Discussion Forum held every two months at the University of Pretoria.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The reader is referred to Chapter 1, where a conceptualisation of the (present) exploratory study and a (future) empirical study was done (see section 1.3). The following recommendations for further research are made:

- 1) That the exploratory study described in Chapter 3 be followed by a quantitative study--testing the hypotheses generated and the measurement items developed for the role of the *PR strategist*. Therefore, that the need for a corporate communication practitioner to play the role of the *PR strategist* be empirically verified in South African organisations (including the government and private sector), as well as abroad.
- 2) That the exploratory study described in Chapter 4 be followed by a quantitative study--testing the hypotheses generated and the measurement items developed for the role of the *PR manager*. Therefore, that the need for a corporate communication practitioner to play the role of the *PR manager* be empirically verified in South African organisations (including the government and private sector), as well as abroad.
- 3) That the need for the development of corporate communication strategy, as an important activity of a practitioner in the role of the *PR manager*, be empirically verified in South African organisations (including the government and private sector) as well as abroad, by means of a quantitative study.
- 4) That the concept of 'PR model' be empirically linked to 'PR role' in future studies.

- 5) That the process by which corporate communication strategy is actually formulated in private sector organisations be explored by means of a qualitative study—i.e. that an inductive approach be followed by building theory from the data collected and analysed (rather than using a confirmatory approach). This would confirm the validity of the model.
- 6) That the model for developing corporate communication strategy that was implemented through action research in non-profit organisations, also be implemented in public and private sector companies.
- 7) That the process of developing corporate communication strategy be further analysed, evaluated and improved.
- 8) That the influence of the chief executive's world-views on playing the role of the *PR strategist* and the *PR manager*, be investigated (and the resulting 'PR model' practised).
- 9) That environmental scanning as a research technique to be utilised by a practitioner in the role of the *PR strategist* and the *PR manager*, be further investigated-- both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- 10) That the process of issues management, as an integral part of the strategic role of the corporate communication manager be investigated, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- 11) That the identification and management of stakeholders as an integral part of the strategic management of corporate communication be investigated, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

12) That the identification and management of publics and activists, as an integral part of the strategic management of corporate communication be investigated, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are regarded as the most important limitations of the study. (It could also be regarded as indicating further possibilities for future investigations):

- 1) The role of the *PR strategist* was conceptualised by means of a *literature* investigation only.
- 2) The model for developing corporate communication strategy was hypothesised by means of a *literature* investigation only.
- 3) The model was implemented amongst a *non-representative (convenience) sample*.
- 4) The model was implemented in the *non-profit sector* only.
- 5) Findings *could not be generalised* to the population.
- 6) According to Marshall & Rossman (1995:4), "*full collaboration between researcher and participants in posing the questions to be pursued and gathering data to respond to them, is the hallmark of action-research*". Since the student researchers in this study were guided by a hypothesised model for developing corporate communication strategy, and the participants in the non-profit organisations were assumed not to be knowledgeable on the subject or skilled in strategy development, "*full collaboration between researcher and participants in posing the questions to be pursued and gathering data to respond to them, did not take place*". The model was *prescriptive* in providing guidelines for the *minimum* information to be gathered, although freedom was allowed students to pose other questions or gather additional information that they (or the non-profit participants) thought relevant.

- 7)The *PR strategist* role was developed against a background of traditional organisational forms. Hardly any literature *in this regard* exists on matrix and network organisational forms.
- 8) Whether the role of the *PR strategist* can be *outsourced*, or should rather be performed in-house, was not investigated.
- 9)The chief executive's world-views and the 'PR model' practised by the organisation could have a major influence on the role played by the PR practitioner. These factors were not taken into consideration in this study.

7.8 CONCLUSION

The problem addressed in this study was the seeming dissatisfaction of chief executives/other senior managers with the performance of their corporate communication managers and/or practitioners. The literature indicates that their major shortcomings are perceived as not playing a strategic role in their organisations, or making a contribution to strategic decision making. Corporate communication practitioners are seen as being reactive, awaiting the initiative of their chief executives. Their thinking is tactical, rather than strategic – their focus is on the achievement of *communication* goals, rather than the organisational mission.

A further problem is that the role of communication seems to be ill-defined in many organisations. It can be said that there is a lack of understanding between the corporate communication function and top management on what constitutes communication management, on the role communication should play in the overall management of the organisation, and how communication can benefit the organisation.

The literature review also points to the fact that corporate communication *managers* in South Africa are not unaware of their shortcomings (Groenewald 1998a). Although they perceived strategic communication, management and management communication skills as very important in their positions, they did not consider themselves sufficiently equipped by the training they had received in these skills.

It is obvious that in order to address the problem described above, corporate communication practitioners will have to change their practice. However, there is little indication in the academic literature on exactly how this is to be done -- the very lack of theory might even be a reason for the situation described. Some light was shed by the findings of the Excellence Study (Dozier *et al* 1995), one of the few sources that touch on corporate communication's strategic role. It found that one of the prerequisites for an organisation to have 'excellent' communication is that there must be a practitioner functioning in the role of a corporate communication (public relations) *manager*, with knowledge of strategic management.

The point of departure of this study was therefore that in order to contribute to strategic management, there should also be a corporate communication practitioner functioning in the role of the *PR strategist*. This role was conceptualised from the public relations literature as one of the major objectives of the study. The need for such a role at the top management level was qualitatively verified in the body of knowledge on strategic management. By providing a description of this role and indicating its behavioural characteristics, the study addressed a vacuum in the public relations literature—providing some insight on the activities that might fulfil the expectations that top management seems to have for a senior corporate communication practitioner.

The lack of definitions or description of the concept 'corporate communication strategy' in the literature provides a further possible reason for the management vacuum in the function. As an attempted solution, the study redefined the historical role of the *PR manager*, identifying the development of corporate communication strategy as one of the major activities of a practitioner in this role. Corporate communication strategy is conceptualised as the *direction* an organisation should take with regard to its communication with strategic stakeholders—determining *what* should be communicated to obtain their co-operation, maintain stable relationships with them and avoid conflict.

In order to provide guidelines to students as to how corporate communication strategy should be formulated, a model was hypothesised from the literature. Thereafter the model was twice implemented, evaluated and revised—resulting in Model 3, the final 'Model for developing corporate communication strategy for an organisation'. The lessons learnt that could be applied to the training of practitioners or students at other tertiary institutions were noted throughout the discussion.

Having conceptualised the role of the *PR strategist* and redefined the role of the *PR manager*, this study made an important contribution to the body of knowledge by broadening the theoretical viewpoint of the field of corporate communication. It also provided some answers to Dozier's question (in Grunig 1992:329) of "*who will manage the corporate communication function, how will it be managed, and what are the role expectations*".