

## **CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to collect data for this study. One of the aspects that will be dealt with is a brief discussion of the overview of the purpose of the study. The discussion will also provide an outline of the motivation for the choice of research methodology and the data collection tools used in this study. An outline of how the data will be analysed will also be provided.

### **5.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study will combine exploratory and descriptive aspects. Firstly, as Babbie (2001:91) indicates, exploratory studies occur when a researcher examines a new area of interest or when the subject of study is relatively new. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:41) further state that the purpose of exploratory research is to gain a broad understanding of a situation, phenomenon, community or person, and could arise from a lack of basic information in a new area of interest.

This study will be exploratory largely because as far as this researcher could determine, no academic research has been conducted on the role that traditional meetings such as Imbizo in general can be used as strategy for development communication. With regard to this study, the role of the GCIS in strategic management of Imbizo a development strategy has also not yet been academically examined.

Secondly, in descriptive studies, the researcher observes and then describes what was observed and as a result, most qualitative studies are descriptive (Babbie 2001:93). It should be noted that in most descriptive studies, the researchers proceed to go on and examine why the observed patterns exist and what these patterns imply, which is also the case in this study. As a result, it has become important to include the descriptive part of the research.

### **5.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is qualitative and quantitative, with field research and content analysis as the main research methodologies. The choice of two research methodologies was necessitated by the fact that using more than one methodology helps to ensure that the validity of the study is achieved. Field research was chosen because Imbizo is meant to ensure that government interacts with the people in their own contexts.

Field research is therefore an appropriate methodology because it seeks to investigate the subject of research in its natural setting. In this study, the focus was not on the beneficiaries of the government Imbizo campaign; but rather on the internal GCIS management processes of Imbizo and the extent to which they enhance or inhibit participation of the people. The implication in this regard is that the GCIS an organisation becomes the field where the research will be conducted.

According to Arnst (1996:116), while quantitatively oriented research methods seek insight through objectivity, detachment and exclusivity, more qualitative approaches pursue participation of the intended beneficiaries of the phenomenon that is being researched. The basic tenet of participatory research is that the planning process must be accessible to those among whom the Imbizo initiative is meant.

The limitation with Imbizo at the moment is that the beneficiaries are not actively involved in the pre-campaign research and planning. Their involvement is important because they understand their circumstances better. Therefore, they are in a better position to articulate their problems and needs. It is for this reason that a qualitative approach which seeks to ensure that the involvement of the beneficiaries of Imbizo in the planning process is attained, has been chosen for this study.

In this case Arnst (1996:119) further states that the focus of a qualitative research must be on the immediate benefits of research to those who are the beneficiaries; rather than on a pre-formulated agenda established by the researcher. Hence, the choice of field research for the purpose of this study.

The current arrangement with Imbizo is that the agenda is formulated before the actual Imbizo meeting. For example, an Imbizo brochure, which gives an outline of government achievements, is developed prior to an Imbizo meeting (See the Brochure in Appendix D). The brochure provides these achievements from the perspective of government and not the citizens.

According to Tandon (1985:21), participatory research is partisan, ideologically biased and explicitly non-neutral. This means that participatory research must be conducted by an independent organisation in consultation with the government and the intended beneficiaries. The implication for Imbizo is that organisations working

closely with the community must be requested to conduct research which can be used to enhance participatory development communication strategies.

Arnst (1996:120) further states that participatory research possesses a grassroots bias, and it is a process of empowerment and conscientisation. The premise in this regard is that people are not objects to be controlled by the researcher, but individuals who can control their own destiny in the research process. Therefore, rather than agendas being set by an academic elite and programmes enacted by bureaucratic elite for the benefit of an economic elite, participatory research involves beneficiaries in analysing their situation as well as gaining the confidence and understanding to address it. It therefore means that in order for Imbizo to be a genuine participatory approach, it must adopt a participatory research approach, in which the citizens will be empowered to solve the problems in their communities and to participate in taking decisions on issues that affect their lives.

The researcher in this case is consciously committed to the cause of the community that is involved in the research. This approach challenges the traditional principle of scientific neutrality and rejects the position of the scientist as a social engineer (Arnst, 1996:123). In order for participatory research to play a more meaningful role in participatory development, it is important to consider the use of language as it has the potential to either enhance or inhibit community

participation. The researcher must understand the language (s) used by the beneficiaries to enhance their participation.

## **5.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS**

### **5.4.1 What is content analysis?**

Content analysis is one of the unobtrusive research methods. According to Neuman (1997:271), content analysis involves analysing documents relevant to the subject of the investigation. Neuman (1997:272) further states that content analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing content of the text.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:112), there are three concepts, which characterise content analysis. Firstly, content analysis is systematic. This means that the content, which will be analysed, should be selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules. For example, the selection must follow proper procedures, each item must have an equal chance of being included in the analysis and only one set of guidelines for evaluation is used throughout the study.

Secondly, content analysis is objective. This means that the researcher's biases should not form part of the findings. It also means that if another researcher replicates the analysis, the same results should be found.

Thirdly, the goal of content analysis is the accurate representation of a body of messages. Quantification gives the researcher additional statistical tools that can aid in the interpretation and analysis of the data (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997:112).

The content in this case refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas or any message that can be communicated. The text in this case is written, visual, or spoken word that serves as a medium for communication. As Babbie (2001: 304-305) indicates, the text includes books, newspapers, or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, and articles of clothing or works of art. For the purposes of this

study, newspapers articles on the coverage of Imbizo, GCIS Corporate strategy, video recordings of Imbizo events, analysis of the toll-free number register and the communication strategy framework will be analysed.

#### **5.4.2 Why content analysis was chosen?**

Content analysis was chosen because although Imbizo deals with unmediated communication, there is a tendency to place emphasis on generating extensive media coverage for Imbizo. It has therefore become important to conduct a content

analysis of the press coverage of Imbizo to determine the extent and nature of the coverage of Imbizo.

The content analysis of video recordings of Imbizo meetings has also become important as this would help to determine the nature and extent of people's participation in the discussions. Given that the focus is on the management processes of people's participation, an analysis of the Imbizo communication strategy framework, the GCIS corporate strategy, Imbizo toll-free number record, will be done. The following is a breakdown of the steps used in the content analysis conducted for this study:

#### **5.4.2.1 Research question**

As Wimmer and Dominick (1983:143) indicate, a research question or hypothesis provides guidance to content analysis. They further argue that it is possible to generate a research question based on existing theory, prior research, practical problems or as a response to changing social conditions. The other important aspect is that a well-defined research question simplifies the process of developing accurate and sensitive categories; which helps to produce more valuable data (Wimmer and Dominick 1983:143).



The focus of content analysis in this study will be on newspaper articles, videotapes, communication strategy framework, Imbizo toll-free line register and the GCIS Corporate strategy. All these documents will be analysed in relation to Imbizo. It should be taken into consideration that the purpose of analysing these documents is to assist in determining the role of the GCIS in strategic management of participatory development communication. The analysis also seeks to determine the extent to which the management of all Imbizo processes enhances or inhibits the participation of the people on issues of governance.

#### **5.4.2.2 Population**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:116), a population specifies the boundaries of the body of the content to be considered which requires an appropriate definition of the relevant population. For the purposes of this study, the population is all documents that make reference to government's Imbizo programme.

#### **5.4.2.3 Sample**

A sample is a subset of the population that is representative of the whole population. The sample for this content analysis is all documents that make reference to government's Imbizo programme from 2000 to 2004.

#### **5.4.2.4 Unit of analysis**

A unit of analysis is the smallest element of a content analysis which must be counted or measured (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997:119). In a written content, the unit of analysis might be a single word or symbol, a theme or an entire article or story. The unit of analysis identified for this study is the words, articles, and themes that are identifiable in the documents that have been analysed (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983:146).

#### **5.4.2.5 Categories**

According to Wimmer and Dominick, (1983:147), at the heart of any content analysis is the category that is used to analyse and to classify media content. A category system must also be exclusive (when a unit of analysis can be placed in one category), exhaustive (when a unit of analysis must be placed into an existing slot) and reliable (different coders must agree in the greater majority of instances about the proper category for each unit of analysis) (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983:147-148).

The following categories have been identified from the purposes of this content analysis: newspaper articles, videotapes, communication strategy framework, Imbizo toll free line register and GCIS Corporate strategy. These categories have been dealt with in more detail in the following discussion:

#### **5.4.2.5.1 Press coverage**

For the purposes of this study, newspaper articles on the coverage of Imbizo events will be analysed. As Neuman (1997:277) indicates, this will be done to determine the amount of coverage, the prominence of the coverage, and whether the coverage was positive or negative. The analysis will also seek to gain an understanding of the issues that have been covered in the newspapers. The focus will largely be on the Presidential Imbizos which took place in Gauteng, North West and Western Cape Provinces in October 2002-August 2003.

#### **5.4.2.5.2 Videotapes**

In as far as videotapes are concerned; the focus will be on the video recordings of all Presidential Imbizos which took place in Gauteng, and North West Provinces.

These Imbizos took place between October 2002 and August 2003. The focus of the analysis will be on the nature of the interaction and the extent to which the interaction is participatory, issues that have been discussed and the undertakings that have been made. The other aspect that will be dealt with is the set –up at the venues. This will be done to determine whether the environment is conducive enough for active participation and interaction or not.

#### **5.4.2.5.3 Communication strategy framework**

The GCIS has developed a generic communication strategy framework which is used in all government communication campaigns. This is the same framework which is used for communication around Imbizo. For the purposes of this study, this framework will be discussed. The focus will be on the extent to which this communication strategy framework enhances or inhibits participation of the people in the Imbizo activities. In order to achieve this objective, the different steps that are followed in this framework will be discussed.

#### **5.4.2.5.4 Imbizo toll-free line register**

During Imbizo campaigns, the GCIS hosts a toll-free line. The purpose of this toll-free line is to provide the people, especially those who may not be able to attend the Imbizo events, with a platform on which they can raise issues that are of concern to them. A record of all the issues that people have raised is kept. This is meant to facilitate follow-up after Imbizo events. It is often argued that this toll-free line is participatory and interactive because people are able to raise issues that concern them. This study will analyse this record to look at the issues that the people have raised. In this regard it will be interesting to check whether the issues that have been raised are similar to those that have been covered in the newspaper clippings that have been analysed.

#### **5.4.2.5.5 GCIS corporate strategy**

A brief analysis of the GCIS corporate strategy will be done to provide an understanding of how and where Imbizo fits in within the broader government communication context. This analysis will also provide an overview of GCIS priority issues.

#### **5.4.2.6 Coding and quantification of the data**

The content analysis in this study will make use of both manifest and latent coding. In this case, the units of analysis will be given the same attention from both methods.

According to Neuman (1997:275), manifest coding deals with the visible, surface content in a text. In this regard, Berg (1998:225) argues that manifest coding deals with elements that are physically present and countable. This involves, for example, counting the number of times a phrase or a word appears in a written text or a recording. Neuman (1997:275) further states that although manifest coding is highly reliable, it does not take into consideration the connotations of words or phrases. This is important because one word might mean different things depending on the context in which it is being used.

It is because of these limitations that latent coding which according to Neuman (1997:276) looks at the underlying implicit meaning in the content of the text will also be utilised. Berg (1998:225) further states that latent coding deals with the interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physically presented data. At the latent level, the article heading can also be latent, containing an underlying ideological meaning.

#### **5.4.2.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis requires the researcher to work with a wealth of data collected through methods such as content analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis (Mouton 1996:169). As a result, the focus is on the individual case in a specific context of meanings and significance. The methods of data analysis that are often used in this regard are more holistic, synthetic and interpretive (Mouton 1996:169).

As Mouton and Marais (1990:104) indicate, the final interpretation of data is based upon two issues, namely, the reliability of the data and whether the data provides adequate support for the conclusion.

With specific reference to content analysis, Neuman (1997: 279) indicates that it is that important to note that it describes what exists. It should however be noted that content analysis cannot measure the impact of the message that has been communicated. However, content analysis can reveal the intentions of those who created the text. This is because it can reveal the underlying ideology of the communicator. Content analysis can therefore help in media effects and to determine categories and themes to structure in-depth interviews and focus groups when conducting an audience study.

#### **5.4.2.8 Reliability of content analysis**

Reliability refers to the repeated measurement of the same material which produces results similar in decisions or conclusions (Wimmer & Dominick (1997:126). An acceptable level of reliability largely depends on the research context and the type of information that has been coded. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:130), if a certain amount of interpretation is involved, reliability estimates are typically lower.

Intracoder reliability was established for this content analysis. After the initial coding was completed, a sub sample of the data of 20 percent was selected and re-analysed by the same researcher after the elapse of a period of a week, thus intracoder reliability was achieved.

Although content analysis provides useful information, the following are some of the problems that have been identified.

- Content analysis does not take into account the occurrence of some coder agreement strictly by chance.
- Intracoder reliability could be exposed to subjective analysis which could result in a much lower reliability index. However, the use of more than one research method in this study has helped to minimise this limitation.



- As Berg (1998:244) indicates, content analysis is limited to examining already recorded messages. The difficulty is in locating the unobtrusive messages relevant to a particular research question. In this study, this was not a major challenge as most of the required could be easily acquired.
- Content analysis is ineffective for testing casual relationships between variables. It therefore becomes important for researchers to resist the temptation to infer such relationships (Berg (1998:244)).

## **5.5 FIELD RESEARCH**

### **5.5.1 What is field research?**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1983:95), field observation is a research methodology which is useful when collecting data as well as generating hypothesis and theories. It is more concerned with the description and explanation than with measurement and quantification, as it is the case with quantitative research.

Neuman (1997:348) also states that field research is based on naturalism, which places emphasis on observing ordinary events in their natural setting. The importance of observing events in the natural setting is that field research contends that the generation of meaning has to take into consideration the context of the subjects of the observation.

### **5.5.2 Selecting a site**

As indicated by Neuman (1997:351), a research site is defined as a context in which events or activities occur. It is also seen as a socially defined territory with shifting boundaries because the researcher may arbitrarily select the boundary of where field research will take place. Neuman (1997:351) mentions the following three factors, which are relevant when selecting the research site: richness of the data, unfamiliarity and suitability. Although this researcher is familiar with the main research site of this study (the GCIS), this site was selected because of its potential to provide rich data, and accessibility, given that the researcher works at the GCIS.

### **5.5.3 Accessing the research site**

When conducting field observation, it is important to take into consideration that there are gatekeepers who have some form of authority, formal or not, on the access that the researcher might have to the research site or a particular community. As Neuman (1997: 351) indicates, the researcher needs to negotiate for access with gatekeepers. However, it is important for the researcher to set non-negotiable limits in order to protect the integrity of the research.

Once the researcher has been granted the permission to conduct the research, it is important to build rapport with the respondents in order to secure their co-

operation. In this regard, Neuman (1997:355) states that establishing rapport is a step towards obtaining an understanding of the respondents, which ultimately enables the researcher to see events from their perspective. This will ultimately help to ensure that the researcher gains a better understanding of the subjects of the investigation.

With regard to this study, the researcher works for the GCIS, department that plans, implement and evaluate the subject under investigation (Imbizo). The researcher notified, the employer about the research and permission was granted to this effect. Part of the study fees for this research was provided for by the researcher's employer (GCIS). It is also important to note that the employer did not impose any conditions on what, where and how the research should be conducted.

The fact that the researcher is employed by the GCIS provides an opportunity to interact with the people involved in the subject under investigation, to gain insight into the subject, gain access to some relevant documents and enables the researcher to observe certain organisational practices without being actively involved in the phenomena under investigation.

The following discussion of field observation provides an outline of how the research was conducted and how the data will be collected and analysed.

#### **5.5.4 Field observation**

The following discussion will deal with total observation, field research interviews as techniques for data collection and data collection tools in field observation.

##### **5.5.4.1 Total observation**

As described by Wimmer and Dominick (1983:96), total observation takes place when the observer does not take part in the phenomenon that is being observed. In the observation of Imbizo, total observation will be used as one of the methods of data collection. This is largely because the researcher is not directly involved in the Imbizo project team's activities.

Total observation in this case has been adopted because as explained by Wimmer and Dominick (1983:96), it helps the researcher to define basic background information needed for the study and in developing a hypothesis. It also enables the researcher to have access to a group that would otherwise be difficult to access using other intrusive methods.

This is often the case in instances where a sensitive issue is the subject of the research. Total observation is important in this regard because in interviews, there is a possibility that respondents might provide socially desirable answers.

Therefore, total observation would help to deal with the challenge of socially desirable answers provided by the respondents.

As Wimmer and Dominick (1983:96) indicates, the other advantage of total observation in field research is that it takes place at the natural setting of the subject under investigation. In this case, most of the activities around Imbizo take place at the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), where the researcher is an employee. This provides the researcher with an opportunity to interact with people who are directly involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Imbizo. This helps to provide insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

The researcher has also chosen total observation having considered the fact that as Wimmer and Dominick (1983:97) have indicated, it relies heavily on the perceptions, judgements and preconceived ideas and bias of the researcher. However, this study will also use field research interviews for data collection, which should effectively address these limitations. In this regard, informal discussions with colleagues who are involved in Imbizo have been held to gain insight into the processes involved in the planning and implementation of Imbizo programme.

#### **5.5.4.2 Field research interviews**

Field research interviews are given different names by scholars. For example, Babbie (2001:291) calls them qualitative interviews, whilst Neuman (1997:370) calls them field research interviews. For the purposes of this study, they will be referred to as field research interviews.

A field research interview is described by Babbie (2001:291) as an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent where the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry. It is generally perceived to be a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction of the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent. According to Neuman (1997:371), field research interviews are a joint production of the researcher and the interviewee. The interviewees are active participants whose insights, feelings, and co-operation are essential parts of the discussion process that reveals subjective meanings.

However, as Mouton and Marais (1990: 76) indicate, depending on the nature of the source of data, and the way in which it is being collected, when people participate in the research, they become more conscious of the situation and tend to react to it; a phenomenon known as reactivity. Mouton and Marais (1990:78) further states that reactivity is the main threat to the validity of the research findings when human beings are the source of data. However, in this study, this limitation to

field research interviews has been countered by the use of other methods such as content analysis of relevant documents and total observation of the subject under investigation. This is because they provide an alternative approach to data collection.

#### **5.5.4.3 Data collection tools in field observation**

Wimmer and Dominick (1983:98) indicate that traditional tools of data collection such as the notebook and pen have given way to radically new equipment, in many cases due to advances in electronics. However, data collection in this study will be done through the use of the notebook and pen to minimise the intrusive nature of video and audiotapes.

The other reason is that the researcher in this instance would like to observe the subject of investigation from an outsider's perspective to counter-balance the possibility of receiving "socially desirable answers" from the field research interviews. The other aspect that has been considered is that certain parts of field observation will be to some extent covert.

According to Neuman (1997:363), full field notes can contain maps, diagrams, photographs, interviews, tape recordings, videotapes, memos, objects from the

field, notes jotted in the field, and detailed notes written away from the field. The researcher will record not only what happened and what was said, but also personal impressions, feelings and interpretations of what was observed.

#### **5.5.5 Data analysis in field observation**

According to Neuman (1997:427), in general, data analysis means a search for patterns in data, recurrent behaviour, objects, or a body of knowledge. In the same vein, according to De Vos (2002:339) data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data. The data collected in this study will be given structure because data comes in a variety of forms, such as notes made while observing in the field, interview notes, documents, newspaper cuttings, and videotapes..

As Leedy (1997:160) argues, throughout data analysis, the researcher organises, arranges, and chronologically orders the data, searching for recurring themes or patterns that represent the participant's perspectives. Each piece of information will then be coded to identify the source. Wimmer and Dominick (1997:87-88) further explain that all the results of the foregoing analysis are integrated into some coherent explanation of the phenomenon. The researcher in this study will then search for relationships and common patterns across categories and look for meaningful connections.



De Vos (2002:341) further states that data analysis in qualitative research involves a twofold approach. Firstly, it involves data analysis at the research site, during data collection. The second aspect involves data analysis away from the site, following a period of data collection. This aspect is conducted between site visits, prior to, as well as after, completion of data collection.

Traditionally, research separates data collection and data analysis. However, a qualitative study involves an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis (De Vos, 2002:341). This is largely due to the assumption that a human instrument should be subjected to ongoing fine-tuning to generate an array of data.

This means that data are analysed as they are collected. In conducting data analysis during data collection, the researcher utilises some of the methodological tools such as triangulation to ensure the study's trustworthiness. (De Vos, 2002:342) Triangulation occurs when a researcher uses multiple theoretical perspectives. In this study, analysis has been done on a regular basis. This means that there is a thin line between data collection and data analysis.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The focus of this chapter was on the aspects which are central to the collection of data such as the site of the research, data collection techniques and procedures and data analysis. The chapter also discussed the research methodologies that will be used in this study, namely, field research and content analysis. The rationale behind using the two methodologies was to enhance the validity of the study.

## **CHAPTER 6 RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of this study. The results will focus mainly on the role of the GCIS in strategic management of government communication, with specific reference to Imbizo. It should be borne in mind that the focus is largely on the internal organisational processes and the extent to which they enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of Imbizo. An analysis of the processes used in the strategic management of government communication- project management- will be discussed in this chapter.

An analysis of the communication strategy framework that is used for Imbizo together with the issue of language usage in Imbizo (and extent to which they impact on Imbizo processes) also forms part of this chapter. An analysis of the newspaper cuttings on the coverage of Imbizo will also be presented in this chapter. An analysis of the videotapes of an Imbizo event will be presented as it helped to determine the extent to which people's participation is encouraged.

## 6.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The GCIS has adopted the project management approach to government communication. In this regard, people are nominated to form part of the Imbizo project team on the basis of their skills, interests and organisational needs. A determination is made on the extent to which an individual's involvement in a project such as Imbizo will benefit the project in general.

Ideally, all government departments and the civil society partners are suppose to take part in the decision making processes. This is meant to ensure that all government departments are able to deal with service delivery concerns coming from Imbizo. At the same time, civil society organisations are suppose to be actively involved on the basis that they understand the social conditions of the environment within which they live, which would help the to ensure that Imbizo campaigns are able to address the needs of the people.

It has become evident from the analysis of the project management approach that the involvement of government departments and civil society structures is not as effective as intended. The other aspect is that the process seems more centralised at the GCIS, and as a result the role of other government departments and civil

organisations is minimised. This study therefore contends that this state of affairs minimises the impact of Imbizo in the targeted communities.

This study has found that although there is a project team that has been established to deal with Imbizo issues, their role is confined largely to implementation of decisions already taken at top management level. Project meetings tend to be forums where project team members are given project related tasks which are meant to achieve broader project objectives and not where project team members discuss project related issues and take decisions. It can therefore be concluded that project team members do not have decision making powers.

The other concern is that there is a lack of proper succession planning with regard to project management. This is because although officials are sent for project management training, there are limited avenues for implementation of the newly acquired skills. This impacts on some project, especially where a key player in the project leaves the organisation.

### **6.3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

#### **6.3.1 The development of the Imbizo communication strategy**

The communication strategy for Imbizo is developed at the GCIS. Although there is a project team selected specifically for Imbizo, the team is not completely involved in the process of developing the communication strategy. The process is highly centralised at the senior management level of the GCIS. As a result, the project team members do not get the opportunity to give input into the process but only implement decisions.

The other concern is that the service delivery departments are also not actively involved in the process. In cases where some of them become involved, their input is either minimal or insignificant. This is a challenge given that they are government's service delivery points. This study therefore contends that the lack of their input in the process minimises the impact of Imbizo.

It has also become apparent that there is little or no representation of the civic organisations and local government in the process to which they are meant to be partners. The local government is meant to be represented by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). However, their involvement is also minimal. Civic organisations that are also meant to be partners in the process do not feature in this part of the planning for Imbizo.

It should be noted that once the main communication strategy has been developed, the distribution strategy and media plan are developed in line with the

main objectives of Imbizo. The distribution strategy is meant to assist in the process of distributing material that has been developed to generate publicity for the campaign.

The problem in this regard is that the strategy is developed without the involvement of the people who are meant to benefit from the campaign. This is a problem largely because these people understand their environment better, and are therefore in a better position to assist in determining the best possible ways to distribute campaign material.

The media plan on the other hand is developed to inform the media on the various activities of the campaign and subsequently to generate extensive media coverage for Imbizo. The problem in this regard is that most of the people that Imbizo is meant to reach cannot be reached using the mainstream media, but through unmediated communication. This practice raises questions around the effectiveness of publicity generating activities if channels that are not relevant to a particular community are used to reach them.

The other aspect that the study has observed is that the process of developing the communication strategy is highly centralised. As a result, it can be argued that the centralisation of the development of the communication strategy contradicts the very essence of Imbizo; which is the development of partnership with all affected

stakeholders. The question that needs to be asked is how Imbizo could be said to be a participatory approach when its planning does not involve the intended beneficiaries and role players?

This study has also observed that the communication strategy framework does not make provision for communicating the Imbizo strategy within the GCIS or even internal communication within government departments. Communicating the communication strategy within government is important because even though not all government employees are directly involved in Imbizo, an understanding of how it works could help them to explain the campaign to their family members and friends. In this way, this will help in generating more publicity and understanding of government programme of action. This is also important because an understanding of the organisations' strategic communication objectives could enable the employees to determine the way they can best contribute to the attainment of the organisations' communication objectives.

The other concern is that the branding material used for the purposes of generating publicity around Imbizo is developed at the GCIS, with no involvement of the stakeholders. These products, amongst other things, include radio television and press adverts and billboards. The problem in this regard is that branding material that does not address the needs of a particular community could be developed.



Although Imbizo is meant to encourage unmediated communication between government and the people, there is an over-emphasis on the need to generate extensive media coverage. The problem with the need to generate extensive media coverage is that the media provides little or no platforms for interaction between the people and government as compared to the face-to-face interaction.

The other concern in this regard is that generating extensive media coverage is costly when one considers that television and newspaper advertorials are more costly as compared to unmediated communication. In this regard, this study contends that emphasis should be placed on dealing and profiling issues affecting the people and the impact of Imbizo on the community. As a result, the Imbizo campaign will in turn be able to generate extensive media coverage without spending huge sums of money in buying the airtime in radio and television and space in the newspapers.

A communication strategy developed for any project is meant to communicate a particular message. However, with regard to Imbizo, this study has found that what is communicated before an Imbizo campaign is not so much about what needs to be done but about what government is doing, and what it plans to do, and logistics around a particular Imbizo meeting. Not much is said about the community where

the meeting is going to take place, why it is going to take place at such a community and the possible benefits to that particular community.

### **6.3.2 Key messages**

As part of the Imbizo communication strategy, key messages are developed by the project team. The purpose of these messages is to provide a framework within which government communicators should communicate on Imbizo related issues. They are also meant to ensure that communicators do not send conflicting messages around Imbizo and to ensure that the core messages that government wants to communicate are communicated to the people. Consistency in government communication is therefore central to the development of key communication messages.

It is worth noting that the key messages are developed prior to Imbizo events. Given that these messages are developed before the Imbizo takes place, it can therefore be argued that they do not take into consideration the local context and the needs of the people in a particular community. This becomes a top-down approach to communication. This study contends that because Imbizo by its nature is supposed to be interactive, key messages should also be developed after an Imbizo event has taken place. This is important to ensure that they reflect the

views of the people and to communicate the way forward, that is, possible deadlines and the people who will execute certain responsibilities. This usage of key messages would ensure that the commitments made by government and other relevant stakeholders are clearly understood by all the affected people.

The problem with this approach is that although Imbizo is publicised as a partnership between government the community and other stakeholders, the process of developing such messages does not involve the community. It can therefore be argued that in this process, the government's communication objectives are communicated in a manner that does not give prominence to the local issues. It also gives an impression that Imbizo focuses more on government communicating its achievements and to a lesser extent on the interaction with the people.

#### **6.4 LANGUAGE USAGE**

Language usage is one of the determining factors for the success or failure of a particular communication project or campaign. In the pre-1994 South Africa, government communication was largely conducted in either English or Afrikaans, at the expense of other African languages. The dawn of democracy necessitated a paradigm shift from the exclusive use of English and Afrikaans to the recognition

and use African languages. Although the South African Constitution recognises the previously marginalised African languages there is still a bias towards the use of English in government communication.

#### **6.4.1 Constitutional language provisions**

Languages carry with them the pride of their speakers and their usage reflects their speakers' position in society. They do not only evoke political, ideological and social debates, but also emotional debates, mainly because they are carriers of the cultural values and pride of their speakers. Theoretically speaking, all languages in South Africa are equal, but socially and politically some languages are more equal than others in terms of symbolic, material and the communicative resources allocated to them.

The early 1990s marked the beginning of a new political dispensation in South Africa. These changes also witnessed the drafting of a new Constitution that recognises eleven official languages as stipulated in section 6(1), which states that:

“The official languages of the Republic of South Africa are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, isiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu”.

In this way, the Constitution commits the country to the promotion of multilingualism. Thus, the focus now in South Africa is no longer on the question of whether multilingualism is right or wrong, good or bad, but rather how to use the linguistic reality to achieve the nation-building which at the moment is at the top of the political agenda in the country (Madiba, 1999: 62).

Its is against this background that the use of language in government communication campaigns such as Imbizo should take into consideration the fact that languages carry with them the pride of their speakers because they are able to best articulate their feelings and needs using their languages. It is therefore important to note that in order to reach the all the people, it becomes necessary to communicate with them using the language (s) that they understand.

#### **6.4.2 Language usage in Imbizo brochures and the press**

The language used in the articles and advertisements on Imbizo is largely English. This is largely because the newspapers in which they are published are mainly English newspapers. This is a major concern when taking into consideration the fact that most of the people targeted by Imbizo activities have limited or no access to newspapers and have limited comprehension of English. This, therefore, has serious implications on the extent, nature and impact of Imbizo.

The other concern with regard to language is the fact that government communicators write in highly academic and abstract English which is difficult to understand, even by people who are literate, let alone those who are illiterate. For example, most of the writings around Imbizo and government communication in general, are preceded by the phrase “Building a people’s contract...” (a phrase which was the theme for President Mbeki’s 2004 State of the Nation Address). This has become one of the most commonly used phrases in government communication. However, little or nothing is done to have it simplified in a way that its meaning could be understood by all the people.

Another example is that of brochures developed providing an outline of government’s achievements, and in some instances to generate publicity. These documents are written in English. For example, during the October 2003 Presidential Imbizo, a brochure was developed. The purpose of the brochure was to give an outline of the opportunities that government provides, to talk about issues around service delivery and to illustrate progress in government’s service delivery (See Appendix D).

The problem with this tabloid is that it was written in English, which could be difficult for some people to understand. Even if it was to be translated, the main problem could be that some of the words may not have their vernacular

equivalents. For example the main heading is “Building a people’s contract for growth and development”. If, for example, this phrase was to be translated to Venda or any other African languages, it would require the translator to write a long story to ensure that its meaning is not lost in the translation process.

The other concern with the use of the word “contract” is that in some instances contracts are often associated with negatives because some people might have had bad experiences with their contracts to which they might have committed themselves. As a result, the use of such a concept could cause misunderstanding and resentment to the campaign and ultimately to what it seeks to achieve.

#### **6.4.3 Language used in the electronic media**

In order to generate publicity around Imbizo, one of the forms of communication that is used is the development of advertisements for radio. These advertisements are developed in English and thereafter translated into all official languages. There are inherent problems with this approach because the fact that they are developed in English and then later translated is a problem in the sense that some of the

English words that are used may not have their equivalent in vernacular. As a result there is a risk that the intended meaning could be lost in the translation process.

The risk with this approach is that the documents might lose the message that the campaign intends to convey. This study also contends that if writers in all official languages are properly briefed and the documents are written originally in the different official African languages, with strict supervision, this could ensure that the messages that the campaign intends to convey is not lost in the process.

Television advertisements are also developed to help generate publicity around Imbizo. However, the problem is that given the cost implications with regard to television advertisements, they cannot be developed in all official languages. This, therefore, could limit the impact of such advertisements.

## **6.5 SUMMARY OF IMBIZO VIDEOTAPES**

This section provides a summary of the recorded proceedings of presidential Imbizo meetings which were held in the North West and the Gauteng provinces. These recordings were selected to give an indication of the manner in which the meetings are conducted, issues that have been dealt with during those meetings, language usage and the environment of the meeting venue. The focus will also be



on the undertakings that the president made, and those that he made on behalf of premiers and mayors in the areas that he had visited.

### **6.5.1 North West Presidential Imbizo**

The following are the commitments that the president made during the North West leg of the Imbizo campaign:

- The president indicated that together with the premier they have agreed that there is a need to have a complete picture of the situation in order to determine the needs in the various areas that he visited.
- The premiers, MECs, councillors and national ministers have noted the concerns which were raised by the people and the need for community halls, libraries, multipurpose community centres, grounds, roads, electricity, water, houses and sanitation in the greater Taung area.
- The president also indicated that “we will come back to respond to your concerns and to indicate what all of us at the national government, councillors and provincial government will do”.
- The president also expressed support for Mafikeng Industrial Development Zones (IDZ) and for small business people in the area. He committed to

report to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) the concerns raised in the meeting to see what the department can do to help the IDZ .

- The president said that the phasing out of commandos would not be done in such a way that it reduces the capacity to fight crime.

### **6.5.2 Gauteng Presidential Imbizo**

The following are the commitments that the president made during the Gauteng leg of the Imbizo campaign. The areas that were visited are Rosslyn, Greenfields and Garankuwa.

- The president undertook to discuss the issue of the need for inspectors whose purpose is to oversee the implementation of Employment Equity and Affirmative action together with the Minister of Labour.
- The president undertook to talk to the Minister of Justice to consider the establishment of a civil and criminal court in the neighbourhood.
- The president undertook to talk to the Minister of Home Affairs to consider the possibility of building a Home Affairs office.
- The president undertook to talk to the Minister of Safety and Security to consider the possibility of increasing the number of police officials in the area.

- The president undertook to talk to the Minister of Communications to consider the possibility of establishing a post office in the area.
- A commitment was made for the need for more classes. A commitment was made for the announcement on the school expansion programme as soon as possible.

### **6.5.3 Analysis of Imbizo meetings**

Although the purpose of these meetings is to provide an opportunity for all the people to speak, the set-up during these Imbizo meetings is not conducive for interactive discussions with the community. This is largely because many people attend these meetings. As a result, this makes it difficult to thoroughly discuss the issues that have been raised. Infact, it becomes difficult for most of the people to get the chance to raise the issues that concern them. As a result, lists of questions are drawn up. And one person from the community would present them to the president so that he can then respond to them.

There are several drawbacks that can be identified in this approach. Firstly, if people ask questions, there is no indication of whether they are representative of all the people or whether they are just individual specific questions. The risk is that some of the issues may not be addressed because they could be censored before they are brought to the attention of the president.

Secondly, practically the venues that are available in the communities are not big enough to accommodate all the people who may want to raise issues with the president. Even if all the people are accommodated, it would be impractical to exhaust all the issues in an interactive manner.

It is against this background that it becomes important to make sure that a mechanism is put in place to ensure that the questions that are asked are representative of all the people in the community.

In order to enhance the interactive nature of Imbizo, where necessary, an interpretation service is provided to make sure that the local people understand and are able to participate in the discussions. This is a positive aspect because it recognises the diverse nature of the South African community. It also acknowledges the fact that people are better able to express themselves competently when they use their mother tongue.

The other concern with Imbizo is that there is limited time within which the interaction takes place. As a result, Imbizo meetings lack the kind of interaction that characterises the traditional Imbizo. The problem in this regard is that people are not able to extensively discuss the issues that have been raised.

During the meetings, the president committed to address the issues that people had raised. However, a notable omission was that even though the president made commitments and also committed premiers and mayors to address the problems that the people raised during the meeting, no timeframes were set on when these issues will be addressed. It may be argued that it is not possible to provide timeframes during the meetings as some government procedures need to be taken into consideration in taking implementation decisions.

However, this study contends that a rough indication, subject to conformation could be provided to the people. This is largely because these meetings take place in an environment where people are sometimes sceptical of government's ability to deliver on its promises. The other concern is that a perception exists that *Imbizo* is a public relations exercise from which issues raised could not be implemented.

It should be taken into consideration that the proceedings of an *Imbizo* meeting are recorded by government officials who attend the meeting. The purpose of this is to ensure that a record of all the concerns that people have raised is kept. At the end of the campaign, a report detailing all the issues raised during *Imbizo* is then compiled. The issues are then sent to the relevant departments for their attention. In order to ensure effective follow-up, a database of all the issues has been developed.

## **6.6 NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS**

This section provides an overview of newspaper coverage of the North West, Gauteng and the Western Cape Imbizos. The articles which were analysed were carried by both the national and provincial newspapers (See Appendix B).

### **6.6.1 An overview of the press coverage of the Presidential Imbizos**

A total of 56 articles were analysed for the purposes of this study. Forty-nine (49) of these articles were more factual in their reporting of these Presidential Imbizos.

The following are the newspapers that carried the stories on the three Presidential Imbizos, which are the focus of this study: Beeld, Sunday Times, Saturday Star, Weekend Pretoria News, City Press, Daily Sun, Sunday Independent The Citizen, Sowetan, Mail and Guardian, Weekend Pretoria News, The Star, Pretoria News, and the Sunday World, Saturday Star, Hermanus

Times, Daily Dispatch, Rapport, The Mercury, Business Day, Sunday Tribune, and Independent online.

Seven of the articles were opinion pieces which were carried by the Sowetan, The Citizen, The Star, Pretoria News, Business Day and the City Press.

The main issues that were dealt with in the media coverage included amongst others, the president issuing title deeds to residents, visiting clinics, discussing labour issues, government's position on HIV/AIDS, controversy around Jacob Zuma, relationship between the ANC and the NNP and the visit to the Dutch Reformed Church In Cape Town at these different sites.

The writers from government praised Imbizo as a progressive approach to governance, and argue that it provides the people with an opportunity to interact with the president. Imbizo is also presented as a positive approach to governance. In this case, one would have expected people writing from a government perspective to provide more information about the rationale of Imbizo, how areas are selected for the Imbizo meetings, and the impact that previous Imbizo's have had on the community. The importance of this is that it could help to ensure that people understand what Imbizo is all about.

In general, the newspaper coverage of Imbizo was positive with a few negative and critical articles (refer to Appendix B for details). The other aspect that should be considered is that the reporting style used in these articles was largely factual. This is because they dealt with questions such as, where, why, what, who when and

how? There was little or no provision of background information with regard to the purpose of Imbizo, information about the areas where Imbizo meetings were taking place. An aspect which could provide an educational angle of Imbizo could have been the profiling of Imbizo's success stories.

Given that Imbizo is supposed to be people driven, it is striking to note that people writing from a government perspective do not highlight the human interest aspect of Imbizo, that is, the extent to which Imbizo has improved the lives of the people. If done, this could highlight the impact of Imbizo in the community. As a way of informing people about what Imbizo is all about, and the processes involved, it could have been more helpful to have articles which provide details around these processes.

The other aspect to be considered is that the articles do not make reference to the issue of deadlines for the implementation of promises made to the people during Imbizo meetings. The fact that there is no reference to deadlines has been highlighted in the press coverage as an area of concern by the people. This is largely because people become sceptical as a perception exists that the promises will not be met as this is a public relations exercise.

On the other hand, some journalists and political analysts presented a more critical view to the whole Imbizo concept. The fact that Imbizo meetings (Western Cape) were scheduled just a few months before the 2004 general elections, raised



concerns among some political commentators. They perceived the timing as part of electioneering by the majority party (ANC).

This was largely because it was during this time that the relationship between the African National Congress (ANC) and the New National Party (NNP) became more prominent. The assumption was that the relationship between the ANC and the NNP was necessitated by the ANC's desire to win the elections in the Western Cape.

The other aspect that came up in the opinion pieces was the acknowledgement that Imbizo could play an important role in strengthening democracy at grassroots level. However, the fact that one Imbizo meeting cannot accommodate a lot of people at once proved to be a limiting factor in terms of giving most of the people the chance to express their views. It therefore becomes important to make sure that a system which would be able to address these limitations is developed.

One of the concerns that the newspaper articles raised was that people complained that in the Gauteng leg of the president's Imbizo, local councillors pre-selected people who should ask questions. The rationale for this tendency it is alleged is to make sure that people do not ask questions that might embarrass the local councillors in the presence of the president.

## **6.6.2 People's participation as reflected in the newspaper coverage of Imbizo**

The rationale behind Imbizo is to ensure that there is participative interaction between the government and political leaders. In this context, political leaders and the people meet on a face-to-face encounter to discuss issues that affect the community and as a result work on a mechanism to make sure that such issues are addressed.

In general, the press coverage indicates that Imbizo as practiced in government is an interactive process. However, there are instances where one could argue that the manner in which some of the issues were handled reflects a degree of resistance to interaction. For example, during the Western Cape leg of the Presidential Imbizo, one of the people in attendance (referring to the New National Party) said that:

“They are the people who oppressed us, who threw us in jail. I say to hell with the National Party”.

I response the president said that:

“That’s fine. The rest of us will work with the NNP”

(Merten, 2003 Mail and Guardian).

Given that this interaction took place during Imbizo, the perception created by the newspapers is that the president missed an opportunity to explain the processes involved with regard to Imbizo and what it seeks to achieve. This is because Imbizo by its very nature should accommodate all the questions that people may ask during the meeting.

However, the other aspect that this incident highlights is the thin line between government and the ruling party. Imbizo is a government communication initiative, and technically not an ANC programme.

The issue of the working relationship between the ANC and the NNP is therefore technically not a government issue, and therefore irrelevant to an Imbizo meeting. This is an aspect which could have been clarified as it is evidently not often well understood.

The concern around the time issue was also raised by Wyndham writing for the Business Day (18 September 2003) when he said that:

“More than an hour of questions, some aggressive, others full of praise, were answered in less than 15 minutes and then it was back to the motorcade”.

The implication in this regard is that not enough time was given to answering the questions that the people had asked. The limited time given to questions and answer session compromises the ability of those in attendance to thoroughly discuss the issues that they may want to raise with the president.

This could largely be because the communication messages are finalised before Imbizo meetings take place. The problem is that this provides no room for issues that are beyond the designed scope to be considered, as was the case in the above interaction between the president and the individual who attended the meeting.

The other aspect is that assumptions are made on what the people in a given community would want to talk about. Although this is informed by the pre-campaign site visit, given that consultation is largely done with the leaders in the community, the possibility is that some of the aspects which might be important o a particular

community might be missed in the process. The other aspect is that most of the people at the local government level would not want a negative picture to be presented to the president on how they run the local affairs.

As a result, during the consultation they may try to paint a positive picture of their environment, hence the need to provide people with an opportunity to ask questions without restrictions. This would therefore require that more time be given for people to ask questions, and for the president to respond to such questions.

### **6.6.3 Analysis of press coverage of Imbizo**

It can therefore be concluded that in general, Presidential Imbizos received extensive positive coverage in the print media. This is largely because efforts were made to ensure that journalists are present at the Imbizo events. The question that this raises is whether this coverage has been generated because of the interest that Imbizo attracts or can this be seen as “arranged” publicity. If the latter is the case, it could then be argued that this reinforces the perception that it is a public relations exercise.

The other question that this raises is whether extensive press coverage could be equated with a better understanding of what Imbizo is all about, improved access to government communication and information services. This becomes a concern

when one considers the fact that most of the people that Imbizo wants to reach have limited access to the newspapers and that they have little or no understanding of the English language.

Imbizo is promoted as a participatory approach to issues of governance, which encourages partnership between government and the people. However, this partnership is not reflected in the opinion pieces which have been written. For example, it would have been interesting if there were articles which were written from a civil society perspective, in order to give a perspective of Imbizo from the recipients' point of view.

The other aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that none of the press articles that have been selected for the purposes of this study provides an explanation of the concept Imbizo. In this regard this study contends that there is an assumption people in general understand what Imbizo is all about. That some people do not understand what Imbizo is all about is evidenced by the fact that some of the people interviewed in the newspaper articles, especially non speakers of Zulu did not understand what the word Imbizo itself means. In some instances, some people have heard about Imbizo but could not attend Imbizo meetings because they did not understand what it is all about.

What can be concluded from the press coverage of Imbizo is that there seem to be some interest on Imbizo from the press. This provides a platform to strengthen relations between government and the press to ensure that there is maximum reach.

## **6.7 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

This section presents an analysis of the extent and nature of community participation in Imbizo. The focus will be on the processes involved and the extent to which they encourage or inhibit the creation of an environment conducive for community participation.

### **6.7.1 Nature of community participation**

Theoretically, Imbizo is meant to be a participatory form of governance, however in actual practice, this does not seem to be the case. This study has found that at the planning level, there is little or no consultation with the beneficiaries of a particular Imbizo campaign. Although it could be justified that practically it is not possible to consult all the people in a particular community, efforts should be made to ensure that the views of all the people, over and above the feedback provided by the local leaders are received.

This study has also observed that the only form of visible participation is that of people attending meetings, listen to the president's address and in some cases be able to ask questions. However, this does not extend to decision-making and in the implementation of the decisions that have been taken.

The other aspect that this study has observed is that the process seems to have predetermined communication objectives. This is largely because the key messages that need to be communicated are developed prior to Imbizo meetings. This approach has a negative impact on the course of the interaction, because instead of having the interaction being led and determined by the issues raised by the local people during the meeting issues are defined before the meeting.

Although Imbizo is meant to provide an opportunity for all the people to interact with the political leaders, there is no way of ensuring that the issues raised during the meeting are representative of all the people in the community. Although some consultation can be done with the community leaders, the question that comes up is on the extent to which those consulted represent all the interests in a particular community. The other aspect that seems to compromise representativity is that that the venues that are used might not be able to accommodate all the people in the community. As a result, the extent to which people can participate in the discussions become limited. The set-up of the meetings, sometimes under a tent, is not conducive for frank and exhaustive discussions.



### **6.7.2 Participation through the Imbizo toll-free number**

The other form of people's participation during Imbizo is through the toll-free number. This toll free number is managed by the GCIS. The purpose of this number is to provide the people with an opportunity to report issues that need government attention. It is also meant to provide answers on Imbizo-related queries that people might have. These calls are recorded and therefore form part of the overall Imbizo project team report (please refer to Appendix C for the record of issues raised through the toll-free number). The main purpose of this exercise is to enable government to have an idea of the concerns and needs that people have, and where possible to assist in the follow-up process that might take place during the campaign or after the campaign.

The challenge with the toll-free number is that the fact that somebody keeps a record of all the issues, contact details and physical addresses of callers in itself raises people's expectations. The implication is that efforts should be made to ensure that issues that people have raised are addressed. Otherwise, if they are not addressed, in the long run people might become disillusioned with the Imbizo process, and ultimately with government in general.

Further investigation of this process revealed that there is little or no follow-up on issues raised through the toll-free number. As a result, during the next Imbizos people call and complain about issues raised during the previous Imbizos to which no follow-up was made.

The other aspect is that the toll-free number provides an opportunity for people to raise a variety of issues that affect their lives, and in some instances, they need urgent responses. The problem in this regard is that the number is managed by one person who is not trained to deal with complex issues that people raise. As a result, the official is forced to refer these cases to relevant departments, or in some instances offer advice.

Another observation that this study has made is that that this toll-free number has brought forth the fact that people need more avenues to communicate with government. The implication is that the existing avenues are not as effective as they should be.

Amongst others, people who called the toll-free number raised the following questions:

- What is Imbizo?
- What is Imbizo all about?

- When is Imbizo coming to my place?
- How does Imbizo process work?
- What must we do when we want leaders to come to our areas?
- Do we pay to participate in Imbizo ?
- Who is allowed to speak during Imbizo ?
- Will the leaders listen given the number of people in attendance?
- Will the leaders come back to give us feedback on the issues that we raised with them?

It is evident from the above questions that people have limited understanding of what Imbizo is all about and the processes involved in this campaign. This could be accounted for by the fact that an assumption is made by government communicators that all the people understand what the concept of Imbizo is all about. This could also be accounted for by the fact that Imbizo is a Zulu word, which non-Zulu speakers might not be able to understand. As a result, publicity materials which do not seek to explain what Imbizo is all about are developed. As a result, an opportunity to provide clarity on what Imbizo is all about, or what the word Imbizo itself, mean is missed.

The fact that people want to know if they have to pay to take part in Imbizo is a clear indication that there is limited understanding of what this campaign is all

about. Given that even though Imbizo is meant to give all people an opportunity to ask questions to politicians, but still have people who want to know as to who is allowed to speak during Imbizo makes it clear that this process and what it seeks to achieve is not well understood by the people it is meant to reach.

The question that relates to whether the leaders are going to listen given that many people attend Imbizo meetings is at the core of logistics around the nature and ability of people to actively participate in the discussions. It is with this understanding that a mechanism must be developed to make sure that those in attendance are given the chance express their views.

The issue of lack of set deadlines on the implementation of the promises, and that the leaders do not come back to provide feedback raises questions about whether government takes their concerns seriously or not, and as a result, this may lead to people becoming sceptical about Imbizo. It is therefore important to note that feedback does not necessarily mean progress on issues raised during Imbizo. This means that even though there are problems, people still want to know that at least somebody is dealing with their concerns. This could help to ensure that there is transparency in the whole exercise. As a result, this could enhance the level of trust between government and the people.

One of the criticisms levelled against government communication in general is that the language that is used is often very difficult to understand. For example, one of the callers wanted to know what “the concept of the people’s contract” is all about. The problem with the use of difficult language is that some of the people who may have interest in Imbizo for example, may not understand what is being communicated.

The challenge in this regard is for government communicators to communicate in a manner that makes it possible for the people to understand the issues under discussion. The other aspect in this regard is that the concept of the people’s contract could have conflicting interpretations in the communities. It is therefore important for government communicators to make use of the language which is not ambiguous.

Although the toll-free line record does not necessarily represent the majority of the people in the country, it can however be argued that it provides an indication of the nature of issues that concern the people in the community and their views towards Imbizo. The other concern with the toll-free line is that there is no follow-up on these issues although they have been put on record for the purposes of follow-up. The problem in this regard is that during the next Imbizos, people who previously raised issues through the toll-free line and such issues were not addressed call to complain about the promises which have not been fulfilled. Can be concluded that

if this pattern continues, in the long run people might lose interest and become disillusioned with the Imbizo process.

## **6.8 CONCLUSION**

The concept of Imbizo is an ideal, which seeks to encourage people to participate in the issues of governance in South Africa. However, it has become evident from this study that although it is a positive approach, it has some limitations which need to be addressed for it to be truly participative. This study contends that a multi-media approach with emphasis on face-to-face interaction should be developed to ensure the effectiveness of Imbizo and to maximise people's participation.

## **CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions and recommendations of this study. In this regard, a brief outline of research problem, aims of the study and the research methods used in this study will be provided. This will be followed by the presentation of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### **7.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

As Horwitz (2001:318) indicated,

“...the Comtask Report conceptualised the communications tasks of government as providing information quickly, transparently, and with accountability to the people and the media, and enacting policies to spur the

growth of communications structures so as to enable people to function as active citizens in a democratic environment”.

It is evident from the above quotation that communication in this context is at the core of government’s interaction with the people. This is because if people do not have access to government information, they will not be able participate in government initiated activities. In a democratic society such as South Africa, communication should therefore be seen and practiced as a dialogue between government and the people. The role of the people is seen as more important than simply being voters during the elections. This clearly indicates that as part of the democratic processes in the country, the people should be involved in decision making processes.

In this regard, Mtaka (2002:2) indicates that, participation at community level is necessitated by the fact that there is a need to move from building to consolidating democracy, hence the need for people’s participation. It is therefore through building an enabling environment at community level that democracy can be consolidated in the broader community.

However, looking at Imbizo as adopted by government, it is evident that the people are generally not involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the



campaign. In this regard, this study contends that lack of effective public participation compromises the democratic principles that underline democracy.

It is in this regard that Mtaka (2002:3) further argues that to sustain democracy, efforts should be made to ensure that all citizens understand the nature of their participation, and what it is in which they have to participate.

Access to information is therefore central to participation as it could help citizens to understand government programmes and therefore remain committed to such programmes. It also shows that there is a need to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in planning for Imbizo so that they can understand their roles and responsibilities to ensure its success. The importance of participation is that it could help to ensure that the citizens take ownership of the whole process; an important democratic principle.

This approach could also help to ensure that there is a buy-in by all affected parties to ensure the consolidation of democracy. However, the other concern with government's adaptation of Imbizo is that such meetings can only reach a small fraction of the people in a particular community. This is largely because of logistical limitations such as, amongst others, the size of the venues and limited access to the venues. The other concern is the apparent lack of a mechanism to ensure that

the views and opinions expressed at these meetings are representative of the majority views in the community.

### **7.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The following were the aims of this research:

- To analyse the role of the GCIS in strategic management of government communication, with specific reference to Imbizo.
- To determine the extent to which the strategic management approach adopted for government communication, project management, enhances or limits the GCIS' ability to execute its mandate.
- To determine the extent to which strategic management of Imbizo enhances or inhibits participation of the people.
- To analyse the communication strategy framework used for the purposes of Imbizo, and the extent to which it enhances or inhibits people's participation.
- To analyse the nature and extent of media coverage received by the Imbizo campaign.
- To develop a communication strategy framework that can be used for participatory development communication purposes.
- To determine the extent and nature of people's participation during an Imbizo meeting through the analysis of Imbizo videotapes.

## **7.4 RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THE STUDY**

The research methods used in this study were, content analysis of video recordings of the actual Imbizo meetings, documents containing information about Imbizo, analysis of the print media coverage of Imbizo, and field research, the field being the (GCIS).

## **7.5 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **7.5.1 Understanding of the concept participation**

As shown in this study, issues around participation and interaction are interpreted differently, and sometimes depending on the context in which the participative

activities are taking place. Imbizo as a participative approach to governance is also perceived in the media, community, and business from different perspectives. The interpretations of its objectives also vary amongst others, from a genuine need to uplift the community, public relations, and to legitimising government activities.

However, it is evident that overall, although there are aspects that may need to be improved, Imbizo is a positive approach to governance, as it provides reassurance that government listens and cares for the people. It can therefore be argued that even if the promises that government makes might not be met at the expected

time, the fact that people are given the platform to express their views creates the sense that the people are involved in the planning and implementation of government programmes.

It is also interesting to note that there seem to be a general acceptance of Imbizo as a positive step towards the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. This is also because even soccer clubs call their meetings with their supporters Imbizo (a practice which became even more popular after government had adopted the Imbizo concept). Even in soccer clubs' supporters' structures Imbizo is used to underline the democratic nature of such interaction.

### **7.5.2 Generation of extensive media coverage**

The Imbizo concept as applied in government places emphasis on the generation of extensive media coverage. This emphasis is inherently faulty as it defeats the main objective. This study has noted that most of the publicity is generated before and during the Imbizo campaigns. But little or nothing is done to generate post Imbizo publicity. Imbizo is meant to be an unmediated form of communication between government and the people. This is largely because it gives politicians and the people an opportunity to talk to each other face-to-face about issues that affect their lives.

### **7.5.3 Implementation of government promises**

It has also become evident that there is little or no follow-up on issues that the people raise during Imbizo meetings. This is evidenced by the fact that in the analysis of the press coverage of Imbizo, people who have been interviewed often raised concerns about the lack of delivery on promises that government has made in previous Imbizo meetings. It was for this reason that several people who have been interviewed by the press indicated that they see no reason why they should attend Imbizo meetings.

The other concern is that there is no indication of the time frames within which the identified issues will have been addressed. This limitation has also been identified in the video recordings of the Presidential Imbizo meetings analysed for the study. The problem in this regard is that this has resulted in people becoming sceptical of government's messages and its commitment to address their problems.

### **7.5.4 Key messages**

As part of the planning for Imbizo, key messages are developed by the GCIS. It is worth noting that the key messages are developed prior to Imbizo meetings. The

purpose of these messages is to provide a framework within which government communicators should communicate on Imbizo related issues. This is meant to ensure that they do not send out contradictory messages, but stick to what has been prescribed.

An analysis of the key messages that have been developed to guide communication around Imbizo reveal that the messages are often not localised. This means that they do not take into consideration the interests of the target audience and the issues that concern them. They rather focus on the broader government objectives. The other aspect is that there is no involvement of the local people in the development of such messages.

The problem with this approach is that although Imbizo is publicised as a partnership between government the community and other stakeholders, the process of developing such messages does not involve such stakeholders.

The problem in this regard is that given that Imbizo seeks to build partnerships with civil organisations, there is a danger that government and civic organisations might not communicate from the same premise. This might at the end confuse the local community. Against this background, it can therefore be argued that in this process, the government's key ideological objectives are communicated in a manner that does not give prominence to the local issues.

### **7.5.5 Role of the partners in the planning of Imbizo activities**

The planning of Imbizo activities is highly centralised, with decisions taken at the GCIS, with limited or no involvement of the stakeholders who are meant to be the beneficiaries of this process (the people who supposedly have a better understanding of their circumstances and needs). The question in this regard is that if the people who are supposed to benefit from the campaign are not actively involved in the planning and implementation of the campaign activities, how is that a partnership?

It has also become evident in this study that the development of the communication strategy, which is a guiding document for Imbizo communication does not reflect the partnership with the community that it is meant to reach. This situation has to some extent perpetuated the perception that Imbizo is a public relations exercise than an attempt at uplifting the communities.

### **7.5.6 Imbizo as an ideological approach to governance**

It can be concluded that Imbizo is more of an ideological approach to governance than the much-publicised need for interaction between government and the people. The creation of extensive media coverage seem to be the main objective. It also appears as if it is the measure of Imbizo campaign's success and/or failure. But given that in its communication emphasis is placed on the poor communities, the question that needs to be answered is how extensive media coverage could help to reach South Africa's poor people, most of whom are illiterate?

The other concern is that most newspapers from whom publicity for Imbizo is sought are national newspapers whose coverage of issues is not localised, but provide provincial and national perspectives on issues. This tendency therefore does not benefit the local people in their efforts to improve their lives.

### **7.5.7 Language usage**

One of the limitations with the use of mainstream media is the language issue. English is the main language that is used. The problem in this regard is that the type of English used in, for example, brochures and articles written by government communicators is highly abstract, which makes it difficult to understand.

### **7.5.8 Branding of Imbizo**



The Imbizo initiative is not well branded. This is clearly indicated by the fact that in some of the articles that have been analysed, the press covered some of the Imbizo activities without any reference being made to Imbizo. This could be accounted for partly by the fact that some of the journalists might not have the background information on what Imbizo is all about.

The problem caused by poor branding is that if a person does not know anything about Imbizo, and does not understand what the word Imbizo means, they may not know that that particular story is part of a broader government communication programme.

There is also a limited understanding of the concept Imbizo amongst the people. This may ultimately affect the extent to which they participate in Imbizo activities. It has also become evident from the analysis of the toll free line register that there is a need to explain what Imbizo is all about in a way that is understandable to all South Africans. The problem in this case is that not all the people understand Zulu.

#### **7.5.9 Accessibility of Imbizo meeting venues**

The other issue that need to be taken into consideration is the issue of accessibility of Imbizo meeting venues. This becomes a problem because most people have to

travel long distances to get to Imbizo meeting venues. This means that because of the distance, some people who may want to talk to the president may not be able to attend such meetings. It therefore becomes important for leaders at the local level to devise strategies that will ensure that the concerns of all the people are raised with the president even though some of the affected people may not necessarily be able to attend the meeting.

#### **7.5.10 Venue constraints**

Imbizo meeting venues cannot realistically accommodate all the people and address all the issues in that particular community. It therefore becomes important to devise strategies that will make sure that although the people could not all be reached at once, their issues are taken into consideration. This would require co-operation of a cross-section of structures at the local level.

### **7.6 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study has concluded that the adaptation of Imbizo for use in government has become a highly politicised phenomenon and its main objectives highly contestable. Looking at the press coverage of Imbizo, it has become evident that in some instances people perceive it to be an electioneering mechanism for the African National Congress (ANC). This has brought to the fore the fact that there is a thin line between the ruling party, in this case the ANC, and government. In this

regard, this study contends that this is a criticism that is unavoidable. All ruling parties are most likely to be accused of using campaigns of this nature partly to reach their own political goals.

In trying to clarify government's understanding of the role of Imbizo, Mbeki (2004:5) stated that:

“The KZN Imbizo, our last one before the elections, has confirmed the need for ongoing interaction between government and people. It emphasised the correctness of our view that we should not relate to the people by visiting them for a few hours by merely going to launch projects and thereafter go back to Pretoria or our provincial and local capitals”

This clearly demonstrates government's aims with regard to Imbizo. However, there are concerns in some quarters of society where people are sceptical about the “real” reasons behind Imbizo campaigns. People have often raised concerns about the lack of delivery on promises made during Imbizo meetings.

Writing in ANC Today Mbeki (2004:5) further stated that:

“It produces measurable results both for the people and the government, expands the possibility for the people to determine their destiny and further

entrenches our democratic system, building on the Imbizo traditions of our pre-colonial societies”.

The fact that Mbeki wrote the above quotation in his capacity as ANC president further illustrates the thin line between government and the political party. This is because he was commenting on a government programme using a political party platform. However, the understanding of the role of Imbizo as shown in the above quotation contradicts some of the findings of this study. For example, it is not clear how the impact of Imbizo is measured. This study contends that the most viable measurement of such campaign would be the implementation of promises made during Imbizo meetings. However, as this study has observed, there is a general concern that the issues raised during these meetings are not implemented, and no feedback is provided in this regard.

The other aspect is that the people who are meant to benefit from Imbizo are not involved in decision making processes on Imbizo related issues. For example, they are not involved in the development of the communication strategy and on when and how issues that have been raised will be implemented. In this regard, this study has concluded that although Imbizo is branded as a participatory process, it is not completely participatory in practice. This study contends that Imbizo is largely meant to create the impression that the government is still in touch with

people at grassroots level. With this understanding, it can therefore be concluded that this is more of a public relations exercise.

This study has also observed from the planning and implementation that there is over-emphasis on the generation of extensive mainstream media coverage before and during the Imbizo campaign. It can therefore be concluded that government's bias toward the mainstream media contradicts the very essence of Imbizo; which is to interact with the people in a face-to-face encounter. The role of the mainstream media cannot be seen as an attempt to reach the main beneficiaries of Imbizo, the poor people. It is meant to reach mainly the intellectuals, business people and opinion makers. This is meant to mainly inform them of the programme of government so that they can in some way garner support for Imbizo.

This study however contends that informing opinion makers is part of what government communication is all about. However, this aspect of government communication should be clearly spelt out. This would require that the Imbizo programme targets different audiences, which would require that their preferred channels of communication should be used in order for Imbizo to have maximum impact.

It can also be concluded that although Imbizo is meant to reach all the people, all factors considered, it cannot be all-inclusive in terms of planning and

implementation. However, strategies that would help to ensure that the views and interests of all interest groups are taken into consideration should be developed. This is important because if this aspect is undermined, in the long run Imbizo might lose its credibility in the communities that it is meant to reach.

The other aspect to be considered is that where government has made promises to deliver on certain things, such undertakings must be honoured. In cases where there are delays, such delays should be communicated to the relevant communities through relevant channels of communication. This will help to ensure that a relationship of trust is maintained, and Imbizos credibility as a channel of communication between government and the people is strengthened.

The analysis of the videotapes of Imbizo meetings clearly demonstrates that all aspects considered, an Imbizo meeting cannot realistically accommodate all the people in a particular community, and address all the issues in a particular community at once. It therefore becomes important to devise strategies that will make sure that although the people could not all be reached at once, their issues are taken into consideration. This would require a largely representative local structure which would deal with such issues.

It has also become evident that although Imbizo is gaining in terms of popularity, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in this regard. This is largely

because the toll-free line has revealed that there are still many people who do not understand what Imbizo is all about and how it could benefit their communities (refer to Appendix C).

The issue of language usage in government communication, and in this case, with regard to Imbizo raises some concerns. This is largely because of the obvious bias towards the use of English in the publicity material developed for the purposes of Imbizo. Given the low literacy levels in the country, this could minimise the impact of Imbizo.

Finally, this study contends that as an ideal, Imbizo is a progressive approach to governance. This is because it strives to ensure that people participate in the discussions about issues that affect their lives. However, in practice, there is a limited scope for people to be equal role players with regard to planning and in decision making in general. The other aspect that should be noted is that the president and political leaders come from a position of power. This automatically gives them an upper hand in the discussions and in decision making. This study therefore contends that in as far as Imbizo is concerned, there can never be equal participation between the people and the president or any political leaders. The challenge is therefore for government to conduct the campaign in such a way that the views of all the people represented during the Imbizo meetings are considered.

## 7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made on the basis of the results of the study:

- The local government should be actively involved in Imbizo as they are the first contact that people have with government. This is also because they are the ones responsible for implementation of government policies and programmes. Their active involvement will help to ensure that the issues raised during an Imbizo meeting are representative of all the people in their municipalities.
- There is a need for a shift in the mindset of government communicators; from the need to generate extensive media coverage to effective use of existing communication structures in the communities to publicise Imbizo meetings.
- Undertakings made during Imbizo meetings should be honoured. In cases where there are delays, such delays should be communicated to the affected people through the existing communication structures in the affected community. In this regard, a checklist of issues that need attention,



indicating the time frames and the responsible people must be developed.

This will help to ensure that Imbizo builds and retains its credibility.

- Prior to an Imbizo meeting, the different groups in the community should draw a list of concerns and comments which their leaders should present to the president. This would help to ensure that the needs and concerns presented during an Imbizo meeting are representative of all the views in the community.
- An intersectoral team comprising of civic organisations, non-governmental organisations, government and all relevant stakeholders should be formed. The purpose of this team would be to ensure implementation of agreements and undertakings made during the Imbizo meeting.
- All government interaction with the people at national, provincial and local level should be clearly branded as Imbizo to ensure that people become well informed when such events take place.
- The content of the Imbizo brochures should be customised to the local communities which are to be visited to ensure their relevance.

- A structure that deals solely with Imbizo activities should be established. The purpose of this structure will be to co-ordinate, plan, evaluate, and work on implementation of issues raised during an Imbizo meetings. The structure will have to work closely with the GCIS and liaise with government departments at all levels. The establishment of such a structure will also help to ensure that the issues raised during an Imbizo meeting are addressed.
- There is a need for feedback mechanisms to be established to keep people informed about the developments on the issues raised during an Imbizo meeting. This aspect is important because as indicated in the research, people would want to know about progress, even if there are challenges in the implementation process.
- Given that South Africa is a multilingual country, it is important that efforts are made to explain what the concept Imbizo is all about. This is important because it has become evident that some people could not attend Imbizo activities because they did not understand what Imbizo is all about.
- A team which includes professionals should be set up to manage the toll free number during the campaign. This is because as this study has noted, the toll-free line could be effective in addressing issues that cannot be

postponed to a later date. The report from the toll-free line should also be used in the development of the communication strategy for the next campaign as it provides an indication of the issues that need attention.

- A two-phased communication strategy must be developed. The first part of the communication strategy should focus on communication before and during the campaign. The purpose of this communication will be to generate publicity and awareness about the imminent visit by the president or political leaders and to sustain awareness during the campaign. The second phase should focus on post campaign communication. In this case, after the president and political leaders have visited the selected areas, extensive communication should be embarked upon. The purpose of the communication strategy should be to communicate the findings from the visit, what will be done, how they will done, who will do it, and when they will be done. This is more important because after visit communication will address the problem of people not knowing when and how the issues will be addressed. It will also be a way to hold all the stakeholders accountable for all the undertakings that they had made.
- The following framework, which is a modification of Steyn and Puth's (2000) (refer to Figure 4.1) framework on the development of a corporate communication strategy should be used for Imbizo:

Figure 7.1: Proposed communication strategy framework for government's participatory development communication initiative.



This adapted framework moves from the premise that instead of developing a generic communication strategy which is then implemented even at the local community, the broader national communication strategy must be further subdivided in community specific communication strategies. In developing the localised communication strategies, the following aspects which are aligned to the main headings in Figure 7.1 should be taken into consideration:

- **Consultation with community leaders**

Community leaders in this case include amongst others, traditional, civic, religious and business leaders. These leaders serve the interests of diverse groups in their communities. The fact that they deal with the people that they lead on a regular basis provides them with a better understanding of their needs. It can therefore be concluded that in order for any communication campaign such as Imbizo to succeed, efforts should be made to ensure that community leaders are involved in the planning and implementation stages of the campaign. The other important aspect in this regard is that these leaders should be involved earlier on in the campaign. This must be done to ensure that there is buy-in by the community leaders and the community in general.

The other aspect is that community leaders have a certain degree of influence on the community. This places them in a position where if they are not involved in the

planning and implementation, they might influence the community not support the campaign. This is something which might adversely affect the impact of any communication campaign, and must therefore be avoided.

- **Identify community strategic stakeholders (internal and external environment)**

The internal stakeholders in this regard refer to the people who are the beneficiaries of the campaign, that is, the local community. The external stakeholders are people whose services may be required to address the needs of a particular community. The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders should therefore be clearly outlined earlier on in the planning to simplify the monitoring of the implementation processes.

- **Identify needs and strategic issues facing the community (community representatives should identify their needs)**

The community representatives are in a better position to identify strategic issues facing the community. As a result, they should be placed in a position where they can identify community issues that need attention. This is important because if they are involved, a sense of ownership develops. As a result, they will be able to

commit and mobilise the community to work together with government to find solutions to the issues that have been identified.

- **Prioritise the needs**

It should be noted that given the financial and human resources constraints, it may not be possible to give attention to all the issues affecting the community. As a result, it is important to prioritise the issues. This should be done in consultation with the community. At this stage, it is important to ensure that there is effective communication between all the affected stakeholders.

- **Set communication goals (decide whether the purpose of communication is to inform, influence or educate)**

At this level, it becomes important to take decisions on the purpose of communication. If for example, the purpose of the communication is to educate, the communication messages should be communicated as such. Once the purpose has been identified, it should be communicated and clarified with all the stake holders to ensure that they all understand what is going on. It is also important to identify channels of communication that are suited to communicate educational messages. In this case, given that emphasis is placed on face-to-face communication, community based unmediated communication channels must be

used. At this stage, it also becomes important to make sure that provision is made for the interaction to be done using the language (s) that the local people will understand.

- **Formulate communication policy (who should communicate with whom)**

One of the challenges with regard to communication is the co-ordination of communication processes. Co-ordination is important to ensure that communicators do not send contradictory messages to the community. In this regard, it also becomes important to clarify the channels of communication. At this phase, a person who should speak on behalf of the campaign should be identified by all the stakeholders. It is also important to make sure that the selected communicator understands the local community dynamics as this might help to ensure that communication is effective.

- **Develop a media plan (place emphasis on unmediated/face-to-face communication)**

Given that the communication strategy is meant to generate publicity and to effectively communicate a specific message, it is important to draw up a communication plan to achieve this objective. Communication platforms which are



used by the targeted community must be identified. In this case, emphasis should be placed on face-to-face communication because Imbizo by its nature takes an interactive and unmediated communication approach.

- **Impact assessment of the communication strategy (consider the main goals of the communication strategy)**

One of the main aspects once a communication strategy has been implemented is to ensure that its impact is assessed. This assessment should be done against the objectives which were initially set when the communication strategy was developed. In this assessment emphasis should be placed on the role of the recipients of such communication. The importance of the assessment is to identify the challenges that might be avoided in future campaigns.

## **7.8 CONCLUSION**

This study has observed that in principle, Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication is a progressive strategy because it provides an opportunity for government to interact with people and get first hand information on their needs and the possible nature of government intervention. However, in practice Imbizo is not participatory, especially when it comes to the planning process, and in taking decisions in general.