

**IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR  
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
LEARNING IN LESOTHO**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Relebohile Letlatsa, declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Management at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Relebohile M. Letlatsa

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Implementation of a communication strategy for stakeholder engagement in institutions of higher learning in Lesotho**

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The main purpose of this research was to establish how institutions of higher learning (IHLs) in Lesotho can enhance the implementation of their strategic plans by engaging stakeholders in the communication planning and implementation process. This was achieved by exploring how four IHLs in Lesotho, National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP), Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC) and Centre for Account Studies (CAS) use communication strategies to engage their internal and external stakeholders for effective implementation of their strategic plans.

The research was a phenomenological, exploratory and descriptive inquiry in to stakeholder engagement and it employed non-empirical and empirical phases of research. The non-empirical aspect comprised extensive literature review of three primary themes, namely: stakeholder engagement, communication strategy, strategy formulation and implementation; as well as content analysis of institutional strategic plans. The empirical research phase encompassed collection of primary data through interviews and questionnaires while secondary data was collected through strategic plans of the institutions.

A convergent mixed-methods design was used to collect and analyse research data. Data analysis of both qualitative and quantitative strands was done independent of each other, while interpretation of obtained results was merged. A computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), Leximancer, was used to analyse the qualitative data while SPSS software analysed the quantitative data of the study. Thematic analysis of strategic plans and transcriptions of interviews conducted with members of IHLs senior management were analysed using Leximancer, whereas closed-ended responses of questionnaires were analysed using SPSS software. Content analysis was carried on with open-ended question responses of the questionnaires. An exploratory-based mixed method was applied to sort raw data into four public institutions due to their relative similarity. Subsequently the entire set of interdependent relationships amongst the institutions was analysed simultaneously.

Research findings from the internal and external stakeholders of the institutions revealed that it was in the institutions' culture to practise a one-way/top-bottom communication to inform and engage stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans. They use improper and inefficient communication platforms. Therefore, a communication strategy implementation framework was developed. The framework proposed that the IHLs practise three steps recommended for enhancement of effective implementation of strategic plans.

Whilst the institutions engage in a two-way communication process to enhance stakeholder engagement, they should firstly align formulation and implementation of strategic plans with the institutional culture because institutional culture can enforce certain types of institutional growth or oppose some institutional values.

Secondly, it was proposed that IHLs identify their strategic and legitimate stakeholders, and maintain long-term relationships with them. This would enable identification of implications of strategic issues on institutions and stakeholders.

Thirdly, the institutions were encouraged to use proper and clear communication platforms for the right type of message to engage stakeholders. The use of these platforms should be inclusive, regardless of the type of stakeholder or their length of affiliation with the institutions.

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## DEDICATION

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***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Abbreviations**

CAQDAS	Computer aided qualitative data analysis software
CAS	Centre for Accounting Studies
CHE	Council on Higher Education
HE	Higher Education
IHL	Institution of Higher Learning
LAC	Lesotho Agricultural College
LP	Lerotholi Polytechnic
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NUL	National University of Lesotho
QFL	Qualifications Framework of Lesotho
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

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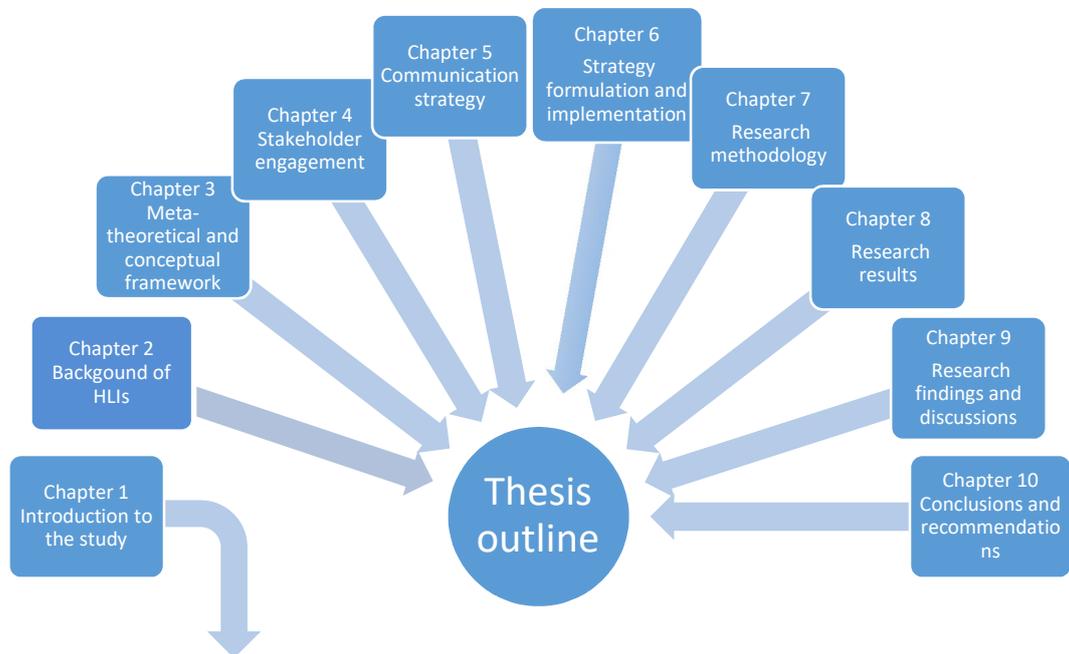
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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY



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## 1.1 Background

Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) in Sub-Saharan Africa seem to share similar characteristics and challenges pertaining to the provision of access to stakeholders. According to Bender (2008:84), there is a lack of stakeholder participation in compiling and implementing strategic plans. Institutions' resources are strained because of the admission of large numbers of students over limited resources. Because the

institutions strive to become relevant to the stakeholders, they align their core values to become open, honest and inclusive to the stakeholders (Bender, 2008:84). They portray similar cultural traits wherein they build walls or fences around their structures to bar random access from the community. As a result, community resentment towards the institutions manifests (Bender, 2008:85) since the surrounding public feel isolated.

Despite all these common traits, the institutions try to integrate the stakeholders into the institutional structures and funding. They use the goals (Table 2.1 Mission, vision and goals of Council on Higher E) and objectives to enhance accessibility, relevance and quality assurance (2.3.1 Governance of Institutions of Higher Learning) (Council on Higher Education, 2013).

Compared to other IHLs in Sub-Saharan Africa, IHLs in Lesotho delayed introducing quality assurance mechanisms. Most of the academic employees in Lesotho are inadequately qualified in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Regardless of these, the IHLs increase access to prospective students through publicity materials, directories, prospectuses, internet and media. They participate, to a lesser extent, in outreach programmes as well as career guidance (Council on Higher Education, n.d:47).

The institutions further face communication challenges characterised by low communication and collaboration levels across the academic disciplines (National University of Lesotho, n.d:5). There are low levels of teamwork, which consequently manifest in organisational culture (2.7.4.1 The situation at National University of Lesotho) which somehow affects implementation of the strategic plan. Despite all these common challenges, IHLs have strategic plans in operation (National University of Lesotho, n.d:5).

Organisations formulate strategic plans to establish and develop their operational actions. Argenti, Howell and Beck (2005:83) attest that greater effort is expended in

formulating rather than implementing strategic plans, whereas strategic planning is an institutionalised concept of a common process across organisations. As opposed to implementation process, strategic planning employs common formats and purposes as well as strategy tools and techniques (Johnson & Greenwood, 2015:27). Research also indicates that the lack of implementation becomes more noticeable when it has to be communicated (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:83). It is, therefore, imperative for an Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) to have a communication strategy in place that engages stakeholders for effective implementation of its strategic plan, while positioning and promoting the institution.

This research assesses the extent to which Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) use a communication strategy to implement their strategic plans. Emphasis is placed on communicating the goals and objectives to stakeholders (internal and external stakeholders) to enhance the implementation of the strategic plans. The stakeholders of IHLs in Lesotho include managers, employees and students of the IHLs, government, media, parents, parastatals, alumni, donors and the community. The research attempts to test the theory that in order for stakeholders to process information effectively, they have to understand the organisation's decision-making rationale and strategy implementation imperatives (Sutcliffe, 2001:203).

In addition, the research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the implementation of strategic plans by demonstrating that it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders involved. Top management cannot, on their own, implement the strategy without the active involvement of the other constituents of the organisation (Puth, 2002:203). The research further proposes a communication strategy implementation framework for the IHLs to implement strategy more effectively in the higher education environment.

This research primarily examines the extent to which IHLs use communication strategies to engage stakeholders to effectively implement strategic plans. The researcher employed a mixed-method research approach to address the research

question and used available literature to collect data and inform the analysis. The researcher surveyed internal and external stakeholders at four IHLs in Lesotho through face-to-face interviews and questionnaires to obtain information. In addition, content analyses were done on the strategic plans of the different institutions to determine the extent of how strategy implementation is communicated to stakeholders.

Research findings indicate that while the institutions communicate with stakeholders, the stakeholder information strategy dominates the stakeholder engagement strategy. Some stakeholders are unaware of the strategic plan and as a result do not participate in its implementation, while others who know about the strategic plan participate to a certain extent. The institutions also lack communication strategies and stakeholders are uncertain about which levels of communication to follow. The research, therefore, proposes a communication strategy implementation framework for the IHLs to enhance the implementation of their strategic plans.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

A need exists for a clear articulation of how managers should manage the implementation of strategic plans. A well-developed communication strategy aimed at improving all communication platforms is needed to address this problem. Columbine (2007:17) emphasises that communicators have an important role to play in guiding businesses to maintain healthy relationships with stakeholders and manage corporate reputation and brand positioning in their respective markets. This implies that organisations have to involve stakeholders in activities that concern the implementation of strategic plans.

The link between strategy and the actual implementation process has always been tenuous (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:83). Top consulting companies have employed countless

people with MBAs to develop strategies for their clients. Academics at top universities have developed frameworks to guide improved strategy development for top companies. A handful of academics and communication consultants at public relations companies have struggled primarily with the implementation of strategic plans where it matters most: stakeholder communication (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:83). Additionally, research has shown that “Lack of implementation has been one of the major failings in strategic planning” and most organisations’ strategic plans “gather dust rather than results” (Kenny, 2005:191). The researcher has observed that while stakeholders at the IHLs in Lesotho are aware of the importance of strategic plans, the concern rests with ineffective implementation.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The most important research question of this thesis is: To what extent do the IHLs in Lesotho use a communication strategy to engage stakeholders in the implementation of their institutional strategic plans?

A number of research sub-questions emanate from this general research question, namely:

- How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?
- What impact does stakeholder engagement have on the implementation of the strategic plan?
- To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) knowledge about the strategic plan and, b) participation in the implementation of the strategic plan?
- What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?
- Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?

## 1.4 Research hypotheses

To assess the implementation of a communication strategy for stakeholder engagement in IHLs in Lesotho, the researcher assumed there was an association between two variables, which were sub-divided into four for internal stakeholders and three for external stakeholders. Firstly, a statistical significant association between type of staff (internal stakeholders) and their knowledge, as well as their participation in communication strategies and strategic plans was tested. Secondly, the statistical significant association between length of affiliation of external stakeholders with their institutions, and their knowledge and participation in communication strategy and strategic plans was tested. Different types of stakeholders determine the degree of their engagement in the implementation of strategic plans in the IHLs in Lesotho.

**Table 1.1 Research hypotheses for internal and external stakeholders**

<i>Internal stakeholders</i>	
1. As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff are more likely to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Use telephones to communicate.</li> <li>b) Know about personnel responsible for implementation of the strategic plan.</li> <li>c) Know about availability of a strategic plan.</li> <li>d) Participate in strategic plan activities.</li> <li>e) Believe that the institution is strict about communication protocol.</li> </ul>
<i>External stakeholders</i>	
2. As opposed to external stakeholders with a short affiliation with IHLs, the stakeholders with a long affiliation are more likely to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Receive communication from IHLs through letters, media, meetings and telephones</li> <li>b) Know about the availability of the strategic plan</li> <li>c) Participate in strategic plan activities</li> </ul>

## **1.5 Purpose statement**

The main purpose of this research is to establish how the IHLs in Lesotho can enhance the implementation of their strategic plans by involving stakeholders in the communication planning and implementation process. This entailed assessing the IHLs' communication platforms to inform and engage stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans. The research further establishes the extent to which the IHLs involve stakeholders in implementing their strategic plans. Moreover, the research also aims to assess the extent to which communication strategies are used to implement strategic plans. It is proposed that if the IHLs adopt the communication strategy implementation framework suggested in this research, the implementation of strategic plans will be more effective.

The purpose of the research was addressed by using the concurrent mixed-method research design where quantitative and qualitative research approaches are combined to develop a better understanding of the research problem. This is done by triangulating the numeric patterns obtained from the quantitative research and the elements of the qualitative research (Creswell, 2009:121).

## **1.6 Contribution of the study**

The research complements the existing theory that communication strategy plays a vital role in engaging stakeholders in implementing strategic plans effectively.

The researcher attempted to use rigorous, precise and thorough methods of collecting data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:164) to address the research question. To achieve rigour and precision, the following methods were used to gather research data, namely face-to-face interviews with senior management, questionnaires sent to internal and external stakeholders and a content analysis of the strategic plans of the IHLs. The researcher collected, analysed and interpreted data according to the mixed-method

research design to present a more convincing argument that communication strategy is vital for effective implementation of strategic plans. The results from the qualitative method corroborated with results from the quantitative method supported the same conclusions.

The research also contributes to the research methodology in that the researcher applied Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS) for the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. SPSS was applied to analyse the closed-ended question responses of the questionnaires from the internal and external stakeholders. Leximancer was used to analyse the interview transcriptions and the strategic plans of the IHLs.

The practical contribution of the research benefits the IHLs in Lesotho, as well as Institutions of Higher Learning in Sub-Saharan Africa. Communication strategy implementation framework is proposed for the institutions to adopt in order to effectively engage their stakeholders in the implementation of their communication strategies and strategic plans. The community can also benefit when they realise the important role they should play to form part of the effective implementation of the strategic plans. This is the first research of its own kind in the Southern African region.

## **1.7 Delimitations and assumptions**

This section gives an overview of the research delimitations. It outlines boundaries set for the research. All things irrelevant to the research problem were ruled out (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:43). The delimitations guided predictions and untested beliefs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:5) the researcher had about the research:

- The research is conducted within the context of Lesotho. The empirical phases of the research targeted the population of only four public IHLs in Lesotho. The findings of the research were generalised to all eight public IHLs.

- The research focuses on the use of a communication strategy used by the IHLs to engage the stakeholders in the effective implementation of the strategic plans of the institutions of higher learning in Lesotho.
- Triangulation of the research involved data that were gathered from interviews with senior management, questionnaire responses from the internal and external stakeholders, and content analysis of the strategic plans of the four IHLs.
- The external stakeholders only comprised the population that was identified through purposive sampling.
- The research does not include the students due to the unavailability of their Student Representative Council (SRC) during the time of data collection.

## **1.8 Definition of key terms**

Terms used in this research study are defined as follows:

- IHL - Institution of Higher Learning

Education offered beyond the secondary education such as in colleges, polytechnics and universities resulting in higher qualifications that are accredited by the Council on Higher Education-CHE (Council on Higher Education, 2013).

- Stakeholders

A stakeholder can be defined as anybody who may affect or be affected by organisational decisions, policies, actions, practices, or goals. Stakeholders are linked to an organisation because they both have mutual interests and concerns and therefore have mutual consequences to each other (Grunig & Repper, 1992:125). Primary stakeholders include suppliers, shareholders or donors that have a formal contractual relationship with the organisation. Secondary stakeholders consist of the government and NGOs that are affected by the organisation, but are indirectly involved in the organisation's economical aspects (Castka & Prajogo, 2013:245-246; Savage, Nix, Whitehead & Blair, 1991:62).

- Stakeholder engagement

A two-way process between the organisation and stakeholders that involves consultation, empowerment, involvement and collaboration to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation (Standard, 2008:26). When organisations positively involve the stakeholders in their practices, both the organisation and stakeholders benefit from the involvement (Greenwood, 2007:317-318).

- Strategy

A goal-oriented action set by organisations to acquire and maintain performance that is related to their competitors' (Rothaermel, 2017:6). According to Steyn and Puth (2000:52), strategy is mastery of thought for all institutional programmes; the guiding framework and context for all activities related to institutions; and the logic that combines the objectives and tactics.

- Communication strategy

The manner in which organisations present and promote themselves in front of the environment (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007:16). It is the guideline to promote strategic and operational communication programmes (Steyn, 2000:52).

- Strategic planning

Strategic planning follows the formulation of the strategy wherein the strategy is put into action by all the departments and sections of the institutions. It is a fundamental decision-making process to compile a deliberate future plan (Bryson & Alston, 2011:3) that involves articulation of strategies in sufficient and clear terms to enable implementation (Hansen-Horn & Horn, 2014:113; Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2012). The strategies are broken down to specify the different actions to put in place for the implementation and realisation of each strategy (Steyn & Puth, 2000:39).

- Strategy implementation

The process of putting the strategy into action by breaking it down into more detailed schedules at lower levels of the organisation in order to achieve objectives with a clear stipulation of a time frame and people responsible for each activity (Steyn, 2003:175).

- Leximancer

Leximancer is Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) used to analyse the content of textual documents. Conceptual maps and tables are used to provide the “bird’s-eye view” of the content indicating key concepts and relationships amongst the concepts (Leximancer, 2011:4-5).

- SPSS -Statistical Package for the Social Science

SPSS is a software package used by social scientists as well as other professionals to statistically analyse and present data (Green & Salkind, 2011; Landau & Everitt, 2004) collected from the closed-ended question responses of the questionnaires (Pallant, 2013:1).

## **1.9 Research paradigm/Philosophy**

The research questions have to be developed on the basis of assumptions of human knowledge and the nature of the realities encountered in research. These assumptions have the potential to strengthen research strategy and to help with the identification of methods to use as part of the research strategy (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012:128). Research philosophy comprises two major ways of thinking, namely ontology and epistemology, both of which guide the researcher to make the right choice in deciding on a methodology, and data collection strategies and techniques.

Ontology attests the way the world operates in relation to the assumptions researchers have about reality, hence the nature of reality. Human assumptions are defined by two forms, namely: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism is a unit of ontology which

defines the meaning that humans have with regard to social entities. It exists external to the interests humans have about the entities while subjectivism states that social phenomena are a result of the perceptions and resultant actions of people (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:131).

Epistemology focuses on what is considered to be acceptable knowledge in a particular area of research. Knowledge can be tested empirically, embracing positivism, or it can be within what humans think and experience, hence interpretivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:132-134).

According to positivism, researchers collect data about real things that are observable and portray qualities of causal relationships between variables. In the case of this research study, questionnaires were disseminated to the stakeholders and interviews conducted with senior management in order to empirically verify the phenomenon under study. Hypotheses were also formulated from the existing theory so that they could be tested and either be confirmed or refuted (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:134).

Interpretivism suggests that humans should understand that differences between humans exist, and therefore conducting research between humans differs from conducting research between objects. Researchers should be aware that people interpret things differently and are influenced by the meaning they attach to their social actions, and that interpreting actions of others also alters the way of attaching meanings to actions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:167).

In order to respond to the question, "To what extent do IHLs in Lesotho utilise a communication strategy to engage stakeholders in the implementation of a strategic plan?" the researcher used the existing knowledge, theory and a literature review to decide what strategies to apply in the research design. Abductive reasoning was applied as a technique to approach the study in the mixed-method research. The researcher wanted to obtain sufficient and rich data to explore the phenomena in order

to identify and explain themes regarding a communication strategy used by the IHLs to engage stakeholders for effective implementation of strategic plans.

The mixed-method research approach was used in order to obtain credible results that are also reliable and relevant (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:41). This approach was preferred because of its ability to address the qualitative and quantitative approaches effectively. The use of the two methods enabled triangulation of the research results obtained from the interviews with senior management, the questionnaires disseminated to the internal and external stakeholders and the secondary data of the strategic plans of the IHLs so that the findings could be corroborated. These two strands were applied concurrently for data collection and analysis. Questionnaire-dissemination and questionnaire-collection with the stakeholders were run parallel to conduction and transcription of interviews with senior management. When this stage was completed, data sets were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. The research findings were merged into interpretation of research results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:181; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:172-174).

## **1.10 Concepts and constructs**

To make the empirical investigation of the research question, the discussed concepts emanate from the major concepts and constructs. The concepts have been contextualised under the value of communication of the excellence theory. The research is informed by three theoretical domains, namely: stakeholder engagement, communication strategy and formulation and implementation of strategic plans. To achieve effective implementation of institutional communication strategies and strategic plans, institutions must manage relationships with their stakeholders. Institutions maintain long-term relationships with their stakeholders when they appreciate the legitimacy of stakeholders, listen to their concerns and solve their grievances. Institutions with participative institutional cultures encourage stakeholders to contribute to institutional decision-making, and support goals and objectives of the institutions.

### **1.11 Description of inquiry strategy and the research design**

To examine the extent to which IHLs use communication strategy to engage their stakeholders in an effective and successful implementation of strategic plans, the researcher used a mixed-method research approach to collect and analyse data. Mixed-method research was used to enable the validity of the results. The researcher opted for this method because it enabled her to address all the research questions; both qualitative and quantitative methods were used as they complemented each other (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:269). As a result of these characteristics, the researcher generalised the results of the four sampled institutions to the overall population of the eight institutions. Because mixed-method research enables focus, the researcher used the qualitative research approach for face-to-face interviews, content analysis for strategic plans and open-ended questions from the questionnaires. The quantitative approach was used for closed-ended questions in the questionnaire.

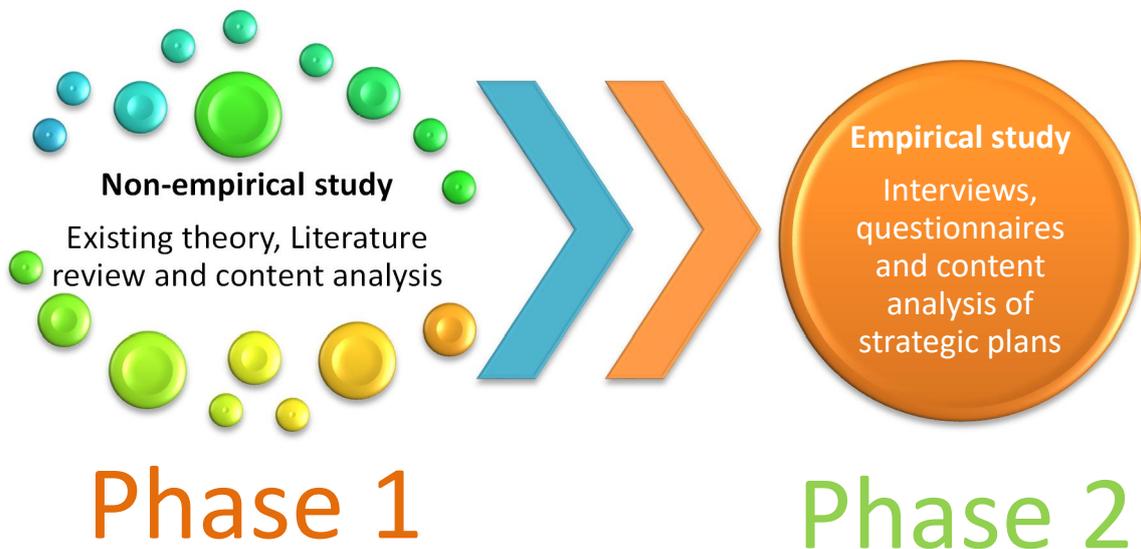
In order for the research to obtain as much response as possible, face-to-face interviews were preferred over telephone interviews. Face-to-face interviews have the ability to promote cooperation from the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:196). Furthermore, paper-based questionnaires were administered to the respondents as opposed to electronic questionnaires. The researcher wanted to ensure fully completed questionnaires and collected them in person to maximise the response rate.

In addition, an exploratory design was used to establish whether strategic plans existed in the organisations, and to determine the communication strategies that are used to communicate and engage the stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plans. The researcher used exploratory research because of her curiosity and desire to understand the influence communication strategy has on implementation of the strategic plans (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:80).

### 1.11.1 The study's overall research design

In the first phase of this research, a non-empirical research design involved the techniques of summary, evaluation and content analysis of strategic plans of the IHLs as well as a literature review of stakeholder engagement, communication strategy and strategy implementation (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:75). The second phase was an empirical research which encompassed the collection of primary data through interviews and questionnaires. The researcher made use of primary data because she wanted to collect new data in order to examine the degree to which the IHLs use communication strategy to involve their stakeholders in the implementation of strategic plans. To address the same goal, the researcher used secondary data of existing documents. Strategic plans were analysed through the Leximancer CAQDAS program (

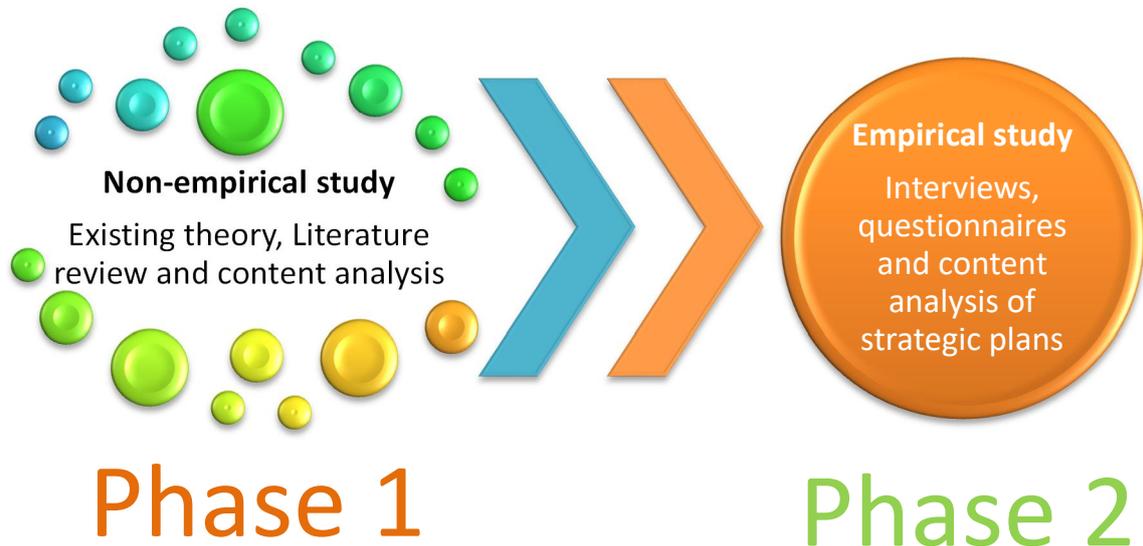
Figure 1.1 Phases of the study



Source: The researcher

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**Figure 1.1 Phases of the study**



**Source: The researcher**

The mixed-method research approach was used mainly because it enables development of appropriate research tools (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:269). Exploratory and descriptive research was employed in this research study. Exploratory research was conducted through a search of relevant literature and institutional documents, as well as semi-structured interviews that were held with senior management of the institutions. The descriptive research was engaged in order to solicit answers from the stakeholders through questionnaires so that the responses were summarised into statistical graphs in order for inferences to be drawn from the sampled population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:195).

The data from the explorative and descriptive research was analysed independently under the quantitative and qualitative methods. The results obtained were then merged into the research findings in order to triangulate and corroborate them.

### 1.11.2 Sampling strategy

The researcher used units of analysis to select the sample for the research from the target population (Du Plooy, 2009:108). Probability and purposive sampling were used to obtain representativeness (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:80) of the stakeholders. The IHLs were clustered into public and private institutions. The public IHLs cluster was then stratified into four institutions. To stratify the four institutions, the sizes of the institutions were considered. A further stratification of the four institutions was applied so that there were internal and external stakeholders of the IHLs.

The focus was based on both internal and external stakeholders of the Centre for Accounting Studies (CAS), Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC), Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) and National University of Lesotho (NUL). Due to feasibility, all internal stakeholders of the IHLs, except the students, were surveyed (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:260). Whereas the external stakeholders were heterogeneously sampled from the media, government, parents, sponsors, alumni and industry to search for variation in perspectives. The researcher applied purposive sample to carry out the research with the external stakeholders (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:260) .

### 1.11.3 Data collection process

In order to address the research question, qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data were employed concurrently (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:181). These involved a survey of the stakeholders of the sampled IHLs. Interviews with

senior management of the institutions were conducted concurrently with the questionnaire administration to the internal and the external stakeholders. The concurrent mixed-method research was employed to validate one set of data with the other set. In the case of the questionnaires, the same respondents provided both quantitative and qualitative data (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib & Rupert, 2007:20). In addition, a content analysis of the strategic plans of the IHLs was applied.

#### 1.11.4 Interviews

The purpose of using interviews was to interact face-to-face with the interviewees to collect as much data as possible in a conducive environment. Another purpose was to solicit information by asking questions in a very clear and concise manner; the interviewer attempted to establish a rapport with the interviewees to ensure their willingness to respond and the researcher applying attentive listening in return (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:372).

The researcher administered one-on-one semi-structured interviews of executive management of the institutions. The main reason for using this type of interview was to allow for further clarifications to the questions and answers where needed. The semi-structured interviews enabled provision of the necessary background of the plan which would develop the research further (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:377). The administration of the guiding questions differed from interview to interview, and the order of the questions varied depending on the direction taken by the interview (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:374). During the interview, audio-recording assisted the capturing of information; this helped the researcher to maintain attentive listening which would otherwise be distracted by note-taking.

#### 1.11.5 Questionnaires

To avoid low returns of e-mailed questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:208), hand-delivered questionnaires were issued to the internal stakeholders; upon collection of

the questionnaires, the researcher was able to check who had or had not responded; or submitted an incomplete questionnaire. In the case of incomplete questionnaires, the researcher requested the respondents to fill in the gaps. These checks curbed possibility of questionnaire contamination caused by hand-delivered questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:208).

In order to ensure the suitability of the questions and accuracy of the responses, the researcher considered the impact that the questions' phraseology (Rowley, 2014:314) and their length would have on the respondents. Hence a consideration of the following factors:

- Firstly, that the questions maintain clarity as much as possible by using English, which is understandable by all respondents and caters for both highly qualified people as well as the less qualified.
- Secondly, that the length of the questionnaire, as well as that of the questions was kept as brief as possible to prevent discouragement by the respondents.
- Lastly, the researcher planned the order of the questions carefully and avoided leading questions or those with implicit assumptions (Rowley, 2014:314).

A letter of consent that indicated the basic purpose of the research and guidelines to complete the questionnaire was attached to the questionnaire.

The researcher pilot-tested the questions by consulting her supervisor to comment on the suitability of the questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:451). Subsequently, a minimum of ten respondents were approached from the CAS and the researcher involved a different institution to avoid repeating the same questions to the same respondents.

The questionnaires can be designed in different formats of questions (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004:1313). In this research, open-ended questions were used to allow free elaboration with no restriction on the length of respondents' answers; and closed-

ended questions confined the respondents to specific, short and direct answers with given alternatives.

#### 1.11.6 Content analysis

The researcher used content analysis to analyse the strategic plans and identify communication messages in the documents. Content analysis is a means of categorising and describing messages in communication contexts quantitatively (Merrigan & Huston, 2004:134). This is the ideal method for a researcher to use in the physical tracing of discourse in the institutions. The content in the documents was used to reveal the communication messages (Merrigan & Huston, 2004:135); conveyed by the discourses.

The advantage of content analysis is that it is systematic (Treadwell, 2011:178). This enabled the researcher to calculate all the relevant aspects of the sample. Raw material was readily available and accessible to the researcher in the form of documented information. Content analysis, however, only works well if used in comparison. In this case, the researcher compared the results of the content analysis with the data collected in the survey.

The researcher divided the text into smaller comparable units of analysis. The division was based on syntactical message units; these were categorised into words and meaningful phrases, and thematic message units which are topics contained within tables that stipulate activities and actions that are implemented. The thematic units require a thorough comprehension of the language used and all the nuances of meaning involved (Merrigan & Huston, 2004:143). Since the document is written in English, the researcher was able to analyse the content without any problems. In order to establish the degree to which the strategic plans have been implemented, the researcher further categorised units of analysis into coding schemes that bore

thematic, referential and syntactical units. A CAQDAS, Leximancer was used in this case.

Content analysis was further employed for the manual analysis of the open-ended questions from the questionnaires, no CAQDAS was used. The researcher used Microsoft Office Word to type the open-ended question responses. After having read through the responses, the researcher was able to code the text into categories. Concepts relevant to each category were grouped accordingly in the matrix that was formulated based on the number of derived categories. All concepts that did not fit into these categories were categorised under the concept *other*.

## **1.12 Data analysis**

Data was collected through interviews and the questionnaire survey of the stakeholders and content analysis of the strategic plans. Data collection engaged qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data. Closed and open-ended questions were used so that appropriate analysis techniques could be applied. The researcher organised closed-ended question responses under quantitative techniques, and open-ended question responses under qualitative techniques.

Quantitative data display techniques were used to present the information gathered from closed-ended question responses with the stakeholders. SPSS was used to describe the data using statistics as well as to test any statistical association between two variables. The chi square test determined the statistical association between the identified variables.

Data was also analysed qualitatively to maintain consistency between qualitative data collection and analysis. Qualitative data was collected through face-to-face interviews, open-ended questions in the questionnaires and strategic plans, and was analysed.

Leximancer was used to analyse strategic plans and transcribed interviews, while open-ended question responses were analysed through content analysis.

### **1.13 Quality and rigour of the research design**

Focus of the research was to maintain its quality; thus reliability of the results is key in this research. Data collection techniques and analytic procedures were selected in such a way that given another chance in another situation of data collection, the research would yield similar results (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:192). The researcher avoided as many as possible threats to reliability, such as participant (respondent) error or bias and researcher error and bias. To maintain the same characteristic of quality of research design, internal validity was established from questions in the questionnaires that seemed to be related to certain analytical outcomes (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:193). The research further indicates signs of generalisability of the findings from the four public IHLs to the rest of the public institutions. The overall four institutions share similar contextual makeup hence the findings are generalised to the other institutions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:194).

### **1.14 Research ethics**

When conducting the research, the researcher underwrote the codes of ethics to avoid poor practice or malpractice, which could negatively affect the research process. Firstly, confidentiality of information and anonymity of respondents was kept as promised. This code was maintained throughout the research data collection and analysis stage.

Secondly, the researcher assured the respondents that the process of providing information is voluntary. To validate this code, the respondents were issued with letters of consent to sign as an indication that they willingly agreed to give information by answering questions during interviews or completing the questionnaires asked (12.

Addendum 1-Letter of consent). The researcher abode by the principle that she

would not go beyond the agreed interview time of 20 minutes; that she would not go beyond the agreed scope of questions without having confirmed with the respondents.

The researcher attempted to maintain integrity and objectivity by acting openly, truthful and accurate and practised utmost caution to recognise and respect the rights, dignity and privacy of participants and respondents. Lastly, the researcher ensured that the benefits of the research are mutual, that both the researcher and the institutions benefited from the research. She maintained her promise to all the IHLs that participated in the research process and granted her permission to conduct the research that they would get a summary report of the research after completion.

### **1.15 Thesis outline**

The research was undertaken in order to assess the extent to which IHLs in Lesotho utilise communication strategies to engage the stakeholders to participate in the effective implementation of the strategic plans. The thesis is structured as follows:

#### **1.15.1 Chapter 2 - IHL background**

IHLs in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa have shown similar characteristics in that a lack of stakeholder participation exists in compiling and implementing a communication plan to promote the institution's strategy. Most of the institutions experience a shortage of resources. Mostly due to them having admitted more students than what they could accommodate. These financial challenges were enhanced by the misappropriation of funds, students who are unable to pay their tuition fees, and the economic challenges facing Africa in general. The institutions try to maintain relevance to their stakeholders involved in the process of managing the institution under these circumstances and strive to stay leaders within their environments.

During a time of financial challenge, the IHLs attempt to maintain the educator-student relationship. The institutions need support from stakeholders and management in order to pursue their stakeholder engagement in general (Bender, 2008:88). The IHLs in Lesotho are no exception to the above characteristics. Through the involvement of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) they try to enhance access to the institutions. The CHE engages graduates, employees, community members and parents for governance of the HE.

The IHLs have devised various ways of disseminating information to their stakeholders i.e. publicity materials, directories, prospectuses, internet (social media) and the media. They also engage in outreach programmes and career guidance platforms. However, not all the IHLs initiate these platforms (Council on Higher Education, n.d:47-48).

The researcher conducted this research in four IHLs, all of which have different experiences about communication initiatives. The Lerotholi Polytechnic has concerns regarding negative staff attitudes towards management which result from lack of transparency in decision-making. Consequently, they become resistant to change (Lerotholi Polytechnic, n.d). The National University of Lesotho remains challenged by limited teamwork which results in lack of communication. Goals and objectives of the University are ineffectively communicated to the stakeholders. The University's culture was therefore negatively affected and led to low morale amongst the University community (National University of Lesotho, n.d:6). Unfortunately, the Centre for Accounting Studies and Lesotho Agricultural College did not have documents to reveal their communication and engagement challenges with the stakeholders.

### 1.15.2 Chapter 3 - Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework

This Chapter discusses the meta-theoretical and conceptual framework of this research. The research is based on the excellence theory as grand theory. This theory

was considered because it seeks to explain a bigger spectrum of the whole research (Turner & Boyns, 2001:353). It explains the social aspects of excellent organisations wherein knowledge becomes the basis of the communication department. It identified whether the personnel in the communication departments have the expertise to participate in the implementation of the strategic plan activities. The communication personnel are expected to assume the managerial role and form part of the decision-making of the organisations. Again, such organisations may either portray participative or authoritative cultural traits, one is often dominant over the other (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995:10-17).

This Chapter also incorporates stakeholder theory. It is imperative that institutions identify their stakeholders because they have different and overlapping identities (Lewis, 2011:95). They are segmented into primary and secondary groups whom the institutions may owe fiduciary or non-fiduciary obligations (Friedman & Miles, 2006:14).

The researcher holds an assumption of what comprises reality and the nature of knowledge as the underpinning ontological and epistemological worldviews to the research (Scotland, 2012:9). Therefore, the phenomenology, positivism, interpretivist and pragmatic paradigms are referred to as the foundation of the combination of the qualitative and quantitative research approaches that are used to collect, analyse and interpret the research data. These paradigms' ways of realising their aims are discussed in this Chapter.

While the institutions formulate messages, they also consider effective dissemination of such messages using the appropriate platforms to the relevant stakeholders. The Chapter also accommodates message selection, socio-cultural tradition, stakeholder theory and, symmetrical and asymmetrical communications.

### 1.15.3 Chapter 4 - Stakeholder engagement

It is vital for all organisations to know who their stakeholders are and to know their roles in the organisation. Stakeholders play various roles within the organisations. Some may act as opinion leaders and they eventually become leaders, diplomats, sponsors, or problem-solvers (Lewis, 2011:95). Therefore, organisations must be able to understand the steps engaged in managing the organisations' relationships with their stakeholders.

Moreover, there has to be an understanding of the meaning of relationships between the organisation and stakeholders. Attempts to find out if communication among management and the stakeholders is effective should proceed on an on-going basis. Participation of stakeholders in organisational processes should be a high priority and the end result is that an organisation is considered to have high stakeholder management (Freeman, 2010:53). Freeman goes on to show that an organisation which cannot identify its stakeholders will definitely have nobody to deal with their concerns and will lack transactions to negotiate with stakeholders. These circumstances indicate low stakeholder management. When managers are in continuous communication with stakeholders through the organisational communication manager (Steyn, 2003:175), they stand a better chance to assess organisational goals, and take good advantage of the unforeseen but mutually advantageous opportunities and perhaps combat conflict before it gets to a critical stage. The methods that may be used to identify groups of stakeholders are also proposed, namely: dependency, responsibility, tension, influence and diverse perspectives (Standard, 2008:20).

### 1.15.4 Chapter 5 - Communication strategy

In this Chapter, the corporate communication strategy (Figure 5.3) that managers and employees can use as a guideline to effective communication is discussed. Management should set clear and challenging goals for the organisation to avoid

distractions that may occur during communication. Stakeholders should have good knowledge about the organisation. Once the employee is knowledgeable about the company's values (situational knowledge), they will be able to not just set the goals, but specific high goals instead of low goals (O'Hair, Friedrich & Dixon, 2011:41).

This Chapter also discusses the corporate communication strategy in relation to how employees (internal stakeholders) interact to affect suitable communication behaviour (Quirke, 2012:13). Messages, internal communication, external communication and platforms are considered important factors to accomplish communication competence.

Furthermore, the Chapter discusses organisational culture as an influencing factor in the process of strategy formulation. It is important to take note of the fact that within the same organisation, there may be sub-cultures, and they are believed to interpret the environment within which the organisation operates (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998:269). The discussion further illustrates the significance of aligning strategy with the culture that exists in institutions.

#### 1.15.5 Chapter 6 - Strategy formulation and implementation

Strategy is a means to an action (Steyn, 2003:171). Strategy incorporates actions and processes in the implementation of the strategy. It is further defined as "a statement of the communication ... vehicles that will be used to accomplish a specific objective" (Austin & Pinkleton, 2006:45). In simpler terms, strategy can be seen as a tool used to activate vision and mission of the organisation into practical terms.

The strategy implementation should be treated as part of strategy development; it does not succeed the development (Steyn, 2003:171). During the strategy formulation, the process, content and context within which the formulation of strategy takes place should be considered. The context refers to the environment within which the

organisation operates and formulates its strategies. The environment, therefore, becomes the main concept in the process of strategy formulation.

Strategy formulation involves various phases, namely environmental analysis that is conducted to get information from the stakeholders; strategic thinking whereby the organisational management sets direction and vision on the basis of the stakeholders' opinions, judgements and feelings. The set plans are put into practice through strategic planning, implementation and control (Steyn, 2003:174).

One way of controlling strategy is to apply the process of strategic review, which is the process wherein top management periodically meets with the stakeholders through review sessions to find out if there has been any progress towards achievement of the set goals and formulate new strategies if the need arises (Freeman, 2010:67). Another undertaking is by evaluating and monitoring progress in relation to the strategies that have been set through four strategies, namely: implementation control, control of strategic programmes, control of strategic direction and control of "what we stand for."

#### 1.15.6 Chapter 7 - Research departure and philosophy

The primary phenomenological research paradigm and the mixed-method research design are discussed in this Chapter. The discussion includes the research sampling, methods used, data collection and data analysis.

The mixed-method research approach was used for data collection and analysis and interpretation of the results. The eight public IHLs in Lesotho were sampled into four. Probability and purposive sampling were used to select the four institutions namely CAS, LAC, LP and NUL. The internal and external stakeholders were invited to feel out the questionnaires while members of the senior management were engaged in semi-structured interviews. Additionally, strategic plans of the institutions were

acquired. The qualitative and quantitative data was concurrently collected and analysed in order to triangulate the results.

#### 1.15.7 Chapter 8 - Research results

In this Chapter, the results of data collected from the interviews and questionnaires from the stakeholders, and content analysis of the institutions' documents are discussed. SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data while Leximancer analysed the qualitative data. The description of the results is based on the research questions of the research. The Chapter further describes the results from the manual analysis of the open-ended question responses from the questions collected from the internal and external stakeholders.

#### 1.15.8 Chapter 9 - Research findings and discussion

This Chapter revisits the literature review and theoretical aspects of the research. It also provides answers to the research questions. The research findings are aligned to the literature and theory to inform the conclusions reached. The research findings are discussed under each research question. Each research question merges and triangulates the findings obtained from the internal and external stakeholders, and content analysis of the strategic plans. Again, this Chapter posits the current state of communication in the IHLs and a communication strategy implementation framework proposed for the institutions to enhance implementation of their strategic plans.

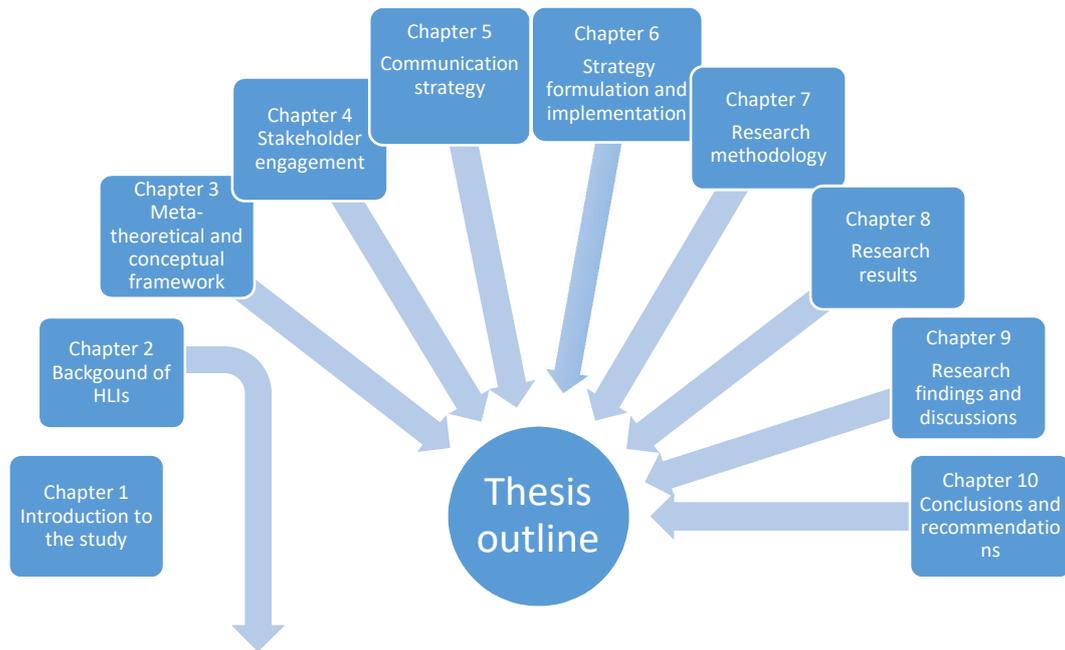
#### 1.15.9 Chapter 10 - Conclusion and recommendations

This is the final Chapter of the thesis, which discusses conclusions and recommendations made from the research findings of the study. The model of developing institutional communication theory, which was adapted from Steyn and

Puth (2000:62), has been recommended for the IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa to adopt for effective institutional communication strategy.

The following Chapter (2) discusses background of the institutions of higher learning. It briefly discusses governance of the four institutions under study as well as their institutional culture and stakeholder engagement.

## Chapter 2 Background of Institutions of Higher Learning



- Institutional culture and stakeholder engagement
- IHLs in Lesotho
- Council on Higher Education – CHE
- Gaps in IHLs
- Communication initiatives in IHLs in Lesotho
- Public IHLs in Lesotho

### 2.1 Introduction

Institutions of higher learning in Sub-Saharan Africa are renowned for a number of common problems, such as limited access to the institutions, which has recently resulted in a strain on the existing resources after admitting large student-enrolment numbers. The resources were originally intended for smaller numbers of students (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004:25). IHLs currently undergo severe financial challenges that result from the pressure encountered in trying to accommodate large student-enrolments, economic challenges facing African countries, the students are unable to pay tuition fees, and misappropriation of available funds. Involvement of the government in the governance of the institutions' structures manifests mostly where

heads of state hold the chancellorships of the institutions. Some of the institutions are battling with management systems that are inefficient and vastly bureaucratic (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004:29-31)

Compared to the world, institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa have the lowest rates of student enrolment (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006:3; Schofer & Meyer, 2005:908). Student enrolment is not the only challenge but a significantly large gap also exists in gender disparities and academic research output.

## **2.2 Institutional culture and stakeholder engagement**

Institutions of higher learning in Africa are increasingly finding ways of becoming relevant to the stakeholders and strive to become leaders in the environments within which they operate. Institutions focus on actions such as alignment of the institutions' core values to becoming open, honest and inclusive (Bender, 2008:84). Nevertheless, they portray similar cultural and structural isolation from their environments. It is a general sight to see institutions surrounded by boundaries; high walls and locked gates that clearly bar random access by the surrounding community and possible student protests, rampages and destruction of property. The communities have since become resentful towards the institutions (Bender, 2008:85) which subsequently have forced the institutions to tighten their security measures.

However, the institutions have always had varying forms of engagement with the community. The activities vary from the educator-student relationship to conduct of research and service delivery. In pursuance of community engagement the institutions require support of management, employees, devices to integrate the stakeholders into the institutions and their structures and funding (Bender, 2008:91).

## 2.3 Institutions of Higher Learning in Lesotho

According to the Lesotho Council on Higher Education (CHE), higher education (higher learning) means the learning process undergone after high school qualification, leading to higher qualifications that have been accredited by the Council. The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) governs higher learning. The public and private institutions are controlled by the CHE and both are represented in the council (Council on Higher Education, 2013).

### 2.3.1 Governance of Institutions of Higher Learning

The Government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Education (MoET), compiled a framework that the ministry wishes to align with the administration of Higher Education in Lesotho (Government of Lesotho, 2012:111). Lesotho is seemingly mirroring the goals and objectives of the IHLs in Sub-Saharan Africa by addressing issues such as enhancement of accessibility, relevance and quality assurance. Below is a list of some of the major requirements that are aimed at addressing the goals and objectives of HE in Lesotho (Council on Higher Education, 2013):

- The relevance of HE programmes should be enhanced to ensure that curricula are aligned with national development priorities and human resource requirements of different economic sectors;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training -TVET should be expanded and upgraded;
- HE institutions should be transformed to offer world-class education in selected disciplines;
- Infrastructure should be upgraded and curricula improved to promote increased enrolments and enhanced outcomes in mathematics and science subjects;
- Foundation skills, including ICT literacy, should be improved across all levels of education;
- HE institutions should be transformed to support development of business and entrepreneurship skills, as well as to train public sector employees;

- A culture of innovation should be developed, while capacity for scientific research should be improved;
- The diffusion of new technologies should be enhanced and their use increased.

These requirements indicate measures taken by HE on behalf of the IHLs to engage their stakeholders. Improved access to education in the institutions encourages more collaboration between the institutions and the government (through the Ministry of Education and Training). This means that the IHLs will align their strategic plans with these requirements and invite their stakeholders' input into the formulation and implementation of strategic plans.

## 2.4 Council on Higher Education (CHE)

The Council on Higher Education is a regulatory body for IHLs in Lesotho as mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training according to the Higher Education Act of 2004. The Council monitors implementation of the HE policy; publishes HE development related information; promotes access of students to HE; and advises the MoET (Council on Higher Education, 2015:6). The Council proposes the following mission and vision statements together with the goals, in order to effectively regulate HE in Lesotho.

<b>Table 2.1 Mission, vision and goals of Council on Higher Education</b>	
<i>Mission statement</i>	<i>Vision statement</i>
To provide an enabling environment that defines, monitors and promotes academic excellence in higher education in order to enhance national development.	By 2020, the Council on Higher Education will have developed a system of Higher Education that is effectively regulated, comparable, accessible, equitable and relevant to the development needs of Lesotho.
<i>Goals</i>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the governance capacity of the CHE;</li> <li>• Strengthening the capacity of the CHE secretariat;</li> <li>• Developing, implementing and reviewing quality assurance systems and mechanisms;</li> <li>• Developing and implementing mechanisms for effective communication with IHLs, government, other stakeholders and the public on developments and priorities in the HE sub-sector;</li> <li>• Mobilising financial resources of CHE, including intensification of alternative sources of funding;</li> <li>• Developing, implementing and reviewing regulatory policies and legislative framework for the higher education sub-sector;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating and cooperating with relevant organisations and stakeholders;</li> <li>• Ensuring that HEIs integrate HIV and AIDS and emerging issues into their policies;</li> <li>• Promoting research within the higher education sub-sector;</li> <li>• Evaluating the strategic plan.</li> <li>• Monitoring Developing and implementing the qualifications framework for HE in line with the Qualifications Framework of Lesotho (QFL);</li> </ul>
<p><i>Strategic objectives</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure systematic development of the higher education sector.</li> <li>• Increased access to higher education from 2% to 5%</li> <li>• Establish national quality assurance mechanisms for higher education sub-sector</li> <li>• Improve efficiency in institutions of higher learning</li> <li>• Establish national accreditation mechanisms for higher education sub-sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet at least 5% Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol foreign student's admission quota</li> <li>• Ensure collaboration among institutions of higher learning locally, regionally and internationally</li> <li>• Enhance capacity in ICT and libraries</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that institutions incorporate emerging issues in their programmes</li> </ul>
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Government is the regulatory body which ensures that IHLs pursue teaching and research as major characteristics of quality assurance (Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007:16). It is clear that the Lesotho government strives for excellence in teaching and research which form the basis of formulation and implementation of strategic plans of IHLs. Table 2.1 indicates that the government of Lesotho, as a stakeholder of IHLs provides the institutions with input in their strategic plans, hence its engagement in the formulation and implementation of strategic plans of IHLs in Lesotho.

## 2.5 Gaps in Institutions of Higher Learning

It has come to the attention of the Lesotho Government that the status of education in the country is lagging in comparison to their counterparts in the SADC region. One of the causes is that the country has introduced quality assurance mechanisms in order to promote quality in the institutions much later than their counterparts in other countries in the SADC region (Council on Higher Education, 2013:8).

The government also realised that IHLs are faced with a limited number of qualified personnel. Higher education providers are inadequately qualified in areas of specialisation and academic employees are not qualified to enrol at IHLs. The institutions are also faced with challenges of not meeting the requirements of the industry. The graduates have a difficult time in adapting to the systems at workplaces. Moreover, most of the graduates, even the lecturers, have limited information and communication technologies (ICT) skills. IHLs have differences of opinion concerning what the most appropriate relationship between the government and the HE public institutions should be (Council on Higher Education, 2013:8).

The above gaps adversely impact the implementation of strategic plans. Late introduction of quality assurance in the institutions may mean that implementation of their strategic plans is ineffectively executed. It may be the reason why some stakeholders do not have knowledge about strategic plans, or more so their implementation. IHLs do not make their strategic plans known to the stakeholders. Westerheijden *et al.* (2007:15) attest that:

“One of the qualities of higher education has to do with the publicly available information about systemic, and/or institutional, activities and performance”.

In situations where information is not shared, stakeholders are less likely to be engaged in the strategic plan activities.

Additionally, institutions with less qualified staff face challenges of ineffective implementation of strategic plans as has been proven by Table 8.2 that academic staff has a better understanding of and engagement in implementation of strategic plans.

The following table illustrates stakeholder engagement in the governance of HE.

**Table 2.2 Role played by stakeholders in HE governance at national level**

Stakeholder	Play a meaningful role (yes/no)
Students	No
Graduates	Yes
Employers	Yes
Community members	Yes
Others (parents)	Yes

Although the source of Table 2.2 neither indicates role played by the stakeholders nor the level of their participation, it depicts that unlike the rest of the mentioned stakeholders, students are not engaged in governance of higher education.

Following a consultative process of engaging the stakeholders, the MoET has established target goals for IHLs (Kotecha, 2008:5):

- To invest in infrastructure development, as it is a national priority to make education accessible to all.
- To review the curriculum and bring it in line with national needs in terms of skill requirements.
- To establish national quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that skills produced are of the required standard.
- To mainstream gender so that every Mosotho (each Lesotho citizen) will be able to participate meaningfully in the economy.
- To mainstream HIV and AIDS interventions in order to mitigate the impact of the disease and prevent new infections to encourage a healthy nation.

## **2.6 Communication initiatives of Institutions of Higher Learning in Lesotho**

In order to enhance access to HE to prospective students, IHLs should inform students and the public about programmes and services offered by the institutions. The HE policy has a provision for access to information concerning various IHLs in Lesotho.

In response to enhancing access to HE, the IHLs have different ways of disseminating information to the stakeholders such as publicity materials, directories, prospectuses, internet and media. They also participate in outreach programmes and career guidance at schools. The CHE records indicate that in 2015 only six (6) IHLs undertook outreach programmes (Council on Higher Education, n.d:47). In addition, the IHLs gave career guidance to schools, but only eight institutions were involved in these sessions in 2012-2014. Only a limited number of the IHLs use websites to increase access to information. It has been reported that some of the institutions do not have websites, three of which are public institutions (Council on Higher Education, n.d:48).

## 2.7 Public Institutions of Higher Learning in Lesotho

In Lesotho, IHL refers to any tertiary level of education that is pursued after high school education that entails at least a minimum constant duration of two years. Higher education is a subsector of the ministry of education that consists of both public and private institutions. The following table illustrates the institutions categorised under the public and private divisions of institutions of higher learning.

**Table 2.3 Public and Private IHLs**

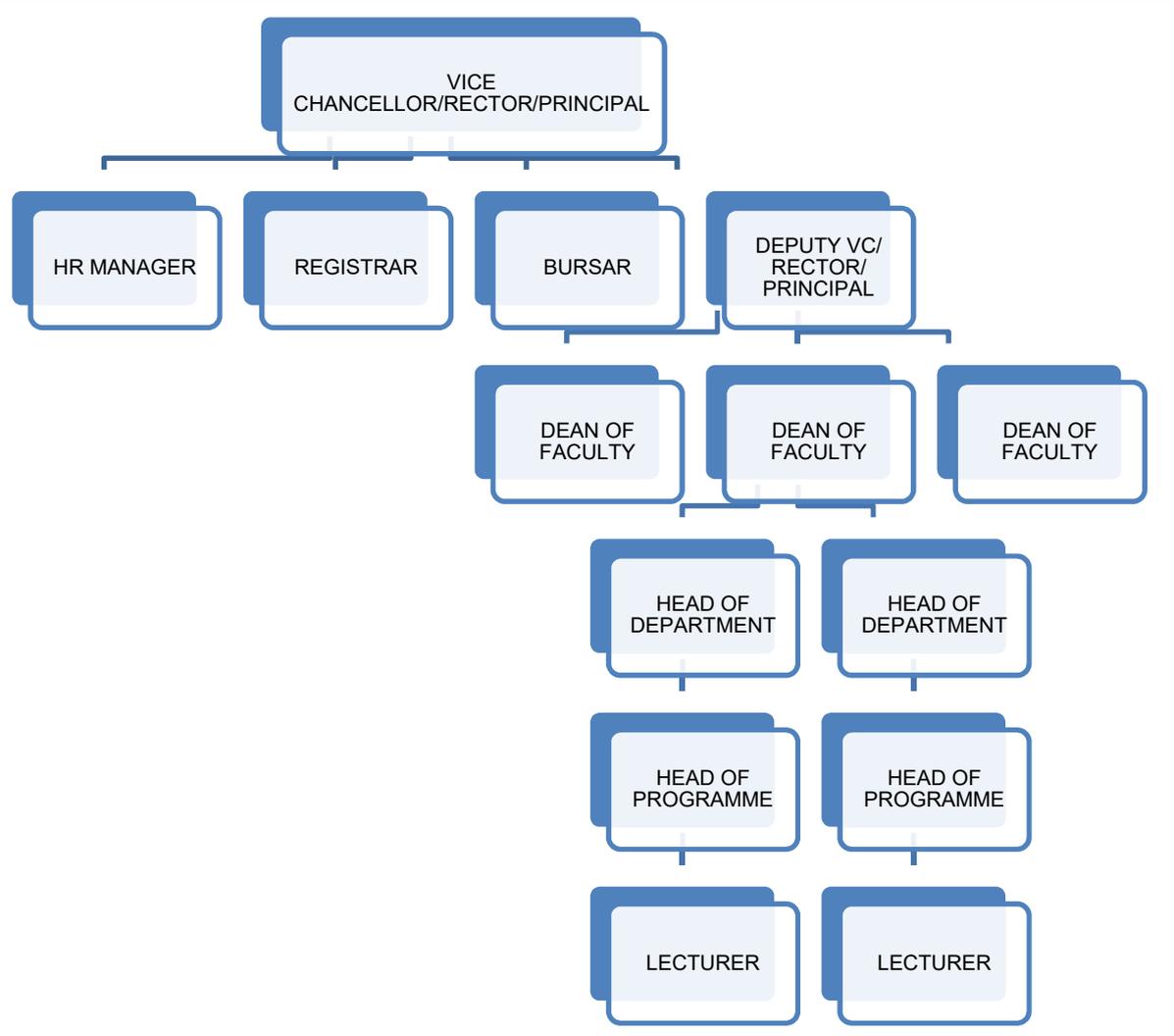
<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>PRIVATE</b>
<b>National University of Lesotho-NUL</b>	Limkokwing University of Creative Technology
<b>Lesotho College of Education-LCE</b>	Roma School of Nursing
<b>Lerotholi Polytechnic-LP</b>	Paray School of Nursing
<b>Lesotho Agricultural College-LAC</b>	Maluti Adventist College
<b>National Health Training College–NHTC</b>	Scott School of Nursing
<b>Institute of Development Management-IDM</b>	Botho University
<b>Lesotho Institute for Public Administration and Management-LIPAM</b>	Lesotho Boston Health Science
<b>Centre for Accounting Studies-CAS</b>	

Only three of the above-mentioned institutions are regarded as major institutions of higher learning. The National University of Lesotho (NUL) is regarded as the highest because it offers a wider scope of programmes at both undergraduate and

postgraduate levels. The Lesotho College of Education (LCE) is second and trains pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels. Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) is the third largest institution of higher learning. It consists of three schools that offer diverse fields of study at diploma and certificate levels. The other institutions of higher learning offer certificate and diploma programmes in different fields of study (Council on Higher Education, n.d:6).

The institutions of higher learning follow similar organisational structures which mainly focus on a high rate of specialisation and rigid departmentalisation and the structures look similar. Below is an example of a generic functional organisational structure of institutions of higher learning in Lesotho.

**Figure 2.1 Generic functional organisational structure**



Source: Researcher

Lesotho has eight public institutions of higher learning. While the initial aim was to conduct research within the largest institutions in the country (National University of Lesotho, Lesotho College of Education, Lerotholi Polytechnic and Lesotho Agricultural College), access was denied to the Lesotho College of Education. The next institution to grant permission to conduct research was added to the list and this was Centre for Accounting Studies. The research, therefore, focuses on four of the institutions of higher learning, namely: Centre for Accounting Studies, Lesotho Agricultural College, Lerotholi Polytechnic and the National University of Lesotho. The following section discusses each of the four institutions under study.

### 2.7.1 Centre for Accounting Studies (CAS)

The Centre for Accounting Studies was founded in 1979. It started as a project that was manned by the governments of Lesotho and Ireland. In 2000 the Government of Ireland handed the centre over to the Government of Lesotho. CAS has a staff complement of 43 full-time and part-time employees, and around 1,500 students.

The centre has been expanded with the introduction of more courses to maintain the focus of being an accountancy training institution. The institution has been focusing on responding to the current needs of the labour market and developing skills that influence the structure of the industry. CAS's national focus has been on the human capital development needs of Lesotho and it is engaged in several studies involving the entire sector of higher education. CAS has established the following as its intents to give direction to its strategic activities (Centre for Accounting Studies):

<b>Table 2.4 Mission, vision and core values of Centre for Accounting Studies</b>	
<p><i>Mission</i></p> <p>We provide quality professional training, for those aspiring for excellence, and professional services to entities seeking informed solutions to organisational problems. Our services are delivered through highly skilled personnel, modern facilities and technology, and innovative systems and processes.</p>	<p><i>Vision</i></p> <p>By the year 2020, CAS shall be a business school of choice and the leading provider of business support services in the region and beyond.</p>
<p><i>Core values</i></p>	

CAS subscribes to the ethos of responsible corporate practice. To this end, the centre undertakes to uphold the following core values in our conduct of business:

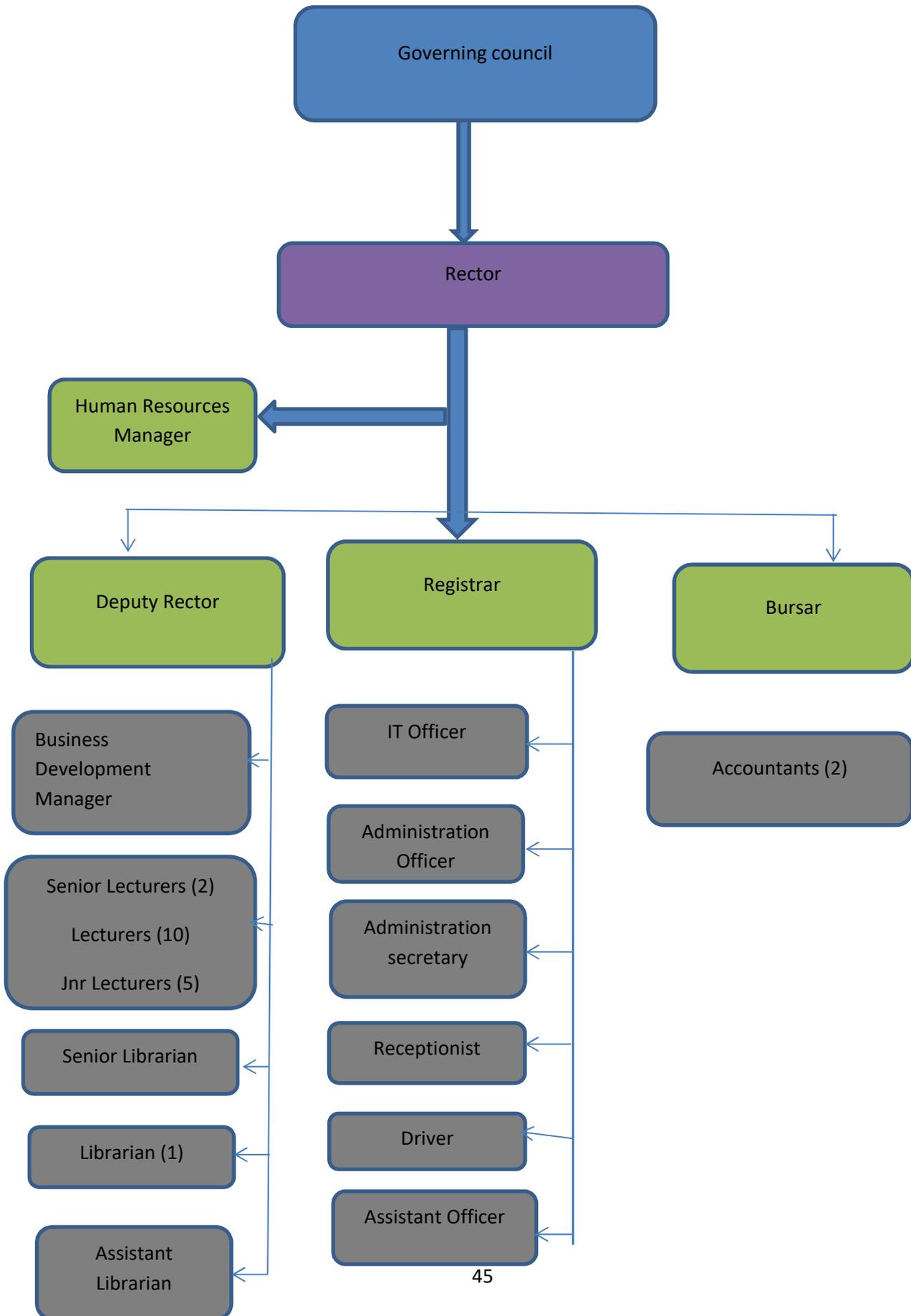
1. Excellency
2. Accountability
3. Transparency
4. Integrity

The above-mentioned values shall underpin the centre's conduct at all times as it endeavours to:

- Provide excellent tuition and a conducive learning environment for students.
- Uphold professionalism in all dealings and interactions with clients and partners.
- Adhere to quality standards in compliance with the dictates of professional regulatory bodies.
- Provide a supportive teaching and research environment to the staff to help them achieve their developmental goals;
- Adhere to strict financial discipline and accountability in the use of funds
- Conduct business fairly, transparently and ethically
- Promote good governance and social responsibility in line with national priorities

The following is an illustration of an organisational structure of CAS.

**Figure 2.2 CAS Organisational structure**



### 2.7.2 Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC)

Lesotho Agricultural College was established in 1954 with the major objective of producing well-trained people in various fields of agriculture at certificate and diploma levels. The institution is the field extension agent for the Ministry of Agriculture. It is mandatory that LAC changes accordingly to address the challenges agriculture in Lesotho faces. The institution has invariably expanded into a number of campuses and programmes (Lesotho Agricultural College, n.d:1-2). It has staff complement of 170 and 495 student enrolment.

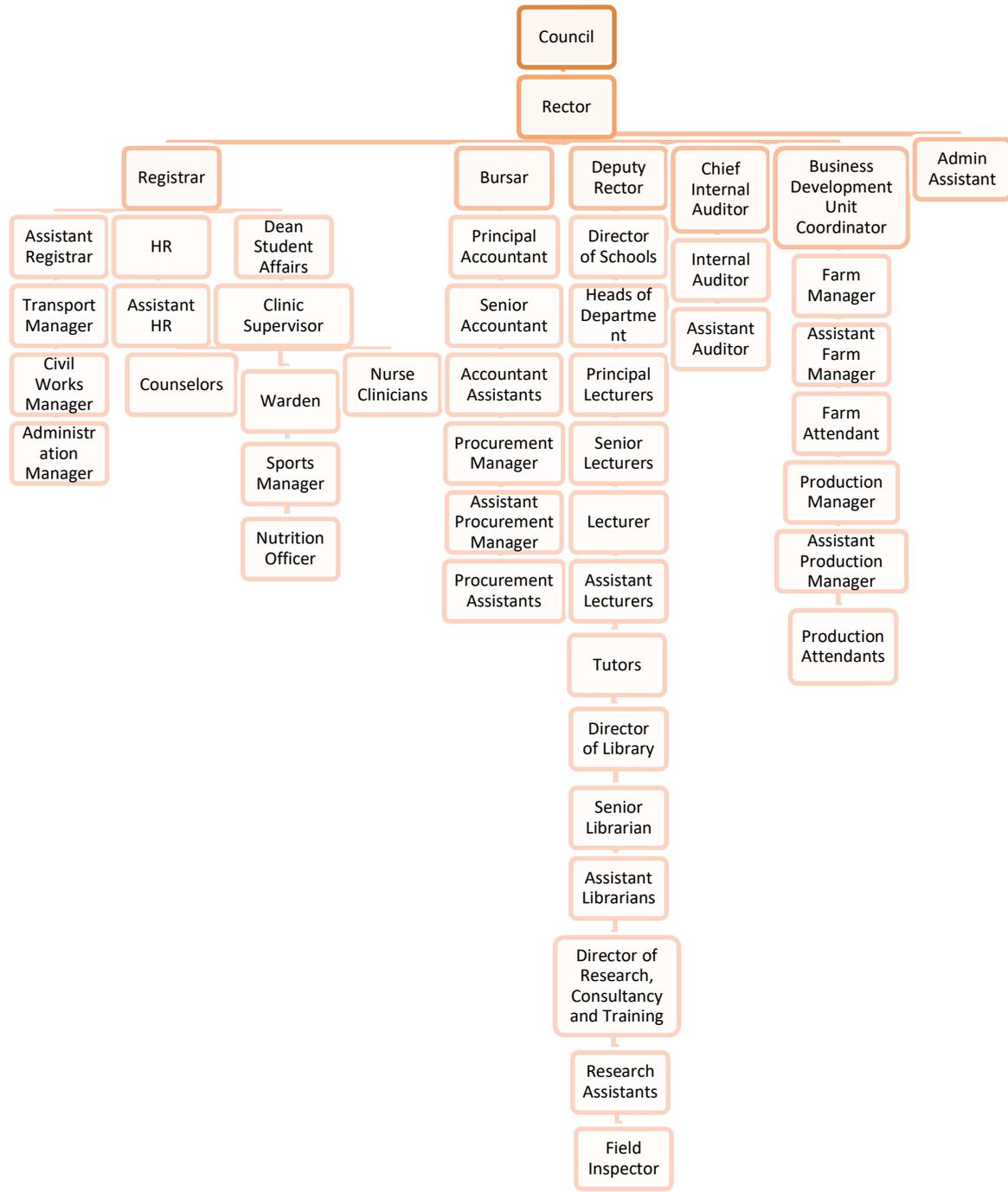
LAC aims to be a competitive institution that meets the expected obligations and objectives of agriculture. The college, therefore, urgently needs to undergo a massive restructuring and rationalisation (Lesotho Agricultural College, n.d:1-2). The college needs to re-direct the strategic plan therefore in order to reach the desired destination. It is through the implementation of this strategic plan that the institution can address the negative trend of agricultural performance and contribution to the national economy (Lesotho Agricultural College, n.d:1-2).

At the time of the formulation of this strategic plan, the college engaged the LAC strategic plan steering group, together with the consultants, to map out a way forward and identify the key stakeholders. A wide range of stakeholders from within and outside the college was invited to participate in the planning workshop and to provide input to the development of the plan. The strategic planning process gave key stakeholders an opportunity to define the college's vision, clarify its mission and values and identify the key priorities of the college, as well as developing the situational analysis, stakeholder's analysis, problem analysis, goal and objectives setting in a workshop environment.

**Table 2.5 Mission, vision and principles and values of Lesotho Agricultural College**

<p><i>Mission</i></p> <p>LAC is committed to providing professional training and research in agriculture and its affiliated aspects by highly qualified and motivated staff for sustainable and commercialised agriculture oriented towards clientele needs, through its unique approach methods of combining quality theory, practical and research.</p>	<p><i>Vision</i></p> <p>By 2020 LAC shall be a centre of excellence renowned for production of competent skilled and marketable graduates in the SADC region.</p>
<p><i>Principles and values</i></p> <p>Staff and students of LAC shall demonstrate a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honesty</li><li>• Excellence</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Tolerance</li><li>• Innovation</li><li>• Building trust with the organisation</li><li>• Integrity and professionalism</li><li>• Transparency and accountability</li><li>• Customer focus</li></ul>	

**Figure 2.3 LAC organisational structure**



Source: Adapted from the proposed LAC organisational structure

### 2.7.3 Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP)

Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) was founded in 1894 after Chief Lerotholi realised it was necessary to establish a technical and vocational school, the first of its kind, in Lesotho. In 1960, the school changed its main focus as an artisan oriented institution to reflect its outward and visionary focus. In 1997, the Polytechnic was granted autonomy by the government of Lesotho (LP Act, 1997). This move provided the institution the leverage to make decisions on their own in which strategic direction they should take; it included total independence. The institution can now determine its own strategies for sustainability and ensure the provision of quality programmes that will continue to attract students and address the external market needs and demands (Lerotholi Polytechnic, n.d:7). The Polytechnic comprises 210 staff complement and 2000 students.

According to the plan, the institution is faced with challenges emanating from the transformation and autonomous status and the ever-changing environment within which it operates and a need to provide a justification for the institution to forge its new strategic direction. These challenges are internal and external and need to be adjusted and respond to the transitional conditions, new policy structures of higher education and technical and vocational education, the establishment of a private university of creative technology and the need for skilled people.

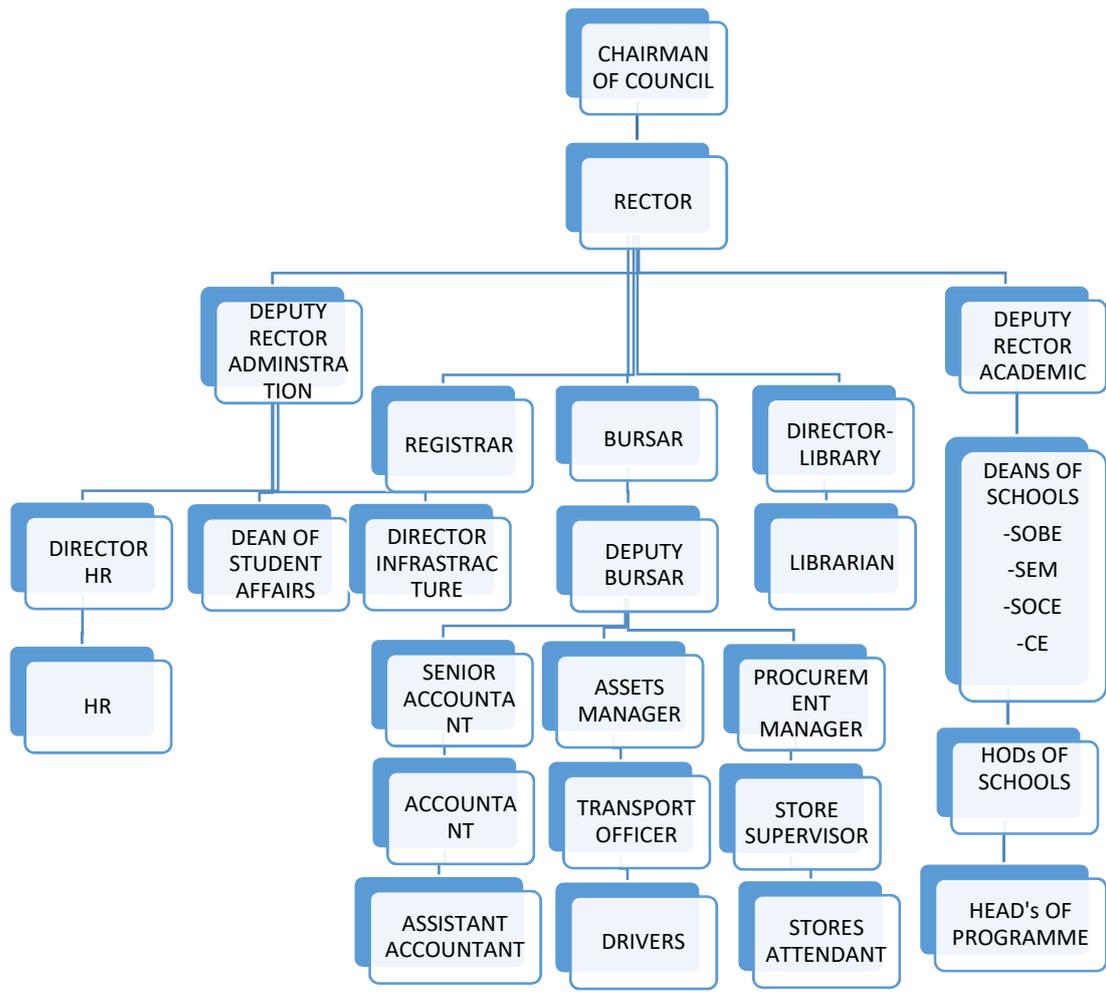
In 2007, the Polytechnic made attempts to formulate the plan which would enhance the focus and achievement of goals and objectives set. The Strategic Plan 2008-2015 was compiled and its aim was to align objectives with the mission and identified goals within the timeframe stipulated in the plan. The focus was on relevance, access, quality, institutional growth, financial sustainability, effective and efficient management, collaboration and developmental needs.

**Table 2.6 Mission, vision and goals of Lerotholi Polytechnic**

<p><i>Mission</i></p> <p>Lerotholi University of Technology is committed to advancing technological, scientific, commercial education and training through research and development.</p>	<p><i>Vision</i></p> <p>By 2015 Lerotholi Polytechnic shall be the University of Technology renowned for its excellence in science, technology, entrepreneurial programmes with its uniqueness of technical and higher education components.</p>
<p><i>Goal</i></p> <p>The Polytechnic desires to be a high-performing tertiary level institution that offers quality programmes in scientific, technological and business fields to produce competent and skilled manpower who can contribute to national and regional development with global understanding. It aims at producing graduates well equipped with entrepreneurial skills who will create jobs for the prosperity of Lesotho. Furthermore, the institution aims at focusing on provision of education and training to facilitate capacity of its products to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country, and target opportunities in other markets beyond the boundaries of the country.</p>	
<p><i>Objectives</i></p> <p>In pursuit for excellence, the Polytechnic set up the following core values and principles:</p> <p><i>Towards its students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide quality and professional services in teaching, learning and administration</li><li>• Promote innovative and creative teaching learning environment</li><li>• Promote, nurture and cultivate professional ethics such as precision, reliability, high quality and honesty amongst students.</li></ul> <p><i>Towards its employees:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote team work and team spirit</li><li>• Promote high morale through motivation and job satisfaction</li></ul>	

- Staff moving away from a curriculum and teacher-dominant culture to a service culture.
- Focusing more attention on client outcomes, not providers' inputs;
- Promote professional development;
- Employees are asset of the organisation;
- Create a culture in which staff is empowered to manage their own performance and results.
- Provide attractive and competitive rewards.

**Figure 2.4 LP Organisational structure (Synopsis)**



Source: Adapted from the proposed LP organisational structure

### 2.7.3.1 *Situation at Lerotholi Polytechnic*

Ever since the institution was granted autonomy, records have revealed that past operational plans have not been reviewed with the purpose to measure the institution's performance against set objectives and targets. An operational plan was developed covering the period 2002-2003 and the plan revealed some significant deficiencies in the capacity to implement the planned activities (Lerotholi Polytechnic, n.d:12). This became evident in the low achievement levels with outcomes of 50% of planned outputs in finance; about 42% in administration; and 25% of other programmes such as academic and non-academic programmes. Results further revealed that staff attrition, inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructure, general discontent and low morale following the transition to autonomy were major constraints influencing the implementation of the plan. In 2004 a new document was drafted, but it never became operational because it was rejected by the Governing Council.

The institution designed an organisational structure that is not based on long-term vision and goals; therefore, it calls for constant review. The plan proposes that all functions need to be linked with the strategy and benchmarked with sister institutions as well as customised with the strategic plan document. To implement the strategy, organisational restructuring should take place that focuses on structural analysis, job analysis, job description writing, and systems integration.

The Polytechnic implemented policies and guidelines to the benefit of institutional sustainability and used the following policies: the Financial Regulation Policy, the Human Resource Policy, the Code of Conduct Policy and the General Academic Regulation Policy. During the time of the formulation of the plan, the Performance Management Framework and Promotion Policy were in the final stages of development. Further development of policies to improve corporate systems communication and communication between policies and procedures should still be undertaken.

Management identified many human resource concerns, such as negative staff attitudes towards management, which emanate from a feeling that there is no transparency in the decision-making processes. Although the top-down decision-making platform seems to be undemocratic, attitudes of resistance to change with the possibility of suppressing the development of the institution still exists. On the other hand, management's attitude towards staff shows signs of discomfort.

Lerotholi Polytechnic identified the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of the institution that will contribute the formulation and implementation of the strategic plan. Internally, the finance and curriculum renewals became critical. More so with the possibility that the government may decide to withdraw financial assistance. Challenges manifested in the institution's capacity to strengthen and broaden its revenue base in order to meet the increased demands for physical facilities, human resources, cautious management and democratic procedures and practices, low morale and a culture of resistance to change. The availability of competent and qualified staff was identified as an opportunity to mitigate these challenges.

In order to remain a competitive institution, LP focuses on efforts to develop and implement strategies to discourage the external threats and to optimise its current resources in exploiting the market opportunities.

#### 2.7.4 National University of Lesotho (NUL)

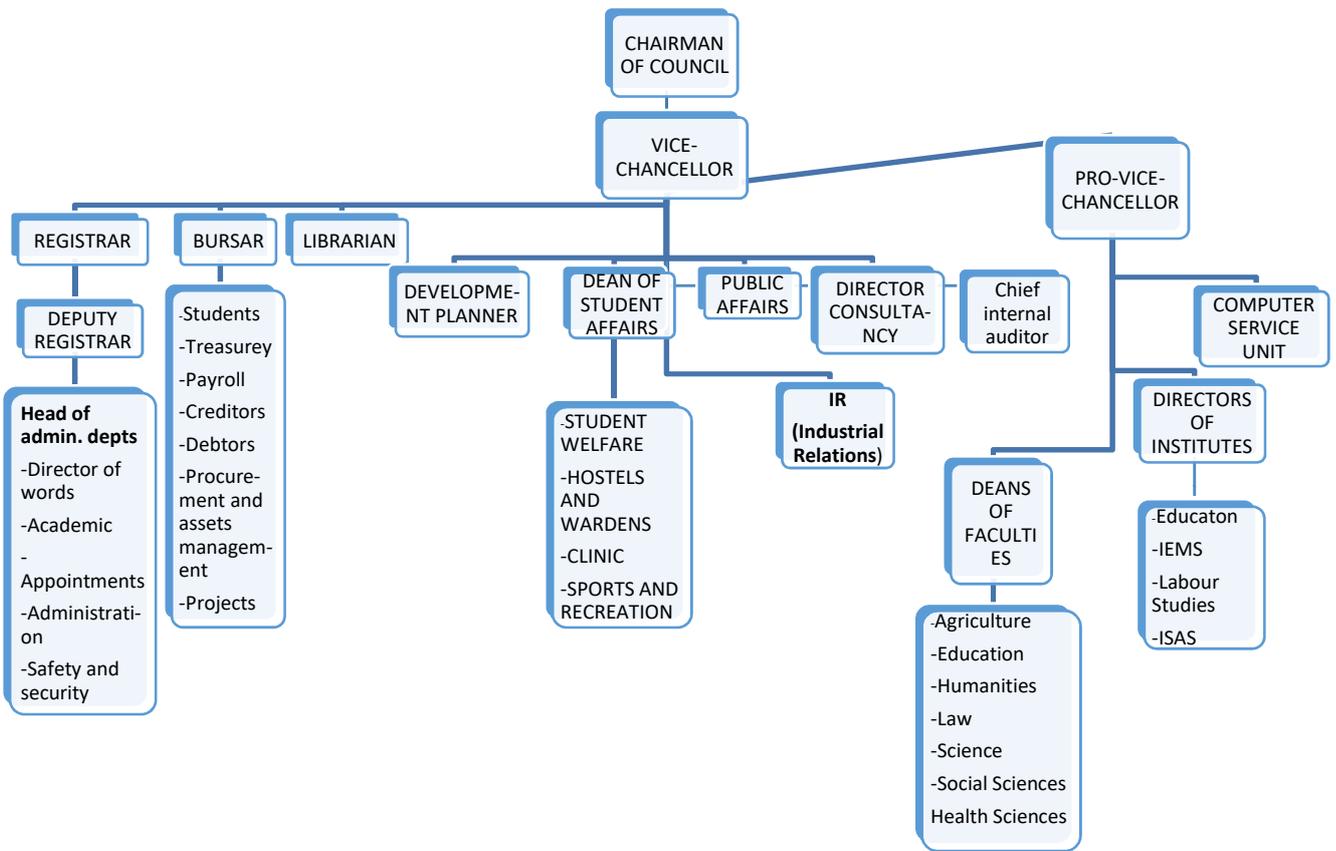
The National University of Lesotho (NUL) was established in 1945 as Pius XII Catholic University College. It grew both physically and academically over the years. In 2014 NUL had an enrolment of over 10,000 students and 370 academic staff. NUL is the leading university of Lesotho and it is affiliated with reputable international institutions of higher learning (National University of Lesotho, n.d:1).

**Table 2.7 Mission, vision and values of National University of Lesotho**

<i>Mission</i> To advance human development and to respond to national and regional needs through knowledge creation, dissemination and community engagement, employing technologically innovative strategies.	<i>Vision</i> A vibrant African University, nurturing thought leaders.
<i>Values</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Client-centredness</li><li>• Professionalism</li><li>• Ethical conduct</li><li>• Innovativeness</li><li>• Diligence</li><li>• Social empathy</li></ul>	

The university operates with an enrolment of over 10,000 students (National University of Lesotho, n.d:4). It comprises seven faculties (see Figure 2.6 below). The NUL is governed by the governing council under the chancellorship of His Majesty the King and Head of State.

**Figure 2.5 NUL Organisational structure**



Source: NUL printed document

#### 2.7.4.1 *The situation at National University of Lesotho*

The university faces many challenges emanating from both the internal and external environments. The university is aware of its external environmental challenges and how they affect the internal environment. The choices and strategies that the university follows in addressing the internal challenges will enable it to minimise the influence of the challenges of the external environment.

The university is faced with an inefficient academic culture as a result of an inflexible and somewhat narrow curriculum to enable students to follow a variation of career paths. A number of programmes and courses do not meet the requirements of the current regional and country developmental challenges. The research output is adversely affected by a limited number of postgraduate programmes, lack of financial support and a lack of internet bandwidth necessary for national and global collaboration (National University of Lesotho, n.d:5).

The university is characterised by the “silo effect” (strategic plan) that manifests in low levels of communication and collaboration across academic disciplines, and as a result, hinders collaboration. The university needs to provide the stakeholders and society with new knowledge about the development of faculties and successfully recruit and retain faculties of high standards.

Limited teamwork levels and professionalism challenge the working environment of NUL. This results in a lack of communication of the vision to all members of the NUL community. The organisational culture is affected, resulting in low morale amongst the community. Policy frameworks and clearly defined targets need to be identified in order for the employees to know what is expected of them. In order to enhance shared vision and to cultivate the spirit of teamwork within the NUL community, the university requires a joint effort to encourage and promote communication (National University of Lesotho, n.d:5).

In addition, the NUL finds it necessary to develop a coherent outreach and community engagement policy in order to keep the stakeholders close, gain public support, enhance its visibility and check external political influence.

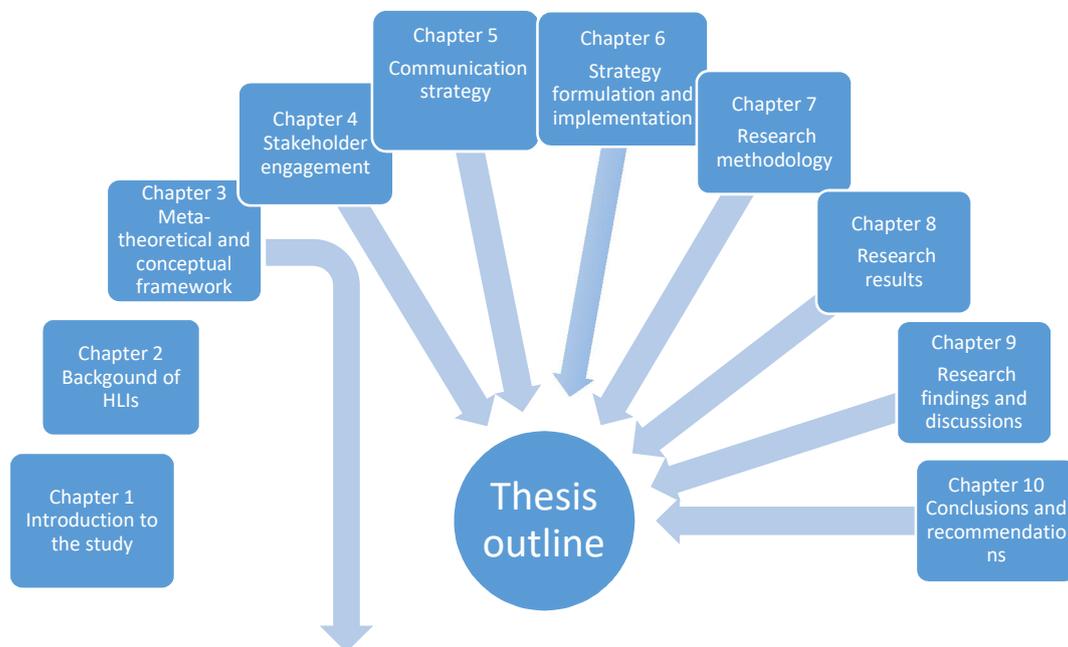
Amongst other managerial and governance challenges that adversely impact the university, the NUL lacks strong managerial authority; good governance that manifests in up-to-date policies and transparency. Again, it is known that the organisational culture of poor communication results in mistrust between employees and lowered staff morale.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

To conclude, it is unmistakable that the institutions of higher learning in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa experience similar characteristics. They are all interested in enhancing access to education and have to engage in the timely development of outreach and career guidance programmes. Nonetheless, they are financially unstable and struggle with attracting high numbers of student enrolment. This is evident in the few outreach and career guidance programmes provided by Lesotho's IHLs to engage their stakeholders (National University of Lesotho, n.d:6-7). In addition, there is absence of organised communication structures of engagement in the institutions.

The following Chapter outlines the meta-theoretical framework of the research for the conceptualisation of the implementation of a communication strategy for stakeholder engagement in institutions of higher learning in Lesotho.

## Chapter 3 Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework



- Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework
- Excellence theory
- Strategic management theory
- Theory of organisational design
- Communication process
- Communication theory
- Theoretical orientation of organisational environment
- Organisation as an open system
- Role of culture in organisational communication

### 3.1 Introduction

Organisational communication is the most significant factor to determine the behaviour and performance of the organisation. Success in an organisation involves effective communicative efforts (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992:72). According to the systems approach, an organisation comprises subsystems and their performances affect the

entire system. For instance, a managerial department may contribute to either the success or failure of the organisation; and management should depend on communication professionals to liaise with the organisation's external stakeholders. Communication forms an integral part of studying the functioning of an organisation, but the space and environment, within which the process of communication takes place are also worth analysing.

The Chapter discusses an organisation and its internal and external communication. A meta-theoretical and conceptual framework indicates the philosophies and paradigmatic components such as ontology, epistemology and axiology that underpin this research. The Chapter also stipulates views from different theorists concerning excellent organisations, socio-cultural theory and the symmetrical and asymmetrical theory of communication.

### **3.2 Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework**

In order to address the question research as stated in Chapter One, the research was conceptualised based on the excellence theory. For an organisation to implement its strategy successfully, it must engage the internal and external stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the strategy. The organisation must consider using a two-way symmetrical model of communication. Based on this approach, three theoretical disciplines were identified, namely: stakeholder engagement, communication strategy, and formulation and implementation of the strategy. The three disciplines are interrelated in that an organisation uses platforms of communication between the organisation and the internal and external stakeholders to engage the stakeholders. The organisation uses available resources to determine guidelines that will enhance the communication strategy for successful formulation and implementation of the goals and objectives of the organisation. The sub-fields under each discipline as discussed in this Chapter and the succeeding Chapters Four, Five and Six, all relate to the three theoretical disciplines. Within the context of this research, the researcher assumes that the three theoretical disciplines underpin conceptualisation of the communication strategy implementation framework. Table 3.1 below summarises meta-theoretical and conceptual framework of the research.

**Table 3.1 Meta-theoretical and conceptual framework**

<b>General aim</b>	<b>To assess the extent to which institutions of higher learning in Lesotho utilise communication strategy to engage stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans.</b>		
<b>Worldview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontology</li> <li>• Epistemology</li> <li>• Axiology</li> </ul>		
<b>Paradigms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phenomenology</li> <li>• Pragmatism</li> <li>• Positivism</li> <li>• Interpretivism</li> </ul>		
<b>Grand Theory</b>	Excellence theory		
<b>Theoretical disciplines</b>	<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	<b>Communication strategy</b>	<b>Strategy formulation and implementation</b>
<b>Sub-fields within theoretical disciplines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Organisation and stakeholders</li> <li>• Stakeholder approach to communication</li> <li>• Principles of stakeholder management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating strategy</li> <li>• Communication competence</li> <li>• Communicating for strategic alignment</li> <li>• Communication platforms</li> <li>• Functional perspectives on group decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy formulation</li> <li>• Strategy implementation</li> <li>• Drivers for strategy implementation</li> <li>• Strategic control</li> <li>• Strategy and sustainability of institutions of higher learning</li> </ul>
<b>Individual theories from specific theoretical disciplines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder theory</li> <li>• Organisational communication theories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems theory</li> <li>• Message selection</li> <li>• Socio-cultural theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Management theory</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of organisational design</li> <li>• Symmetrical/asymmetrical communication theory</li> </ul>	
<b>Individual models from specific theoretical disciplines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnstein's ladder of participation</li> <li>• Two approaches to organisational practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steyn and Puth's model of developing corporate communication strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hussey's model of successful strategic management</li> </ul>
<b>Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal stakeholders</li> <li>• External stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy implementation</li> </ul>
<b>Constructs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Communication platforms</li> <li>• Institutional culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Implementation</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Excellence theory

To address the research question, the research was based on the excellence theory. The theory focuses on the three spheres of communication excellence, namely: knowledge base, shared expectations and participative culture (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:10). The core aspect is the knowledge base of the communication department in all organisations. Communication departments should ideally include personnel with good writing and editorial skills. However, the concern here is whether the communication departments of the excellent and less-than-excellent organisations have knowledge and expertise about the following: two-way communication; the role of the organisational manager; to participate in the strategic planning and

communication policy decisions. Otherwise, communication departments will be held responsible for the success or failure of these activities (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:11).

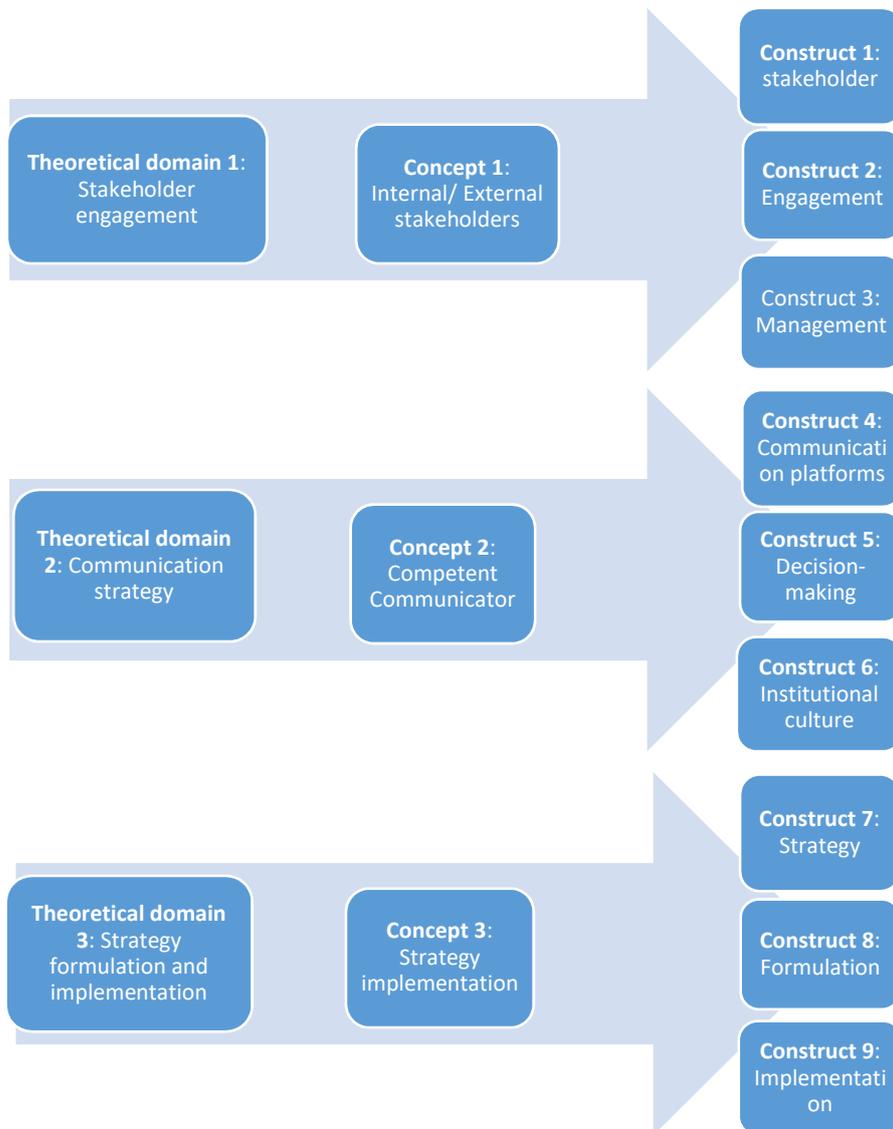
In the communication department of the excellent organisation the above mentioned knowledge becomes a shared expectation, the middle sphere. The department is expected to undertake a managerial role by accepting responsibility for the decision-making in the organisation. There is inevitably no way of excluding the communication department (who should ideally be experts on relations) from the decisions that concern the relationships with strategic stakeholders (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:11).

It should, however, be noted that despite the expectations that excellent and less-than-excellent organisations may have for their communication departments, organisations have their ways and means of handling the internal stakeholders and dealing with the external stakeholders (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:17). According to the excellence theory participative culture is open to ideas outside the organisation, teamwork is valued and employees are engaged in the decision-making. Whereas authoritative cultures are closed to external ideas, favour asymmetrical communication and value excellent communication management less. Dozier *et al.* (1995:17) suggest that although participative culture favours an excellent communication environment, an excellent communication department can still function in an organisation that has predominantly authoritarian culture. It is worth noting that an open system may be combined with authoritarian culture in order to encourage stakeholder participation and discourage stakeholders from obeying orders without contributing their own ideas (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54).

### 3.3.1 Concepts and constructs

The concepts discussed in this research are linked to the major concepts and the constructs emanating from these concepts to make the empirical investigation of the research questions. Figure 3.1 depicts the concepts and their constructs.

**Figure 3.1 Concepts and constructs**



**Source: Researcher**

Concepts and constructs are contextualised under the value of communication strategy because excellence theory and theoretical domains, namely stakeholder engagement, communication strategy and strategy formulation and implementation, underpin the research.

Communication strategy is a valid and important process in institutions. The institutions of higher learning in Lesotho must be aware of the value of strategic planning and implementation. The effective functioning of the institution is enhanced when the institution aims to solve problems and meet the goals of society, the

stakeholders and the management of the institution (Grunig & Grunig, 2008:2). In order for the institutions to be socially acceptable, the impact of institutional decisions on stakeholders must be taken into consideration to eliminate any misunderstanding and confusion (Figure 4.2: Stakeholder map in Chapter four).

This normally calls for communication between the stakeholders and the institution. Matters concerning both the institution and the stakeholders are solved in order to cultivate long-term relationships.

According to the excellence theory, in order to maximise the value of communication, institutions must involve communication management in strategic management. Communication management plays a vital role in functioning of the administrative-manager. Institutions are advised to consider communication strategies at four levels (Grunig, Grunig, Dozier & Botan, 2006:31). At the programme level the media, community and customer relations are productive when they are intertwined with the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural aspects of the stakeholders and the institution. At the functional level, the structures and processes of the departments can be compared to other institutions' public relations best practices. The third level shows that communication management must indicate that institutional effectiveness is the result of effective implementation of communication programmes and functions of the institution. Lastly, through communication management, institutions must be able to contribute to their social responsibility in order for them to be considered as adding value to their societies.

When communication departments achieve objectives that enhance the successful relationship between the institution and the stakeholders, then they are considered valuable (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:35). The authors further indicate that adequate communication personnel are more cost effective and therefore add value to the institution and to the daily running of the department. Institutions rely on the communication departments for the identification of strategic stakeholders and for maintenance of long-term relationships between the institutions and the stakeholders. These relationships are possible when the institutions acknowledge the legitimacy of the stakeholders, listen to the concerns, and address the negative concerns the institutions may have about the stakeholders. It is, therefore, important for institutions

to avoid integrating the function of the communication department into other managerial departments other than communication (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:45).

According to the excellence theory, through communication management, excellent institutions activate a two-way symmetrical communication process into practice to benefit both stakeholders and institution's interest and manages conflict between the two. This is how symmetrical practitioners maintain loyalty between their institutions and stakeholders. Communication departments should have a strategic origin rather than a historic origin. Excellent communication departments have the following qualities (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:53):

- Participative rather than authoritarian institutional cultures.
- A symmetrical system of internal communication.
- Organic rather than mechanical structures.
- Programmes to equalise opportunities for men and women and minorities.
- High job satisfaction among employees.

Grunig *et al.* (2006:53) conclude that institutions with participative cultures, organic structures and symmetrical systems of communication are more likely to have excellent communication departments. It is in such institutions that stakeholders are motivated to participate in institutional decision-making. Because stakeholders become more satisfied with the institution they are more inclined to support, rather than oppose, the goals and objectives set up by the institution. In addition, because the employees will be involved in decision-making and symmetrical communication within the institution they can be "effective symmetrical communicators with members of the external stakeholders" (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:53).

### **3.4 Strategic management theory**

In an organisation, the manager becomes the ringleader in formulation and implementation of strategy. Hussey (1998:3) supports this by postulating that the strength and weakness of strategic management lie in all enthusiastic practitioners; because they are behind the growth and development of concepts of management. According to Jenkins, Ambrosini, and Collier (2015:1) strategic management is described as "the managerial decisions, processes and activities that allow the

creation and implementation of a strategy.” It is the integration of planning and implementation of strategic plans across the organisations (Bryson, 2018:23). Strategic management identifies new terms, sometimes without justification or explaining new nuances and the recognised terms are used in a slightly different manner (Hussey, 1998:3). According to Hussey, such cases have to be approached properly by creating strategy in a manner that will be appropriate for the situation.

Originally, strategic planning used to be associated with externally oriented planning because it used to focus on external environment and on customers and the markets (Hussey, 1998:16). Mintzberg (in Hussey, 1998:16) states that strategy can be observed as an intended, deliberate, emergent strategy; however, it is the part of an intended strategy that gets to be actually realised and eventually implemented. Emergent strategy emerges from ideas and patterns observed without any intention.

Consequent to the above discussion, Hussey (1998:16) provides a model in which the author interprets and illustrates five areas of critical importance for successful strategic management. Strategic management relies on the capabilities of the managers as it is sometimes possible to reach the correct strategy without having to analyse it, although this is risky and therefore discouraged. In this case, creativity and vision are needed firstly so that analysis can follow to examine the possible outcome of the strategy. The author further poses that the manner in which strategic decision is reached and the process involved affect the success of the set strategies; so the best strategy should be implemented.

However, authors are aware of barriers to effective implementation of strategy. Hussey (1998:528) identifies the following barriers:

- Vision that is not put into action because it has not been explained in operational terms (Steyn & Puth, 2000:44).

- There is no link between departmental and individual goals, a very small percentage of objectives from the senior management and middle management contribution of objectives is tied to the strategy.
- Resources are allocated based on short-term budgets, not on the strategy, that is there is an indirect link between strategy and budgeting process (Puth, 2002:199).
- Control focuses on short-term performance more than it does on long-term objectives and it rarely evaluates progress on the latter (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:88).

Following are essential steps to be considered for the proper implementation of a plan:

- Conversion of long-range plans into short-range tactical plans.
- Assignment of tasks to individuals (standards of performance).
- Budgetary control.
- Monitoring performance against the plan.
- Monitoring assumptions.
- Updating and reconsideration of plans as required.
- Yearly report on planning activity (optional).
- Management by objectives.

### **3.5 Theory of organisational design**

In order to implement the strategic plan, an organisational structure must follow the strategy (Rothaermel, 2017:368) to enhance organisational performance. The organisational structure is mainly used to guide the daily operations of the organisation in that stakeholders are wary of how jobs are divided, the up and down reporting lines and the communication platforms used in the reporting. Organisations have distinct ways of doing things; their shared norms and values amongst the organisation's internal stakeholders, an organisational culture can either enhance or hinder the process of strategy formulation and implementation. Strategy control informs management on how well the organisation is performing in as far as the strategy implementation is concerned (Rothaermel, 2017:367).

The structure of an organisation is the prominent determinant of how the communication strategy is compiled and implemented. The organisational structure demonstrates the platforms of communication followed for both internal and external communication. It shows the types of correspondence between the organisation and the external structure (Hamrefors, 2010:14). The external structure can either be stable or turbulent. It can change at any time due to factors such as technology. Theorists devised different characteristics of organisational structure such as formalisation and centralisation based on distinct assignments performed by different functional sub-units and the hierarchical infusion of managers (McPhee & Poole, 2001:504). In support, the author expresses horizontal differentiation where tasks are divided into smaller sets of operations or skills where tasks are clearly distinguished from each another; the size of the organisation which affects the manner in which communication flows. Small organisation managers are seen to be similar to large organisation managers in terms of the concern about communication. However, the latter seems to be more inclined towards internal communication with subordinates more than they do with external communication, and the vertical hierarchy focuses on communication and the time spent communicating vertically in the organisation.

Information is believed to travel more effectively in the vertical structure of an organisation than in the horizontal structure and the behaviour of management is highly dependent on the structure of the organisation and the manager's role in that structure (Grunig, 1992:468). Grunig (1992:468) explains four structural dimensions prevalent in organisations. Firstly, some organisations follow the centralisation structure wherein the decision-making of the organisation is concentrated in the higher ranks of the organisational hierarchy. Organisations that follow this structure are characterised by rigidity as they delegate little decision-making power to the lower levels of the hierarchy. Moreover, communication in such structures is considered relatively little and it follows the downward model of communication, that is, it flows from the superiors to the subordinates. This dimension is known for the ability to instil widespread perspective to decisions and efficiency.

Organisations that take on a decentralisation structure are characterised by disseminating information throughout the structure of the organisation. In a decentralised structure, organisations are readily responsive to changing

environments and ready for more input in the decisions that are made. Rapid response to information, instilling motivation, more voices in decision-making and reduction of the probable information overload are good qualities of decentralisation.

Furthermore, other organisations put more emphasis on rule enforcement, hence the formalisation dimension. Such organisations are associated with rigidly structured organisations as they control their employees as opposed to communication that enhances employee coordination.

Lastly, complexity defines areas of speciality in the organisation and the level of training essential for each speciality. Complexity can be measured by the number of departments, job titles, degree of training, degree of professional activity, qualifications acquire, and frequency of tasks performed. This variable correlates well with upward communication.

It is further important to note that organisation structures vary in terms of the external and internal layout. As a result, the methods of interaction between the organisations and the external structures (stakeholders) differ and subsequently affect the strategy implementation. Moreover, the structure of an organisation is built on the internal developments undergone by the organisation and as such, its developments are based on the internal interaction between the employees. When the structure grows, the developments gradually grow resulting in more opportunities. Moreover, if the structure grows stronger then all information gets processed according to the set of rules and based on a chain of decision-making rather than on the content of the information, which will lead to incorrect decision-making. It is further important to note that when organisations have partial structures they can result into sub-groups that will have different focuses, leading to a power struggle between the groups. Consequently, coalitions are formed in order to enable communication flow of different issues. When formulating external relationships, it is important to consider that it is through structuration that organisations can change the environment or get susceptible to change by the environment (Hamrefors, 2010:15).

Nonetheless, the organisational communication system must always be aligned with the organisation's strategy. Communication managers should always be included in the formulation of organisational strategies (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:265)

### **3.6 Communication**

The fundamental parts of the organisation interact on a daily basis with the purpose of informing, discussing, interpreting or enquiring any matters that concern the organisation. This may well include the planning and implementation of the goals and objectives set by the organisation. All these actions are incorporated into the process of communication. In other words, communication is the creation and interpretation of the message and for the purpose of obtaining feedback (Griffin, 2012:6). Communication is interactive, in this case, the research focuses on the stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the communication strategy (Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson, 2002:303). The source of the relationship amongst the stakeholders is the influence they have in or receive from the organisation.

### **3.7 Communication theory**

Organisational stakeholders often portray different reactions and behaviours in the process of communication. Communication theory identified seven traditions of communication namely the rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, critical and socio-cultural traditions, that describe the reactions of people (scholars) when they communicate (Griffin, 2012:48). For the purpose of this research the socio-cultural tradition is dealt with in more detail below. In addition to this tradition, a discussion of related theories will follow. The different theories include theories of message selection, organisational communication, systems, stakeholder, and symmetrical and asymmetrical theories.

### 3.7.1 Theory of socio-cultural tradition

Communication as the creation and enactment of social reality considers the way that people view reality is strongly influenced by the language that they have been using since they were infants. It is language that gives structure to the way people perceive reality (Griffin, 2012:48). Theorists believe that it is through the use of language in communication that “reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (Griffin, 2012:48). As a result, communication used in organisations should be viewed as a form of mobility to activate the implementation of a strategy. The culture that exists within the organisation is bound to affect the way stakeholders communicate because it is through the language that is used that meanings are attached to actions performed. Organisations have to take into consideration the role that the socio-cultural domain plays in the implementation of strategy.

### 3.7.1 Message (strategy) selection theory

Organisations operate based on goals and objectives which need to be communicated to stakeholders for effective achievement. In other words, it is the responsibility of management to select means of communicating the message (strategy) to the stakeholders to make sure that the strategy gets implemented. Strategy and goal selection are important elements of the communication theory (Littlejohn, 2002:41). In pursuance of the organisational goal, people have to align messages with the goals and objectives. This involves the theory of compliance by the stakeholders towards the message disseminated by management. Compliance calls for sufficient resources within the organisation to provide the expected reaction. In this case, the institutions of higher learning might have the message formulated in a strategy, the question still arises whether the institutions have enough resources to implement the goals and objectives of the plan. One more issue to consider is the factors that may affect communication in the organisation, one of which is culture that may play a significant role in determining the ways in which communication goals are defined and achieved (Littlejohn, 2002:106).

### 3.7.2 Organisational communication theories

Organisational communication is both similar to and distinct from other types of communication (Shockley-Zalabak, 2014:16). Communication in organisations is not different from communication amongst humans as this is evident in humans working in organisations. Organisational communication has communicators and recipients who engage in the encoding and decoding of messages. Messages are transmitted through platforms and get distorted by noise. Shockley-Zalabak continues to argue that as with other forms of communication, organisational communication is related to the competencies of individuals, their fields of experience, the communicative context, and the effects or results of interactions. Yet organisational communication is more than the daily interactions of individuals within organisations. It is the process through which organisations create and shape events.

The above-mentioned interactions done daily by individuals within organisations involve transmission of messages. The messages convey information and simultaneously define the relationship between the communicators (Stohl & Redding, 1987:468). This implies that during the process of communication the communicator and recipient do not start relating before talking. They do both simultaneously, hence *the relational functions of communication*. Stohl and Redding (1987:468) add that within organisations, a fundamental dimension of relationships is to control. Any functional categorisation of messages must include a set of categories pertaining to the control aspects of interactions. These functions include establishing control/submission, providing positive/negative face support, providing feedback, and managing interactional sequences.

### 3.7.3 Systems theory

Organisations consist of objects or sub-systems that are meant to relate and maintain a common goal towards the success of one system, the organisation. Systems theory

puts more emphasis on the interfaces that exist between organisations and environments surrounding them, subsystems within the organisation and the organisation as a whole and the subsystems (Grunig *et al.*, 1992:71).

A system is a unit of interdependent sub-units that comprises the internal components located within an environment; it also operates as an organised entity with other systems towards an achievement of the system's goals and objectives. Information flow that takes place amongst the components of the system enables internal coordination with each other, to accomplish the realisation of the system's goals. Boundaries of the system set the system off from its environment and determine the closedness or openness of the system (Poole, 2014:54). The components of the system function differently from one another, but at the end are guided by similar interests of realisation of the system's goals.

In addition, the most formal organisations operate with five basic subsystems (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011:115): productive subsystems dealing with work accomplished; supportive subsystems dealing with relationships and necessary materials support; maintenance subsystems to integrate people into their functional role; adaptive subsystems geared for change; and managerial subsystems for coordination and control of the various subsystems.

According to the systems theory, the process of communication should be carried out effectively. Elements of communication should be spelt out clearly; communicator, message, channel, recipient, and feedback. The organisation takes in materials and human resources (input), processes materials and resources (throughput), and yields a finished product (output) to the larger environment. With input, throughput, and output, the ideal system should have a self-corrective mechanism (management) whereby feedback or input from the environment can be processed into an adaptation of throughput and potentially, output. In this theory, the multiple action courses should be taken in order to achieve their goal, as attested by the law of equifinality (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:115).

Shockley-Zalabak attests that an open system exchanges information with its larger environment (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:115). A closed system limits exchange of information with the environment and seeks to operate as a self-contained unit. Shockley-Zalabak (2005:115) relates the closed organisational system to a closed thermodynamic system, contending that they both will approach a condition of maximum entropy with no further possibility of useful work. They are practically unresponsive to the happenings occurring in the environment (Witmer, 2006:362). The open system fights entropy and seeks a dynamic equilibrium among input, throughput, and output. According to Littlejohn (2002:41) and Shockley-Zalabak (2005:115) it exhibits the law of equifinality and has a sound self-corrective mechanism. Open systems try by all means to respond to the environment in order to strike a healthy equilibrium amongst its stakeholders (Witmer, 2006:362). Witmer posits an additional system as a cybernetic system which is more open than an open system. Such systems are very sensitive towards their external environments and always devise the means of adapting to the changes happening around the environment (Witmer, 2006:362).

A system has four integral parts, namely: the objects, parts, elements or variables (Littlejohn, 2002:37). Secondly, a system may consist of attributes; the qualities or properties of the system and its objects, and internal relationships element among objects of the system. Lastly, systems exist in an environment. According to the four characteristics of a system, a system becomes a set of connected elements that affect one another within the environment and form a larger pattern that is different from any other parts. Littlejohn (2002:41) agrees with Shockley-Zalabak (2005:115) in that an open system is better than a closed system. A closed system does not involve the environment whereas an open system exchanges ideas with the environment, and it is oriented towards life and growth.

A system possesses characteristics, which are somehow interrelated. Firstly, a system is a unique whole. The elements that make up the wholesome are interdependent, and the interdependence organises the system itself. Secondly, systems are implanted within one another. One system is part of a larger system. Then the

interconnectedness is portrayed when the larger system, suprasystem, is connected to the smaller system, subsystem (Conrad & Poole, 2005:31; Littlejohn, 2002:29; Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:78). Moreover, systems are self-regulated and controlled. They are goal-oriented and regulate their behaviour to achieve certain aims. And when they are trying to achieve their aims, they should at the same time try to strike balance, homeostasis. According to Littlejohn (2002:29), if a system cannot sense imbalance, it will fall apart so it should always be alert for any deviations and changes that might occur so as to sustain itself.

The system should take note of the imbalances that may occur, because the subsystems may likely cause the imbalance. A system that comprises an attitude of the 'self' and 'other', which at times tends to manifest in a system's culture, may be challenged to work as a team that aims to achieve the goals and objectives of the system.

### 3.7.3.1 The "self" and "other" in a system

Grunig and White (1992:42) argue that communication management practitioners do not operate in isolation within a system and that their activities are largely controlled by the organisational structure and culture so the communication management practitioner or department cannot be held accountable for the communication made to the stakeholders.

Grunig and White (1992:43) pose the following presuppositions for a better explanation of worldviews which differentiate between "self" and "other":

- *Internal orientation*- The way the employees view the organisation differs from the way it is viewed by the outsiders.
- *Closed system*- Information takes the outward movement not the inward, into the organisation.
- *Efficiency*- Innovation comes second to the efficiency and control of costs.

- *Elitism*- Management of the organisation knows best, much more than the environment does.
- *Conservatism*- The organisation is so conservative that any external efforts to change it are regarded subversive.
- *Tradition*- It enhances stability in the organisation and helps it maintain culture.
- *Central authority*- Organisations are run by autocrats wherein power gets concentrated in the upper authorities and there is less autonomy amongst the employees.

The “self” and “other” exist in the IHLs systems. The systems are unpredictable from a distance unless one is affiliated with them. In this context, affiliation refers to the internal and external stakeholders of the HILs who in most cases perceive the institutions differently from each other. Based on their perceptions, stakeholders determine the openness or closedness of the system that is, whether the system is open or closed to the views of the stakeholders. The stakeholders may want to become as innovative as they want to be, but if management feels the ideas threaten efficiency and financial aspects of the institution then the innovative ideas may be discarded. Systems like this are autocratic and often reject ideas from stakeholders because they are so conservative that they regard external ideas as signs of rebellion. As a result, the prevalent conduct becomes a tradition and becomes instilled in the organisational culture which consequently influences stakeholder engagement in the implementation of a communication strategy and strategic plans of the institutions.

#### 3.7.4 Stakeholder theory

Organisations operate because there are clients to serve; there are people around them who are affected by decisions that are made, namely stakeholders. People become stakeholders because they can affect or be affected by the decisions of an organisation (Grunig & Repper, 1992:125; Standard, 2008:20). A bigger portion of stakeholders is said to be passive and are mainly employees or residents of a community within which the organisation operates. Grunig and Repper (1992:125) explain that stakeholders are people who are linked to an organisation, because they

have consequences for each other. A stakeholder can, therefore, be defined as anybody affected by the organisation's decisions, policies, actions, practices, or goals (Grunig & Repper, 1992:125).

There is concern regarding the identification of ways of segmenting the range of possible stakeholders in order to distinguish different ways corporations ought to deal with stakeholders in each segment, especially primary and secondary stakeholder groups, and groups to whom the organisation owes fiduciary and non-fiduciary obligations (Friedman & Miles, 2006:14). Since stakeholders hold different and overlapping identities (Lewis, 2011:95) it is possible to find stakeholders playing multiple or even overlapping roles in one organisation, for instance, a customer might be an employee, in the case where a lecturer may enrol for an evening course in the same institution which he/she lectures. A volunteer may be a client in the instance where a disaster management association volunteer may need emergency aid during a disaster in his/her home.

Stakeholders, however, take different roles in organisations. Some stakeholders act as opinion leaders because in most cases their opinions tend to lead rather than follow other stakeholders. This type of stakeholder is said to be a leader, sponsor, diplomat, salesperson, risk-taker and a problem-solver. Secondly, some stakeholders are connectors in that they normally help bridge gaps between different types of stakeholders. Thirdly, other stakeholders become counsellors to other stakeholders during change. Lastly, stakeholders act as journalists to investigate and report during change. In this case, they gather information internal and external to the organisation and then share it with other stakeholders (Lewis, 2011:103).

### 3.7.5 Symmetrical versus asymmetrical communication

Organisations use a number of models to execute their goals in and outside the organisation. According to Grunig and White (1992:39) and Grunig and Grunig (2008:1-3), some organisations operate through a two-way symmetrical model which

involves the use of research and dialogue in order to manage any conflict that may occur, to advance understanding and build relationships with the environment. The two-way asymmetrical model advocates for change in the behaviour of an environment without attempting to change the behaviour of the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:39).

Organisations that implement a symmetrical model believe that they know best and that the environment benefits from becoming cooperative with the organisation; that they manipulate the environment for the benefit of such an environment; and that asymmetrical practitioners are unethical, show social irresponsibility, and are ineffective.

Grunig and White (1992:43) compares an asymmetrical worldview with a symmetrical model, as follows:

- *Interdependence* - Although organisations spell out the boundaries between themselves and the environment and other organisations, they do not operate in isolation. They interpenetrate.
- *Open system*- The organisation freely interchanges information with the systems it interpenetrates.
- *Moving equilibrium* - The symmetrical worldview prefers mutual and cooperative adjustments with other systems. The worldview prefers constant equilibrium with other systems; a state of mutual control and adaptation are maintained.
- *Equity* - Anyone, regardless of education or background, should be treated equally, as they all give equitable input to the organisation, they all deserve to be given equal opportunities and be treated as fellow human beings.
- *Autonomy* - Autonomy facilitates employee satisfaction when they are not controlled by anyone but influenced by their own behaviour. Employees get more innovative, constructive and self-content.
- *Innovation* - Organisation is flexible to accept new ideas and efficiency is always stressed.

- *Decentralisation of management* - Managers should avoid dictatorship but rather coordinate; this facilitates employee autonomy, satisfaction and innovation.
- *Responsibility* - Organisations and employees should take care of their behaviour towards others, they should be aware of the adverse consequences that may follow on unacceptable deeds.
- *Conflict resolution* - Conflict should be managed through communication, negotiation, compromise, and avoid being forceful, manipulative and violent.
- *Interest-group liberalism* - Organisations operate in a political system that protects interests of ordinary people against a government that is not responsive and corporate structures.

Institutions of higher learning should consider becoming symmetrical to enhance the exchange of ideas between themselves and their stakeholders. In symmetrical institutions, interdependence between the institutions and their stakeholders is key for effective implementation of a communication strategy and strategic plans. There is a balance of power between the two, thus they take responsibility for their misdeeds and when there is conflict, they resolve it by communication. In such institutions, there is not “self” or “other” since every stakeholder is treated equally.

Regardless of whether an organisation practises symmetrical or asymmetrical communication, the influence organisational culture has on organisational communication is considered, it portrays the actual picture of the organisation and indicates common practices which the organisation puts in place to achieve its goals and objectives.

### **3.8 Theoretical orientation of the organisational environment**

It is important to look at the organisational environment in order to come to a better understanding of the organisational ways of enhancing strategy implementation. There are key perspectives that influence the understanding of relations within the organisation and that affect communication-related issues (Sutcliffe, 2001:199). The author starts with the objectivist perspective, which originates from a resource

dependence perspective. The environment is struggling over limited resources and organisations are competing over the available resources. In the process organisations try to avoid depending on other organisations for resources yet they strive to make other organisations dependable on them. The objectivist perspective divides an organisation into the following characteristics, which are referred to as “objective environment”: economical components, regulatory, technical and social; stakeholders as customers, competitors, suppliers; and attributes such as instability, munificence, complexity (which are the main dimensions that affect organisations and their environments).

The objectivist perspective further indicates that environments are characterised more widely in relation to industrial characteristics, focusing on market posers, entry barriers, and changes in demand or in product characteristics. The notion of the objectivist perspective is that organisations are located within external, independent environments that comprise some forces to be adapted to, co-aligned with, controlled, or controlled by. This perspective attempts to maintain strategic actions used to meet the actual constraints and demands in the environment (Sutcliffe, 2001:200).

The perceptual and interpretivist perspectives regard environment as a source of data where organisations construct information and organisational responses. The perspective is also referred to as the information-processing perspective and is concerned with circumstances where information is observed and how it is communicated and interpreted. In this case perceptual perspective is compared with objectivist perspective to discover that both presume that there is actually an external environment to perceive. They are, however, different in the degree to which decision-makers can accurately assess the actual environment (Sutcliffe, 2001:200).

Furthermore, the enactment perspective is socially constructed as it evolves around communication processes in a manner that the engaged parties read each other's behaviours in order to make sense out of the situation. Managers pay attention to areas of interest to organisations that stimulate and force them to make sense based on their interpretation. Sutcliffe (2001:200) broadens the perspectives discussion by stating that in an information environment, organisations prosper within environments they are interdependent. In an event, managers and researchers perceive

environments as external, it is then natural to be concerned with the degree to which managers will perceive their environments (Sutcliffe, 2001:201).

### **3.9 Organisation as an open system**

Systems theory assumes that an organisation is treated as an open system where subsystems affect each other and affect and get affected by environmental systems (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:93). Firstly, in an open system the manager does not think of an organisation as an independent entity, rather as an organisation which relates to the environmental systems. There is a lot of interdependence among the units of an organisation. Secondly, a managers' goal is to work concurrently with the subsystems of the organisation and the environment to solve organisational problems. Moreover, managers of organisations have a mission to accomplish by constantly monitoring their progress to achieving their goals and objectives.

In addition to the above assumptions, organisational managers use quantitative methods to gather and process information and use computers to help them make decisions (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:94). Lastly, managers may either control or adapt to other organisations or do both depending on the organisation's environment. The communication practitioner should know when to adapt to the environment, to change the environment or to do both. To be effective, both the communication practitioner and the organisation need to engage in the process of communication.

Most of the activities that take place in an organisation involve exchange of oral, written and non-verbal messages between people who work to achieve the same goals. These activities include holding meetings amongst members of departments or between different departments, planning how the organisation will interact with the external environment and how they will respond to upcoming concerns. Employees have to have a good understanding of organisational communication so that they know what alternatives to use when they are faced with tasks that may need to be efficiently and effectively accomplished (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:13).

Communication in and outside organisations does not mean a process of rerouting information from one source to another, but needs involvement of all the three main elements (Steyn, Dekker, Kuschke, Van Eck & Visser, 2013:321), namely, the communicator, message and recipient. This means that the communicator transmits the message to the recipient. The fourth element, the medium, forms an important part of the platform through which the information gets transferred. Any minor mistake in the communication process can jeopardise the overall success of the communication transferral and of the project. When information is not transferred 100% effectively, it is very likely that there will be a certain measure of misunderstanding or ambiguity leading to uncertainty which will then call for further clarification to the intended message. A need for further clarifications may result in delays in communication which can lead to a negative impact on the cost and time budget of the project. Non-clarifications can increase uncertainties and risks, and may cause projects to fail, or in the worst case even endanger the lives of those working on the project. Communication is not just to inform, informing is one-way, static, and seldom leads to action. Communication is two-way, a dynamic process that enables action. Leaders need to transfer their organisations from the information age to the communication age (Burrus, 2010).

It is therefore vital that the communicator ensures a straightforward and simplistic message. It is important to ensure that what the recipient receives is indeed the same information that was intended to be sent (Steyn *et al.*, 2013:324). Listening and interpreting skills are crucial to enhancing effective communication. This can be ensured by obtaining verbal or non-verbal feedback from the recipient. If the feedback is positive and is what was expected, the project manager knows that the project communication was effective. Evaluation of the feedback is a quality control mechanism in the communication process. The overall communication strategy and the subsequent communication action plan depend largely on the relationships between units or task groups within a specific *organisational structure*. Organisational communication is, therefore, basically a process where meaning is created, negotiated and managed by the stakeholders (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:231). Moreover, a proper selection and use of appropriate tools for communication form an integral part of a successful organisational communication plan.

In addition, communication in organisations involves input, output, throughput and feedback as concepts proposed by systems theorists to describe the behaviour of a system or organisation. Input originates in the form of information or as matter-energy from the environment. Organisations need to focus on input as it identifies problems that put the organisation out of balance with intertwining organisations in the environment. Organisations process the information input using systems language called throughput in order to provide a solution to the problems that were caused by the inputs. Therefore, in order to restore the balance that was lost within the intertwining organisations, the organisation now releases the outputs into the environment. In return, the organisation seeks feedback from the environment in order to establish if the problem was solved. This process continues until the system gains equilibrium with other systems that it interpenetrates with (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:95).

The discussion indicates that even if the equilibrium between the interpenetrating organisations is not disturbed, an organisation can be reactive or proactive towards the environment. In other words, an organisation that is reactive to the environment changes only when the environment forces it to do so, and a proactive organisation changes other organisations in the environment without any attempt to destabilise the equilibrium in the interpenetrating organisations. The proactive organisation begins with throughput instead of inputs and then releases outputs that will affect the balance of interpenetrating organisations which will eventually, upon their reaction, cause problems for the organisation that initiated the outputs. The organisation then has to deal with the inputs that emanate from the interpenetrating organisations that intend to restore equilibrium (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:95).

The organisation must be able to choose the right output that will best suit the proper functioning of the organisation. This can be done by assessing the environment through the right choice of organisational structure between vertical and horizontal structures. Both structures are relevant for the organisation as the vertical structure sets out relationships between managers and subordinates, whereas horizontal structure breaks down tasks of departments into smaller units (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:97).

### **3.10 Role of organisational culture in organisational communication**

Organisations have internal (Jenkins, Ambrosini, & Collier, 2015:4) and external cultural influence in the way they operate. It is through organisational culture that organisations identify themselves or get identified by stakeholders. Organisational culture is developed as a result of the groups' attempt to adapt to the external challenges and the internal integration (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015:88). The practices become the norms of the organisation and new employees get introduced to the correct way of perception, thinking and feeling with regard to emanating problems.

Shockley-Zalabak (2015:89) proposes a model of culture with three levels, namely: artefacts and creations; values and basic assumptions. The most visible level of culture, artefacts and creations, comprises architecture, technology, furniture, dress, meetings, decision-making, networks and written documents. These are most visible to the members of the cultures and other observers. On the second level, values, individuals and groups portray the way they would prefer things to be done in the organisation. On the third level, basic assumptions, stakeholders formulate what they believe is true about the world. They are based on humanity's relationships to nature, nature of reality and truth; of human nature; of human activity and of human relationships (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015:89).

Additionally, Clappitt (2010:71) describes culture as an inclusion of the whole symbolic environment. That gives the reality of an aspect, in this case, it provides reality of an organisation; what is, what should be, and what can be. It focuses on the events and interactions that employees pay attention to. It also states what is important; causes of things in organisations; and how events beyond employees' lives relate to them. Again, culture provides employees with values and standards. Therefore organisational culture is a collection of beliefs and values existing in the organisation (Clappitt, 2010:41; Rothaermel, 2017:384) and are collectively shared by employees and yet expressed in different ways. Culture can enforce certain types of growths, or can enhance fertile growth to some enterprises, or clear away other kinds of behaviours. Furthermore, organisational culture may appear stable while at times it appears to be evolving in new constant challenges. Employees tend to devote themselves to tasks valued by the organisation and ignore the rest. Organisations do

not have one whole culture, even those that are closely knit, they have subcultures or countercultures (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 2015:245).

Organisational culture influences organisations in a number of ways. Clappitt (2010:73) explains four ways, namely: organisational culture affects the bottom line of the company. Clappitt (2010:74) notes that organisations that align themselves with culture always do well in business. Employees are equipped with focus, purpose and motivation through the right culture, structure and strategy. Strong culture enables employees to read the minds of the senior management when they are efficiently managing actions, as a result employees become more innovative and yield high productivity and high profits. Secondly, culture influences the way in which an organisation analyses and solves problems. It is discovered that more meaningful options are not weighed due to the saying 'that is how we do things here'. Furthermore, culture is believed to influence how an organisation responds to change. It can motivate constant and decisive change if need arises, at times it can act as an obstacle to change. Lastly, culture affects employee motivation and customer satisfaction. Employees can be negatively affected by organisational culture when an organisation spells out some values which it does not put into practice. Equally so, when an organisation promises customers, for instance fair prices and they do not see that happen, customers get demotivated. Employees prefer a manager who operates on a set of values rather than rules, and those who focus on employees rather than following procedures.

Understanding companies, churches, universities, government agencies, student clubs, or any other form of organisation or institution can be enhanced through analysing culture. This raises a desire to understand the context of communication and a need to establish recognisable categories of institutional and organisational conducts and practices (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001:292). Organisational culture consists of patterns of human behaviours and meaning. In as much as human behaviours are seen to influence social and organisational structures, communication is still an interactive aspect through which all possible, enabling and constraining forces must pass. Regular discussions of organisational culture, identity and the change process, within organisations, may result in empowering and informing employees.

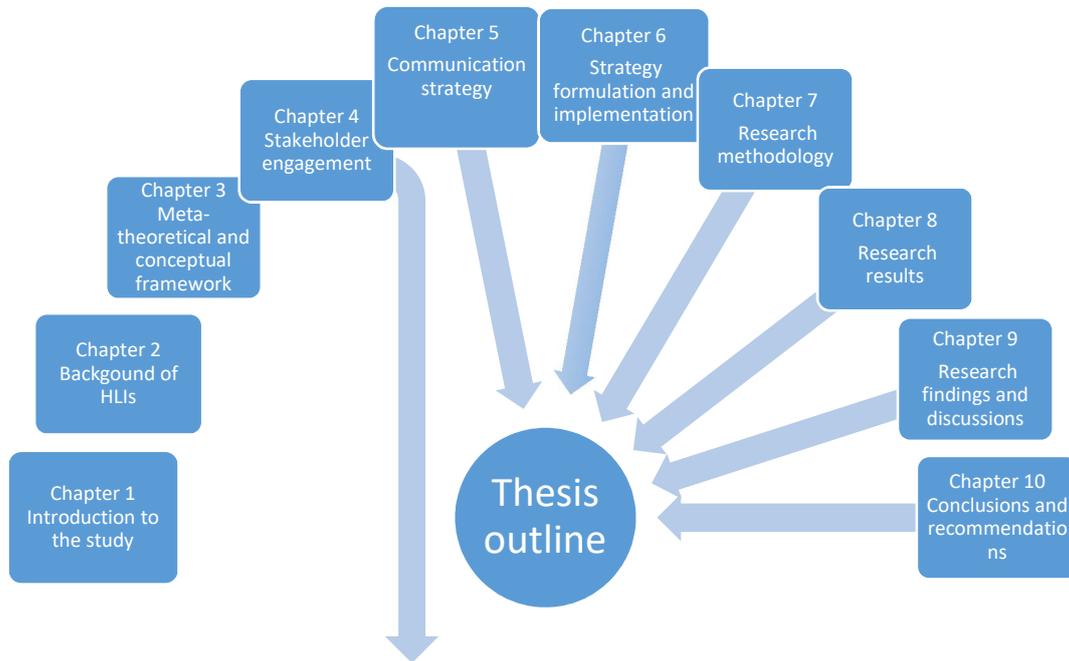
In addition, Eisenberg and Riley (2001:295) point out that managers who show interest in employees' culture often appreciate ideas from different stakeholders and often use them to reshape existing organisations and erect new organisations that may serve as alternatives to hierarchical organisational structures that prefer the top-down models.

Organisations that have strong cultures can actually face challenges because it can lead to resistance of different ways of doing things. In other words, culture has to maintain consistency with the strategies and demands of the organisation (Clampitt, 2010:74). Clampitt, further states that it is only wise for managers to teach employees values of the organisation, since employees do not normally see the value of what they are doing until they have done it, therefore employees should turn the organisation's rhetoric into subjective, personal commitments and experiences. Managers, on the other hand, formulate the organisational values, mission and purpose statements into statements that are neither too ambiguous nor too narrow (Clampitt, 2010:74).

### **3.11 Conclusion**

Based on the fact that an organisation is a system that needs input from the subsystems, the researcher concludes that organisations should be open to accommodate views and inputs contributed by the subsystems, inter alia the stakeholders. Organisational communication subsequently acts as a factor that enables interaction among systems and it is through the communication process that organisations are able to achieve set goals and missions. The research study does not only discuss organisational communication, but also interaction with the stakeholders with the purpose of engaging them in the effective achievement of the goals and objectives of the organisation. Because organisations have to manage their relationships with their stakeholders to enhance stakeholder engagement for effective formulation and implementation of strategic plans, the next Chapter will discuss stakeholder engagement.

## Chapter 4 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



- Critical theory of communication in organisations
- Managing stakeholder vs organisational relationship
- The role of stakeholders in an organisation
- Involvement of stakeholders
- Organisation and stakeholders
- Stakeholder approach to communication
- Principles of stakeholder management
- Assessment of quality management
- Model of stakeholder engagement

### 4.1 Introduction

Organisations operate because there is information flow amongst the integral parts of the organisations. This information usually flows to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategy in operation. The question arises 'who are these stakeholders?' Berry (2007:335); Phillips (2004:1) and Scholes and James (1998:277) state that stakeholders are those individuals and organisations that are affected by, and can influence the organisation. According to Friedman and Miles (2006:13) the easiest way

to determine stakeholders is by considering groups of people with a distinguishable relationship with organisations such as, shareholders, customers, suppliers, distributors, employees, and local communities.

The number of categories of stakeholder groups identified above is limited by the way in which the groups are defined. For instance, the category of employees associates with white-collar, blue-collar, trade unionists and non-trade unionists, permanent or temporary, full-time, or part-time, or in terms of which plant or section they work in.

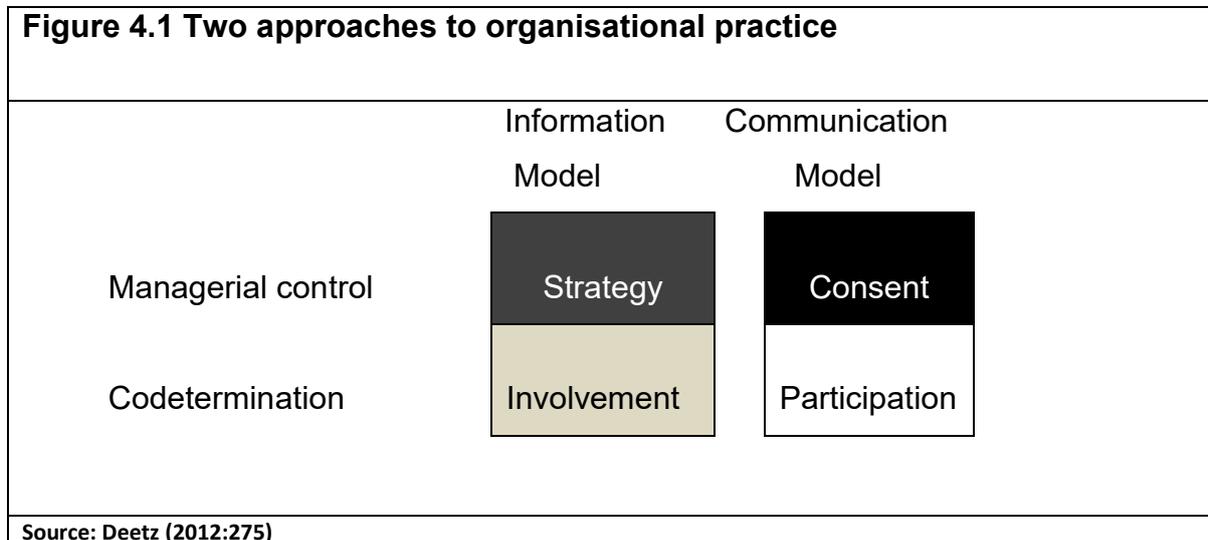
This Chapter deals with how both internal and external stakeholders should be involved in the implementation of strategy. Stakeholder approach to communication and principles of stakeholder management are discussed. Assessment of quality management and stakeholder engagement model will be looked at

## **4.2 Critical theory of communication in organisations**

Griffin (2012:274) discusses communication in organisations based on Stanley Deetz's critical theory of communication. Communication is the transmission of information. Even though a majority of human communication scholars now dismiss the familiar process of the source sending the message through a platform to the recipient, the conduit model is still taken for granted in organisations and in everyday life. The model stimulates two approaches to organisational practice and involves the information model and communication model (Griffin, 2012:274).

The communication model portrays four windows (see Figure 4.1 below). The upper-left window represents the corporate decision processes which systematically exclude the voices of people who are directly affected by the decisions and this is labelled managerial control. The bottom-left window portrays decision processes that invite open dialogue among all stakeholders, and this is called codetermination. According to Deetz (2012:275) when coupled with the constitutive view of communication, codetermination represents the "collaborative collective constructions of self, other, and the world" which are the product of participatory democracy.

**Figure 4.1 Two approaches to organisational practice**



According to the 2 × 2 nature of the model there are four different ways in which stakeholders or organisational decisions can be made: strategy, consent, involvement, and participation. The analysis of the four corporate practices provides the core of Deetz' (2012:275) critique of managerialism.

- **Strategy**

According to Deetz (2012:275), individual managers are not the problem. The real culprit is managerialism. Managerialism is a discourse based on a systematic logic, a set of routine practices, and ideology that values control above all else. Stockholders want profits and workers desire freedom, but management craves control. Initially, managers may regard efficiency as a means to an end to higher profits. The desire to control soon becomes a valued end in itself. The desire to control can even exceed the desire for corporate performance. Talking in terms of money is often more to control than respect for efficiency or profits.

Moreover, other than accelerating advancement on the managerial career path, there is little evidence that strategic control has beneficial effects. It is further claimed that

most corporate successes or failures are the result of factors beyond managerial control. Control does have distinct disadvantages. The cost is high, and workers resent the constant surveillance. Frequent references to clearing the whole system of the unwanted, create an understandable jumpiness among employees, and sometimes their fear is acted out in covert rebellion (Deetz, 2012:275).

- **Consent**

Managerialism promotes worker consent through a process of systematically distorted communication. Unlike strategic control, which is open and deliberate, systematically distorted communication operates under the radar. When this happens, expectations and norms within a group setting restrict what can be openly expressed or even thought. Deetz emphasises that the workers deceive themselves because they believe they are interacting freely, while in reality only certain options are available (Deetz, 2012:278).

In addition, Griffin (2012:278) suggests that the force of an organisational practice is strongest when no one thinks about it. If someone questions such a routine, employees would be pressed to explain why it is standard operational procedure. The best response they could master would be a non-answer; “that’s the way it’s done around here.” Practices that have this ‘taken for granted’ quality are often associated with common sense. Without a clear understanding that communication produces rather than reflects reality, employees will unknowingly consent to the managerial mentality that wants to expand corporate control (Griffin, 2012:278).

- **Involvement**

Anyone who has a share in organisational decisions, shifting from managerial control at the top of the structure to involvement at the bottom makes an important move. That is, the organisation represents a switch from autocracy to liberal democracy; from managerial decisions made behind closed doors to open discussions where all have the opportunity to express their opinions. Whether in political or corporate governance, in every organisation stakeholders must have an opportunity to discuss issues, not

only for the sake of meaningful democracy but also for them to have a voice in the final outcome. Forums provide the opportunity for involvement, but a voice is not just having a say. It means expressing interests reflected in joint decisions. That is, real participation is only possible when all stakeholders realise that their communication creates reality rather than merely describing it (Deetz, 2012:278).

- **Participation**

Through participation stakeholder democracy is portrayed. The theory of communication is critical, but not just negative. Deetz (2012:278) strongly criticises the managerial strategy of increasing control over workers, engineering their consent, and granting them free expression without giving them a voice in decision, he also believes that joint, open decisions in the workplace are possible. He is convinced that meaningful democratic participation creates better citizens and better social choices, and provides important economic benefits. One of the goals of his theory is to reclaim the possibility of open negotiations of power, which he calls stakeholder democracy. Besides managers, there is a list of people who should have a say in the running of an organisation and they are as follows (Deetz, 2012:278):

- Investors seeking security of principal and a decent return on their investment.
- Workers seeking a reasonable wage, safe working conditions, a chance to take pride in their labour, security of employment, and time spent with their families.
- Consumers seeking quality goods and services at a fair price.
- Suppliers seeking a stable demand for their resource with timely payment upon delivery.
- Host communities seeking payment for services provided, stable employment, environmental care, and the quality of family and stakeholders life enhanced rather than diminished.
- Greater society and the world community seeking environmental care, economic stability, overall civility, and fair treatment of all constituent groups (racial, ethnic, gender).

As listed above, institutions of higher learning have stakeholders to consider as important to the effective running of the institutions. Stakeholders invest in the

institutions so they want to get rewarding returns. Internal stakeholders want reasonable salaries while the other group of stakeholders, namely students expect quality education. Suppliers, communities and society expect stable demand of their resources, stable employment and stable economy.

### **4.3 Managing stakeholder vs organisation relationships**

It is vital for all organisations to know who their stakeholders are and to know their stakes in the organisation. Organisations must be able to understand the process involved in managing the organisations' relationship with the stakeholders, and whether the process fits both the organisation and the stakeholder's map (see Figure 4.2) about the organisation. Moreover, there has to be an understanding of all transactions that take place between the organisation and stakeholders. An attempt should be made to find out if negotiations suit the stakeholder map and organisational processes for stakeholders between the organisations and their stakeholders, so that an organisation could be considered to have high stakeholder management (Freeman, 2010:53). Freeman believes that an organisation that does not understand who its stakeholders are, will definitely have no processes to deal with their concerns and will lack transactions to negotiate with stakeholders and consequently the organisation will have low stakeholder management (Freeman, 2010:53).

This research adapts Freeman's 1984 stakeholder map to illustrate groups of people that can affect or be affected by the purpose of the organisation. The map helps organisations to realise the power the stakeholders possess. Stakes range from equity to influencer stakes (Freeman & McVea, 2001:7).

**Figure 4.2 Stakeholder map**



Source: Freeman (2010:25)

Managers are encouraged to formulate and implement plans that satisfy all the stakeholders who have a stake in the organisation. Organisations should focus on the relationships and interests they have with the stakeholders, to manage and integrate them to ensure long-term success for the organisation (Freeman & McVea, 2001:7). Stakeholder mapping will enhance stakeholder participation in the organisational decision-making.

Participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process of the organisation is vital and it should be treated as such (Glicken, 2001:305-310) to avoid stakeholders becoming resentful to participate, which is likely to happen when they discover that their opinions are discounted. External stakeholders, on the other hand, will doubt their contribution if they realise that their input is not equally valuable as that of the expertise

(employees) within the organisation. It is a noted challenge to integrate stakeholder input to that of the employees in the decision-making in process.

Managers should understand that when involving stakeholders, they are not managing the stakeholders, but managing relationships with stakeholders. This enhances the growth of scope to encompass communication management and marketing managers who practise their authority and communication skills to a strategic point of view, namely that all managers should relate to multiple stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:325). In business, the manager and stakeholder relationship is believed to be a mutual engagement that creates a foundation for transparency and accountability. Stakeholder theory consists of the elements of involvement, participation and dialogue (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:325).

#### **4.4 The role of stakeholders in an organisation**

Stakeholders can be considered as members of a community since they have shared goals and bonds even though they have varying interests, needs and values. The stakeholders are believed to be investors in this community. Etzioni (in Friedman & Miles, 2006:74) states that investors offer their investment on the condition that they will be able to participate to some extent, even if indirectly through directors of pension funds and mutual funds, in the decisions that affect what their return may be in future. Employees invest years of their labour and expect to be paid in future (Friedman & Miles, 2006:74).

Communities provide special access roads to the benefit of stakeholders, they offer free land, and loans at 'less than the going' interest rates. In return, communities expect future earnings in terms of job creation, taxes, and prestige. Creditors may also provide specific resources if they provide capital when it is at high risk or provide capital below market rates. Clients, on the other hand, may be thought of as investing in corporations when they continue to purchase goods that they could, otherwise, buy more cheaply or of better quality elsewhere (Friedman & Miles, 2006:74).

Phillips (2004:1-2) maintains that organisations owe legitimate stakeholders an obligation, while derivative stakeholders have power over the organisation and the potential to be a beneficial or harmful influence on the organisation. Due to the fact that competitors can affect an organisation they can be considered as legitimate stakeholders. Although the natural environment is not a normative stakeholder, an organisation may still choose to take care of the environment, mainly because the environment is its legitimate stakeholders who care deeply about it (Phillips, 2004:2).

In addition, Steyn (2003:175) observes that managers are not trained to manage stakeholders in matters concerning complex socio political environment. This calls for stakeholder managers to participate in strategy formulation and to develop linked processes for dealing with stakeholders and emanating issues. Steyn (2003:175) suggests that the senior corporate communication manager can be the ideal person to instil intelligence in organisational stakeholder's groups.

Phillips (2004:1) argues that if managers are in continuous communication with stakeholders, through the corporate communication manager (Steyn, 2003:175), they stand a better chance to assess organisational goals, and can take advantage of the unforeseen, and mutually advantageous opportunities. They can perhaps combat conflict before it gets to a critical stage. These stakeholders can contribute to the organisation and should be given a chance to have a say in the management of the organisation. Managers are, however, encouraged to do so by taking stability into consideration. Stakeholder engagement in the organisational decision-making process should be based on their degree of contribution and the greater the share the bigger voice they should be given (Phillips, 2004:1).

#### **4.5 Engagement of stakeholders**

Following are different features and methods that can be used to identify groups of stakeholders (Standard, 2008:20):

- Dependency – people that are affected by organisation’s activities, services or products or people whom the organisation depends on.
- Responsibility – people that the organisation, at some stage, may have responsibility over.
- Tension – people that may need attention from the organisation with regard to financial, economic, social or environmental matters.
- Influence – people who can make an impact on organisation’s decision-making.
- Diverse perspectives – people who have the potential of raising views that may result in a new understanding of situations or opportunities that may need action.

Stakeholders could also include those who represent custom, culture or reputation and the future generation, as well as the environment. Initial identification of stakeholders may contribute to the building of external sources, such as research studies and peer analyses, or internal sources such as knowledge regarding the organisation, as well as matters concerning purpose and coverage of engagement (Standard, 2008:20).

Organisations should be coordinating the manner in which they handle relationships with stakeholders. Scholes and James (1998:281) state that senior managers have to be encouraged to review the manner in which they approach communication. More emphasis of strategy, values and structure should be made because they impact decision-making. Managers can engage in stakeholder communication by reinforcing values which cover all the functions of the organisation. The next thing to consider should also be given to the structure and process of how stakeholder communication can be managed, given the possibility of a crises or made worse by failure to coordinate the communication process effectively (Hitt *et al.*, 2012).

Morsing and Schultz (2006:325) argue that 50% of companies practised one-way communication to inform the stakeholders, and 35% practised two-way communication that builds on processes of sense giving and sense making.

Organisations make use of three strategies to involve stakeholders, namely the stakeholder information strategy; the stakeholder response strategy; and the stakeholder engagement strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:325).

The first strategy defines communication as one way, it flows from the organisation to its stakeholders. Managers believe in telling and not listening and therefore they focus on one-way communication. These organisations prefer press releases or resort to other means of communicating, such as producing information and news for media i.e. brochures, pamphlets, and magazines to inform the public in general. Organisations that use one-way communication include governments, non-profitable organisations and many other businesses (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:326).

In this model, the organisation ensures positive stakeholder support by informing them about the organisation's good intentions, decisions and actions. This is quite a challenge as most companies believe that they have the right approach in using stakeholder information strategy. All that managers communicate to the stakeholders is to ensure effective communication is about decisions made and actions to be taken. The role of the communication department in an organisation is to ensure conveyance of coherent messages in an appealing way; and that the design of the messages are linked to the core business of the organisation (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

In addition, stakeholder response strategy is a communication model based on a two-way asymmetric model, where communication flows back and forth between the organisation and stakeholders, but in an imbalanced manner. The communication takes place in favour of the organisation. The organisation does not change as a result of communication management, but the organisation rather changes the behaviour and attitudes of the stakeholders. The organisation involves stakeholders when they make decisions relevant to them, because they need external stakeholders' authenticity. Communication is used as a means of getting feedback from the stakeholders in order to identify the tolerance of the stakeholders and to evaluate

whether the stakeholders understood the organisation, and vice versa (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

In the stakeholder response strategy, the organisation focuses on convincing the stakeholders about its attractiveness, while the stakeholders provide feedback. Although they are regarded as influential objects of the organisation, external stakeholders provide feedback to the organisation passively while the organisation formulates questions in such a way that they produce expected answers (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

Stakeholder engagement strategy involves both stakeholders and the organisation in persuading each other for a change. The two parties get involved in a symmetric communication model, the process of sense-making and sense-giving. This strategy allows for concurrent negotiation with the stakeholders. The organisation ensures that it keeps abreast with the stakeholders' expectations, as well as its possible influence on those expectations and of the influence the expectations will have on the organisation (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

In stakeholder engagement strategy and stakeholder information strategy stakeholders are influential, in a supporting or opposing manner, to the organisation; and in stakeholder response strategy, stakeholder expectations are investigated utilising opinion polls. Involvement strategy encourages development and promotion of positive support for the organisation to understand and adapt to their concerns, consequently this will enhance mutual beneficial action through frequent and systematic dialogues (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

To manage stakeholder communication requires improvement of professionalism and Scholes and James (1998:284) argue that research and segmentation should be the key areas where different groups involved in the organisation can be accurately identified, based on different characteristics, aspirations, limitations, hopes and fears. The research and relationship management can also be applied to the internal

stakeholders. Communication with employee stakeholders should be strengthened with the purpose of servicing communication needs of newly emerging external stakeholders (Scholes & James, 1998:284).

Not only should managers consider stakeholder communication, but also be encouraged to understand both group and individual stakeholder representatives. Managers should understand stakeholders' knowledge about matters related to the purpose and scope of the engagement, expectations of engagement, type of relationship prevailing, potential dependence, willingness to engage, level of influence, type and capacity of engagement, cultural context, geographical scale of operation and legitimacy (Standard, 2008:21).

Moreover, organisations should listen to the stakeholders with the aim to explain the organisation's point of view with emphasis on stakeholder listening. According to Scholes and James (1998:284) managers can achieve this process by;

- Inviting all cadres of stakeholders to comment according to the roles they play in the organisation, as employees, shareholders, and consumers.
- Establish forums in which stakeholders will share their expectations, values and understanding of the organisation.
- Invite stakeholders through consultation or judicious appointments to the board in order to create values.
- Engage stakeholders as auditors of how the organisation observes its policies and values.

In general, organisations can use the following activities in order to establish patterns to successful outcomes from stakeholder communication (Scholes & James, 1998:284):

- A more strategic and professional approach towards communication should be taken with the purpose of assisting the organisation both holistically and proactively to manage its reputation;

- Create a strategy to identify the key drivers behind the organisation and stakeholder needs and impacts, rather than satisfying or pacifying individual groups;
- Identifying and building key relationships and then systematically investing in building, improving and sustaining them;
- Listening to and planning the attitudes and behaviours to enhance effective communication;
- Formulate a structure and process to involve the up, down, across, to and from flow of communication in the organisation;
- Making communication management a key competency by finding a way to encourage key players in the communication process to strengthen the communication capability.

According to Standard (2008:26) stakeholder engagement may be a two-way process that involves levels and methods of engagement, as illustrated in the following table:

**Table 4.1 Levels and methods of stakeholder engagement**

Levels of engagement	Methods of engagement
<p><i>Consult</i></p> <p>Limited two-way engagement: organisation asks questions, stakeholders answer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Meetings with selected stakeholders</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Online feedback mechanisms</li> <li>• Advisory committees</li> </ul>
<p><i>Negotiate</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective bargaining with workers through their trade unions</li> </ul>
<p><i>Involve</i></p> <p>Two-way or multi-way engagement; learning on all sides but stakeholders and organisation act independently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder forums</li> <li>• Advisory panels</li> <li>• Consensus building processes</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making processes</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• On-line feedback schemes</li> </ul>
<p><i>Collaborate</i></p> <p>Two-way or multi-way engagement; joint learning, decision-making and actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint projects</li> <li>• Joint ventures</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Multi-stakeholder initiatives</li> </ul>
<p><i>Empower</i></p> <p>New forms of accountability; decisions delegated to stakeholders; stakeholders play a role in governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of stakeholders into governance, strategy and operations management</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source: Standard (2008:26)</b></p>	

Managers will also have to develop a plan that the stakeholders should have input in. The plan should include the mandate, purpose, roles and responsibilities, methodology for profiling stakeholders, pre-engagement activities, levels and methods and boundaries of disclosure.

In addition, managers should take into consideration several aspects to be included in the document, such as tasks and timelines, contact persons, technologies used, ground rules, culture-specific communication styles, communication platforms, resource requirements, monitoring and evaluation (Standard, 2008:30).

The following factors also need to be taken into consideration as they may impede the process of stakeholder engagement, namely: accessibility in the organisation,

availability of technology, timing, local conflicts, religion, culture-specific communication styles and other personal responsibilities (Standard, 2008:30).

#### **4.6 Internal vs external stakeholders**

Communication is integral to the study of organisational behaviour, as it is a way of learning about the environments within which organisations operate. Sutcliffe (2001:197) attests that the main reason organisations keep on surviving is the fact that they acquire, interpret and control flows of environmental information so that they are not blindsided by threats or they do not appear to be unprepared for opportunities that may emerge from the environment. It is worth noting that information flow from the organisation to the stakeholders is as crucial as information flow from the stakeholders to the organisation.

Many organisations found it vital to adopt a variety of internal and external communication activities in order to involve stakeholders. Cheney and Christensen (2001:232) state that many organisations encounter problems trying to convince the external stakeholders, especially the community, about their observation of defence of human rights and protection of environment when the internal stakeholders do not accept the message; and it is likewise when the organisation tries to convince the internal stakeholders (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:232).

Internal and external organisational communication seem closely intertwined more often than not, organisational messages are planned with more than one purpose and more than one audience (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:233). Even in the case of academic institutions, students are seen as designers of services due to their immediate response to the courses and lecturers and through their input to quick changes in curriculums and student services. Such forms of student engagement appear insignificant for they need limited exchange of information and apparently ignore possibilities of intersubjective understanding. This results in students being treated by institutions as consumers or customers and not as the primary audience or

service recipients (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:244), the organisation hardly distinguishes between inside and outside.

Organisations communicate with the stakeholders through advertisements and both Cheney and Christensen confirm that an organisation feels the need to remind not only the consumers, but also the employees that their business ventures are still sound. This creates an awareness in the organisations that the employees are customers who also need to be satisfied. There exists a blurred distinction between internal and external organisational communication (Cheney & Christensen (2001:244).

#### **4.7 Stakeholder approach to communication**

Strategic management of interactions of the stakeholders within the organisation is referred to as internal communication (Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2012:225). Based on stakeholder approach, Welch and Jackson (2007:183) affirm that organisations should, however, insist on being responsive to external forces to the organisation by doing a situational analysis of the external stakeholders. Organisations are encouraged to identify internal stakeholders by using segmentation by demographics or the occupational classification system. Welch and Jackson (2007:184) propose using structural levels to identify internal stakeholder groups, as follows:

- All employees;
- Strategic management: the dominant coalition, top management or strategic managers (CEOs, senior management teams);
- Day-to-day management: supervisors, middle managers or line-managers (directors, heads of departments, team leaders, division leaders, the CEO as line manager);
- Work teams (departments, divisions); and
- Project teams (internal communication review group, company-wide e-mail implementation group).

When identifying a stakeholder group on the organisational level, interrelated dimensions of internal communication result as internal line manager communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication. The last dimension encourages communication with all internal stakeholders who have one common goal of promoting commitment and a sense of belonging to the organisation; as well as the creation of the awareness of the changing environment and an understanding of the development of new goals (Welch & Jackson, 2007:184).

#### **4.8 Principles of stakeholder management**

It is worthwhile for organisations to effectively manage stakeholders for the benefit of efficient communication between themselves and the stakeholders. Friedman and Miles (2006:151) propose principles that organisations may adhere to when managing stakeholders. Firstly, there is a need for the organisations to be aware that stakeholders have various and diverse interests as organisations should monitor the concerns that emanate from all legitimate stakeholders. Secondly, managers should allow for two-way dialogue between the organisation and stakeholders, this will give room for stakeholders to air their concerns and views, and any risks foreseen as a result of their engagement with the organisation. Thirdly, managers should note that the extent to which stakeholders are involved in the organisation differs. In some cases, stakeholders formally get involved through annual general meetings or are represented by unions or through informal contacts, such as direct contact, advertising and press releases. Fourthly, Friedman and Miles (2006:151) emphasise that the two forms of contact should be treated with caution by the organisation, more especially the stakeholders that have limited capacity to interpret complex circumstances. A balance in risk and rewards should be considered between the different stakeholders, as well as to ensure a balance in the distribution of benefits. The fifth principle encourages cooperation between the stakeholders and the organisation to minimise unwanted externalities to the organisational premises. The sixth principle discourages activities that might jeopardise human rights. Lastly, managers should recognise the potential of their own conflicts, conflicts that may exist between the organisation and

legitimate stakeholders; and the need to resolve such conflicts through open communication (Friedman & Miles, 2006:151).

In addition to the principles of stakeholder management, the IHL may be encouraged to manage stakeholder knowledge (5.3.2 Situational knowledge) in order to facilitate stakeholder engagement in their implementation of strategic plans. Because the institutions comprise two types of stakeholders, namely external and internal which is further categorised into academic and non-academic employees, their management should be wary of the impact the distinction may have on knowledge sharing (Friedman & Miles, 2006:151).

#### 4.8.1 Stakeholder knowledge management

In stakeholder engagement stakeholders collaborate in order to share knowledge they have about their institutions concerning their communication strategies and strategic plans. According to Pasher and Ronen (2011:92) institutions must portray proper cultural environment that begins with a basic organisational value that would be shared amongst institutional managers and stakeholders. Everyone should balance individual time and networking with others. Stakeholders must be encouraged to network with others in order to exchange ideas, share knowledge and consult with relevant stakeholders (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:92).

Additionally, a suitable environment of institutional culture is required. Institutions instil values that have a higher appreciation (Svejenova & Álvarez, 2007:185) and respect of individual stakeholder knowledge along with commitment towards enforcing knowledge interaction through mutual trust (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54). Such institutions believe that everyone (institutions and stakeholders) stands to benefit by creating and sharing knowledge. In this manner, implementation of institutional communication strategies and strategic plans is enhanced (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54).

Moreover, a managerial culture that is based on trust instead of hierarchical command and control (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54) is required. Trust is attained in a transition from a predominantly authoritarian stance (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:53) to a more open one and attention to all institutional stakeholder responses. Therefore, a development of institutional culture is key for successful stakeholder knowledge management.

Institutions are further encouraged to consider physical environment within which their internal (regardless of whether they are academic or non-academic) and external stakeholders are located when managing their stakeholder knowledge, since physical environment can foster connectivity and effective communication between stakeholders (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54).

Communication platforms (5.5 Communication platforms) such as meetings that encourage brainstorming sessions about institutional strategic plans enhance quality of decisions by integrating multiple perspectives (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:108). Furthermore, information technology available for communication in IHLs (figure 8.4 Communication platforms used) will remain unused if the institutions do not instil a culture of knowledge sharing (Pasher & Ronen, 2011:110) amongst academic staff, non-academic staff and external stakeholders.

In order to manage stakeholder engagement effectively, managers are encouraged to consider using the principles mentioned above, implement stakeholder knowledge management and consequently assess the quality of stakeholder engagement.

#### **4.9 Assessment of quality of engagement**

Friedman and Miles (2006:159) suggest in effective dialogue, as proposed as one of the principles discussed in Section 4.8, the following have to be considered: symmetrical communication, transparency of the benefits, unbiased facilitation, inclusivity and an early start to facilitate change if needed. There are three dimensions of quality, namely procedural, responsiveness and outcomes.

Procedural quality is used to assess the extent to which engagement is undertaken and whether there is consistency between the undertaking and the proposed purpose. Both the organisation and stakeholders should understand the scope and parameters of discussion, areas that can be negotiable and areas that are not relevant. The restricted engagement that is mostly apparent to the operational issues attracts depoliticising participation wherein stakeholders' choices are constrained with the options and terms provided by management. Quality is characterised by the presence of formalised procedures, facilities of stakeholders in initiating engagement, and declaration that stakeholders are, indeed, empowered to provide views of their own concern. Consequent to the views, stakeholders must be provided with accurate and timely feedback, and broad dissemination of the feedback (Friedman & Miles, 2006:159).

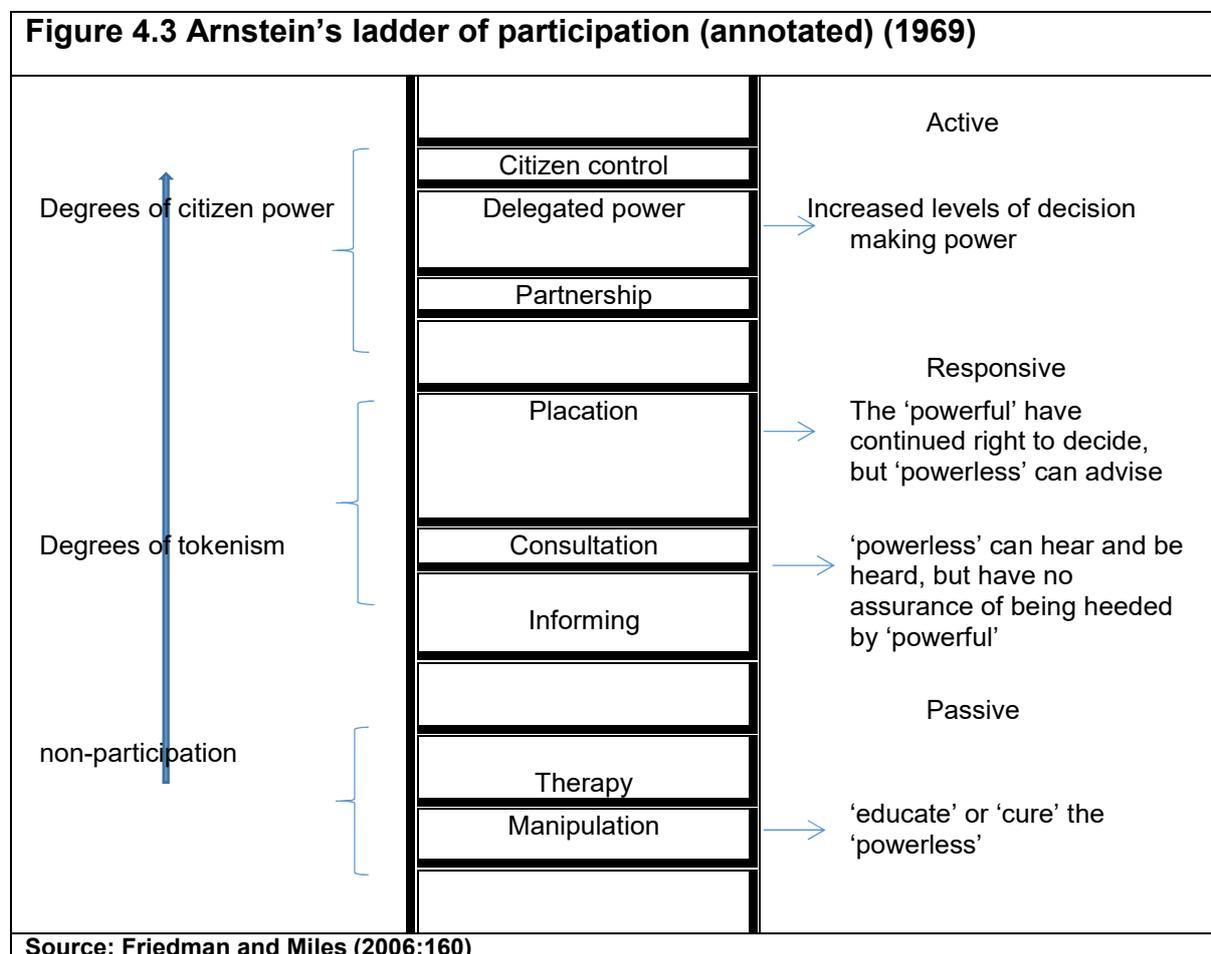
Procedural quality further suggests that stakeholders should be fairly selected, that there should be no signs of biased and an incomprehensible manner in the selection process. The verification process should be included to ensure relevant representation and participation (Friedman & Miles, 2006:159).

Responsiveness quality determines the kind of response made by the organisation, whether the organisation showed understanding of stakeholder's concerns; if concerns were identified, how will they be addressed practically? Was there consistency in organisational response with regard to general policy statements such as represented in the budgets and reviews on staff performance (Friedman & Miles, 2006:159)?

Friedman and Miles (2006:160) further point out that stakeholder engagement must incorporate decision-making. This would show quality of outcomes, the last dimension of quality, as the organisation adjusts its policies and practices in line with engagement of stakeholders.

#### 4.10 Model of stakeholder engagement

Friedman and Miles (2006:160) use Arnstein's (1969) ladder of public involvement for the development of policy, from the paternalistic to the participatory level. The ladder has eight steps that are divided into three categories, namely non-participation (manipulation and therapy), degrees of tokenism (informing, consultation and placation), and degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control). The two authors indicate that there could be more than eight steps; they devise their model with twelve levels based on this model.



According to the model, the lower levels, non-participation (manipulation, therapy, and informing) focus on circumstances in which organisations inform stakeholders about any decisions made. This is an autocratic style which does not allow any interaction between the organisation and stakeholders. The lower two steps, manipulation and

therapy are considered cynical contrary to the third one, namely informing (Friedman & Miles, 2006:160).

The middle levels, degrees of tokenism (explaining, placation, consultation and negotiation), indicate direct participation as a response to stakeholder concerns. At this level, stakeholders get an opportunity to contribute their views before decisions are made, though there is no guarantee that their views will have an impact in the outcome. At level four, explaining, the organisation carries on with exercises on educating stakeholders and inform them through two-way interaction in workshops, but stakeholders are not ensured of any outcome of the concerns and questions they raised. The fifth level, placation, comprises responses directed at stakeholder unrest, which needs concession in order to manage the situation. At the sixth level, consultation, organisations get opinions from stakeholders in advance, but legitimate concerns of stakeholders are ignored; results of the survey are not filtered into the decision-making process (Friedman & Miles, 2006:160).

At the last level of category, tokenism, the organisation uses a defence mechanism when in dialogue with the stakeholders the moment they identify external threats that the stakeholders may withdraw their support. This is the starting point where the stakeholder engagement starts and it shows the possibility that the decision-making process can be influenced. However, if the organisation is less dependent on the stakeholder the organisation can easily limit chances of negotiations with the stakeholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006:160).

At the highest level, there are degrees of involvement and power and this level is characterised by its responsive nature of empowering stakeholders during organisational decision-making. The eighth step includes involvement where the organisation gets willingly involved with stakeholders, to tackle some issues. There may be a reaction by the organisation due to positive or negative actions by the stakeholders or organisation. Although the ability to agree to the decisions made is not guaranteed, there is a high likelihood of influence on the organisation decisions. In the

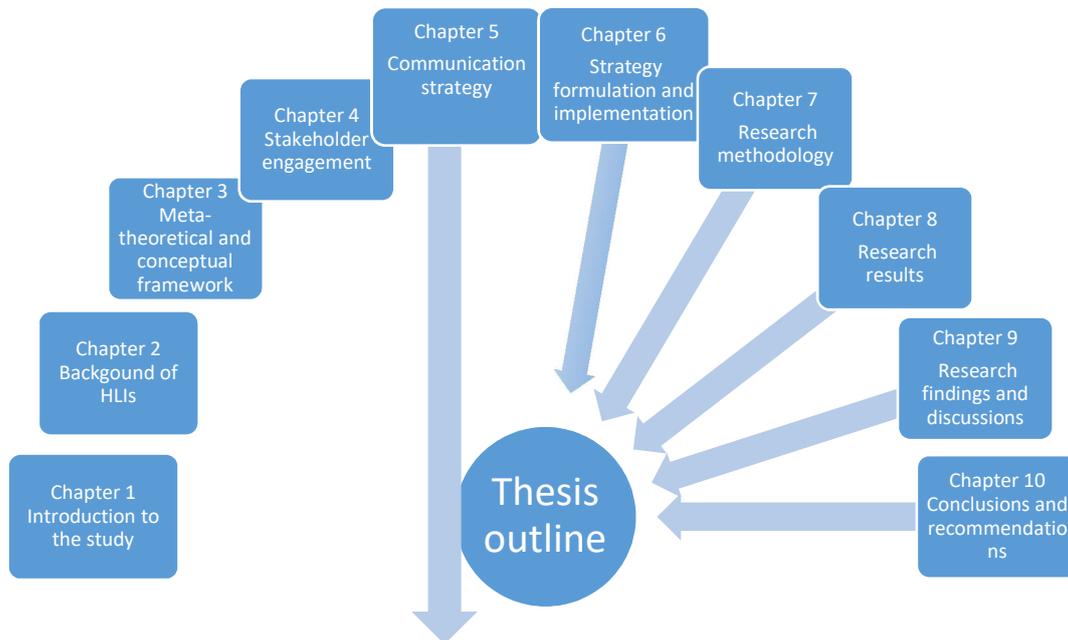
cases where the organisation may collaborate with the stakeholders, stakeholders may have power over the outcome and control will still lie in the hands of the organisation (Friedman & Miles, 2006:163).

Partnership, the tenth step, poses similar characteristics to involvement in that they are a joint venture. The degree to which stakeholders can take control is restricted to certain projects. Sometimes control is obvious in circumstances of delegated power and stakeholder power. Lastly, if managers learn to handle power in decision-making and remain a minority say, this could become a very influential stakeholder engagement strategy (Friedman & Miles, 2006:164).

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

To conclude, stakeholder engagement provides characteristics of a well involving organisation for the enriched engagement and empowerment of the stakeholders. In order to engage stakeholders, organisations select effective communication strategies to suit their structures and sizes. The following Chapter (Five) discusses communication strategy to enlighten the organisations about strategies that may enhance stakeholder engagement for a successful implementation of the strategic plan.

## Chapter 5 Communication strategy



- Communicating the strategy
- A competent communicator
- Communication and leadership
- Communication platforms
- Culture and strategy
- Communicating for strategic alignment
- Strategic communication
- Functional perspective on group decision-making
- Cultural approach to organisations
- Lessons to be learned in strategic communication

### 5.1 Introduction

Organisational communication generally involves the use of verbal and non-verbal cues to formulate and transmit messages to solicit feedback in the organisational context. People act together to create and manage meaning and context (Conrad & Poole, 2005:4). Organisational relationships emanate from organisational context since people communicate to fulfil personal or work related issues. Conrad and Poole further state that organisations are a result of relationships that were formed through

conversations. The authors go on to argue that communication strategies are choices that are constructed by powerful members in an organisation stipulating how an organisation, as a system, will be designed and how it will be run.

Subsequently, communication strategy is used in the organisation to determine ways available to the organisation for effective planning and implementation of strategies. The process requires stakeholders to establish available resources and select potential lines of communication that will allow them to pursue the set goals and missions strategically (Conrad & Poole, 2005:18). This Chapter will discuss communicating strategy, communication competence, communication and leadership, culture and strategy, communicating for strategic alignment, strategic communication and lessons to be learned from strategic communication. All these concepts are discussed on the basis of a systems theory.

## **5.2 Communicating the strategy**

Organisations undergo strategic thinking to embark on planning and implementation of the strategic plans. According to Steyn and Puth (2000:38) strategic thinking equals problem-solving. Organisations undergo the process of decision-making so that they are able to analyse the organisational strategic situation which is determined by the macro industry and internal factors, that may also include the environment of the stakeholders.

### **5.2.2 Institutional strategy and the strategic plan**

Strategy is considered as a plan that top management compiles to execute the mission and goals for the organisation. Mintzberg *et al.* (1998:9) point out that strategy cannot have a single definition. They, however, state that strategy is considered the most important point of managerial activities; a pattern which organisations use to develop their future plan and evolve more plans using past patterns. Strategy has to incorporate combined characteristics of plausibility, actionable tactics in order to

achieve success or a desired end (Farwell, 2012:153). Strategy therefore has to be seen producing managers' intent. There is no end to things in the strategic process; rather the successful strategy will bring about changes that can result into new realities.

In their discussion on strategy, Mintzberg *et al.* (1998:11) argue that few strategies are either deliberate or emergent. That means some strategies require no learning and some no control, though the learning and control can be merged. Generally, the outlines of strategy are deliberate whereas the details are emergent. The effective strategists are encouraged to mix the two in such a way that prevailing conditions are exposed and portray the ability to forecast the need to react in case of the unexpected events. Mintzberg *et al.* (1998:15) define characteristics of strategy and that each characteristic has an advantage and disadvantage:

- “Strategy sets direction”  
Although strategy helps the organisation to operate cohesively through its environment, strategic direction can hide away the potential dangers.
- “Strategy focuses effort”  
Even though strategy gives coordination of activities that take place within the organisation, there may be no borderline vision to cater for other possibilities.
- “Strategy defines the organisation”  
Even if strategy can provide employees with a shorter way of understanding their organisation and to be able to differentiate it from other organisations, the definition may be so easy that the rich involvedness of the system is lost.
- “Strategy provides consistency”.  
Strategy provides order though it cannot be reality itself but just a representation of reality with the likelihood of distorting effects on the way.

Mintzberg *et al.* (1998:339) adopts Kotter's (1995:61) eight steps involved in transforming an organisation for its overall managers. This is the top-down approach managers can employ in putting their organisations into transformation, namely:

- Establishing a sense of urgency: examining market and competitive realities; identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.
- Forming a powerful guiding coalition: assembling a group with enough power to lead the change effort; encouraging the group to work together as a team.
- Creating a vision: creating a vision to help direct the change effort; developing strategies for achieving that vision.
- Communicating the vision: using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies; teaching new behaviours by the example of the guiding coalition.
- Empowering others to act on the vision; getting rid of obstacles to change; changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision; encouraging risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions.
- Planning for creating short-term wins: planning for visible performance improvements; creating those improvements; recognising and rewarding employees involved in the improvements.
- Consolidating improvements and producing still more changes: using increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that can implement the vision; reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.
- Institutionalising approaches: articulating the connections between the new behaviours and corporation success; developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Institutions develop strategies to reflect their plan of movement from one point to another. They indicate the current situations where the institutions are and cast the future of the institutions so as to imagine where they want to see themselves in future, (IHLs). Their current position reveals a definition of economic factors, stakeholder needs, and regulatory influences. About their future, they focus on the results of their strategic thinking and time frame to say when they intend to reach a specified point (Steyn & Puth, 2000:29).

The institutions involve the stakeholders in order to identify critically important strategic issues for the achievement of their vision and mission statement. They then decide on how they plan to put the strategies into reality (Steyn & Puth, 2000:30) hence the strategic planning. They follow four steps namely:

- what they aim to achieve (goal);
- the steps that are measurable to determine if the goal has been achieved (objectives);
- they indicate a rationale behind the actions they plan to take for the achievement of the institutional goals with a provision of a guideline that explains the activities (strategy); and
- they indicate the implementation strategies to be put in place for the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives.

Figure 5.1 below illustrates the above steps.



#### 5.2.2.1 Types of institutional strategies

Institutions are encouraged to be wary of the varying levels of the strategy. Steyn and Puth (2000:41-45) state the five levels to be considered in the management of the strategy. The institutions should note that different people participate at different levels of strategy development.

Firstly, enterprise strategy is in every institution regardless of the size due to its societal engagement attributes. Institutions have a mission, purposes and role that they play in society. This type of strategic management also has a focus on non-financial goals that enhance the institutional image and fulfil their social responsibilities. It also influences the relationship between the institution and the stakeholders. The enterprise strategy provides a guidance towards the formation of institutional policies and strategies; it addresses issues concerning the stakeholders' perceptions of the institutions; the values and expectations of the stakeholders; and what the institutions stand for.

Under the enterprise strategy, institutional survival is dependent on institutional values and their managers, stakeholder expectations and the societal aspects that determine the institutional ability to sell their products. The board and top managers determine how the institutions deal with their stakeholders. The enterprise strategy is, therefore, oriented towards stakeholders, Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2 Enterprise strategy**



Corporate strategy level addresses issues relating to the business portfolio that the institutions must compete in. At this level of the strategy, the focus is financially oriented. In addition, business unit strategy focuses on a group of related products and how to compete in the product segment. It is more market oriented.

Additionally, functional strategy level addresses implementation of the institutional strategies. It focuses on establishment of possible synergies in order to maximise the resource productivity. Each institutional function area contributes independently towards the formulation strategies at various levels. Steyn and Puth (2000:44) state that the functions of marketing and organisational communication functions signify the broader extent of contact between the organisation and the external environment. This level is oriented towards the support of the enterprise, corporate, and business levels.

At the last level of strategic management, operational strategy managers, heads of sections or project leaders determine among others, implementation strategies that are contributory towards business and corporate level goals (Steyn & Puth, 2000:44).

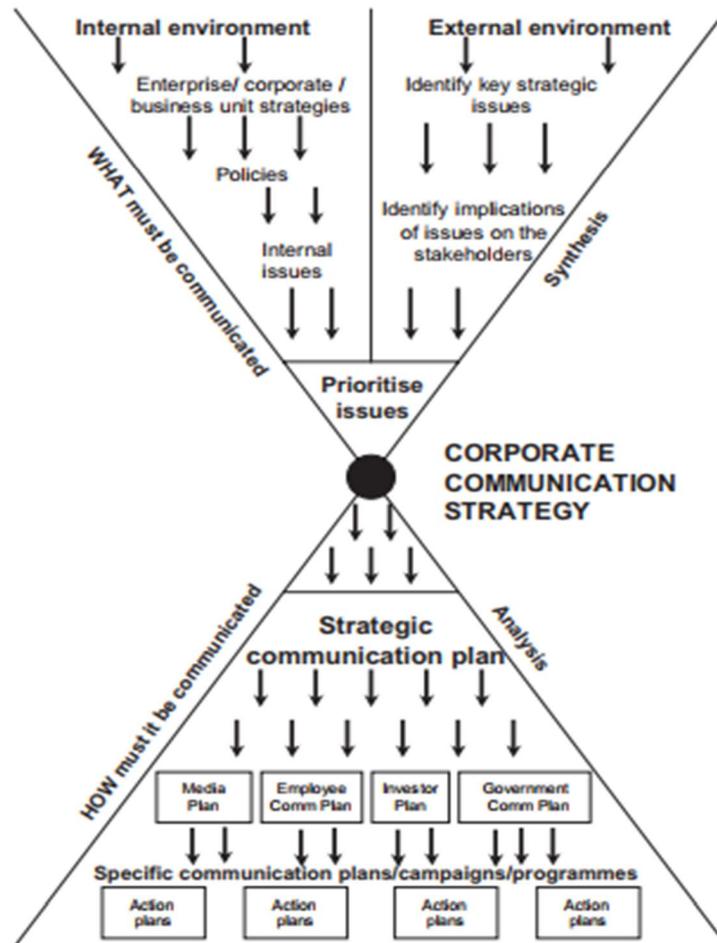
### 5.2.3 Communication strategy

Managers usually use the top-down approach to transforming the organisation. This approach engages enterprise strategy because it provides guidance towards development of institutional strategies. Managers frequently design a guideline for the effective planning and implementation of the goals and mission statements of the organisation hence a discussion of the communication strategy (Steyn & Puth, 2000:52).

Communication strategy mainly focuses on the organisation's way of managing the strategy. Steyn and Puth (2000:52) posit that communication strategy determines a guideline (framework) against which to test the prevailing communication decisions. "The corporate communication strategy is the framework for the strategic communication plan and the operational communication plans or programmes" (Steyn & Puth, 2000:52). It establishes the communication function to be communicated in order to support the organisation and its strategies.

Strategic formulation and planning are key to the formulation of a communication strategy hence the two should mirror each other since the communication strategy paves a way to the communication plan and generates a collaboration between the organisation and the communication strategy (Figure 5.3). Organisational effectiveness is therefore enhanced by the support the organisation gets from organisational communication as it responds to the organisational needs (Steyn & Puth, 2000:53).

**Figure 5.3 Corporate communication strategy comes before the communication plan**



Source: Steyn (2003:181)

It is therefore important to consider studying the internal and external environment of the organisation before developing the communication policy and strategy.

### 5.2.3.1 Internal environment

The internal environment comprises the *vision*: a forecast of where the organisation wants to be and what it intends to achieve. It communicates what makes the organisation special from the other organisations and provides a picture of which must

be lived by each member of the organisation; *mission*: the organisation's purpose in its society and economy. A mission captures purpose, nature and scope of the work accomplished by the organisation; *profile*: the organisational communication manager must be abreast with the organisation's financial status, reputation, products and services, location formal structure; *values*: sets of beliefs that are embedded in the mission statement and serve as a code of ethics and criteria with which members of the organisation may test the organisation's future decisions, making sure that there are no obvious differences between the internal and external messages; *philosophy*: organisations derive their philosophies from organisational values. The philosophies guide principles that determine stakeholder engagement, empowerment, quality control, and customer service; *culture*: organisations have their own set of ways by which they do things. These are just assumptions about what is/not acceptable by the employees; *policies*: organisations use policies to guide their principles for behaviour that forms a basis for particular actions. They are practical sets of principles for running business (Steyn & Puth, 2000:53-57).

#### 5.2.3.2 *External environment*

The organisation external environment is composed of suppliers, customers, unions, the government, competitors, local community and the public in general, as well as the economic, cultural, social and political conditions and priorities (Steyn & Puth, 2000:57). According to Steyn and Puth (2000:57) the organisational environment affects its strategy, structure, internal processes and its managerial decision-making.

The external environment is further categorised into four, namely the remote, industry, operating and functional (internal) environment. Firstly, the remote (macro) environment refers to the societal environment which mainly consists of social, economic, political, technological and ecological factors. Secondly, the industry environment consists of the forces that focus on competition such as new entrants, customers, suppliers, those that focus on substitute products and the current contestants. Then follows the operating environment which are those sectors that deal and directly influence the day-to-day running of the organisation. Lastly, is the

functional environment which comprises the areas of specialisation, such as those within the academy and administration (non-academic). It is within the functional environment that the organisation is able to discover the internal issues and tap knowledge of the employees about the external issues (Steyn & Puth, 2000:57).

Organisations must be able to acquire up-to-date information from the external environment in order to be able to make informed decisions. In order to tap the external issues, the organisation has to make use of the boundary spanners, people who can interact with the external environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:59). It does not necessarily mean that the functional environment has to do the work. Information is acquired from the external environment and decisions are made to determine who, when and what information should be disseminated to others and information is given to others to establish an approving organisational image.

### 5.2.3.3 *Developing a communication strategy*

The organisation is viewed as the socioeconomic system in which stakeholders are seen as valuable assets through collaborative problem solving (Steyn, 2003:173). The collaboration is done through economic resources, political support and special knowledge offered by the stakeholders to the organisation in order to enhance the organisational competitive advantage

Communication strategy development may also be aligned with a two-way communication measure between the internal and external environments. Two-way communication has always been an important strategy for the effective organisational communication hence a proper method towards the excellent implementation of the strategy (Chanda & Shen, 2009:7). Two-way symmetrical communication comes as a go-between between the organisation and its environment as it balances the interests of the two (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:15).

Nonetheless, Welch and Jackson (2007:187) suggest that it would be very unrealistic to expect management in large organisations to meet and discuss, in a face to face dialogue, strategies of the organisation with the stakeholders. This is mainly possible with smaller organisations. It is in such instances of large organisations that one-way communication is inevitable. Mediated communication, such as an organisation's newsletter, external news release, television and website, would be an ideal means of keeping the stakeholders abreast about the information pertaining to the organisation (Welch & Jackson, 2007:187).

### **5.3 A competent communicator**

A competent communicator is needed within the organisation and in order to engage in effective strategic communication, one has to show competence by maximising the opportunities of communication within the organisation. O'Hair *et al.* (1998:29) came up with the model of strategic communication which they propose should be used within organisations. Managers and employees can use this model as a guideline for effective communication. The model entails four elements: goal setting, situational knowledge, communication competence and anxiety management. However, for the purpose of this research, anxiety management will not be discussed as it mostly applies to individuals and it is very situational (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:29).

#### **5.3.1 Goal setting**

To start with, management should set clear and challenging goals for the organisation to avoid distractions that may occur during the communication process. One is able to setup goals on the bases of complete knowledge about the organisation. According to O'Hair *et al.* (2011:41) once the employee is knowledgeable about the company's values, they will be able to not just set the goals, but specific high goals instead of low goals. This involves five steps (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:41), namely:

- Firstly, the manager has to identify specific goals; what exactly needs to be accomplished in the running of the organisation.

- This is followed by mapping out the strategy; using the identified specific goals to devise strategy or measurement to be used to determine the level to be reached in addressing the goals.
- Thirdly, it will be wise to set performance goals, preferably high goals which can enable one to identify if they have performed better or poorly.
- It is further of utmost importance to identify the availability of resources needed in achieving the goals and beware of any contingencies that may crop up during the process.
- Lastly, one has to provide feedback because it is very important as it may influence the success or failure of the goal.

### 5.3.2 Situational knowledge

Another component is situational knowledge. It is imperative for stakeholders to know their organisation, the organisational context within which they work. Organisational learning involves acquisition, sustenance or change of intersubjective meanings and collective actions of the employees (Weick & Ashford, 2001:707) and the knowledge can help facilitate the communication process. The knowledge will enable one to know with whom to communicate and how to initiate or react towards the communication. O'Hair *et al.* (1998:39) reiterate the importance of employees familiarising themselves with the organisational structure of their institution. The structure consists of the actual environment of the organisation. O'Hair *et al.* (1998:39) further state that it is important for employees to know what type of structure their organisation has, for instance the virtual organisation, which is characterised by a tall structure or flat organisational structure, on the other hand, it is known for few hierarchical levels. Tall organisations are known for delayed communication as opposed to flat ones that allow fast transmission of messages.

Organisational learning is, therefore, very imperative for its ability to curb any uncertainties and anxiety that may be experienced so that more employee contributions, commitment to membership and job satisfaction can be enhanced. This does not only call for new employees to learn, but also employees who have long been

employed by the organisation should not stop learning as organisations are dynamic. This involves employees who are able to define their duties and subsequently influence the organisation.

According to O'Hair *et al.* (2011:33) there are four ways in which organisational learning can be approached. Firstly, employees should try and understand conformity between goals, policies, procedures and other people's actions and the dynamics of the workplace; this is called adaptive learning. Organisational values are also worth learning and understanding in order to establish meaning out of the organisational decisions that are made. Furthermore, employees need to acquire specific knowledge regarding norms, policies, procedures, politics, and any accepted behaviours to govern the workplace. Lastly, it is important to keep a track record of what succeeds and fails within the organisation and why (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:33).

Apart from the organisational learning, each employee has to be equipped with on-the-job training where new employees are expected to assimilate philosophies and operations at the workplace. The type of information to be learned includes how the organisation operates, the chain of command to be followed and the relationships amongst different departments and schools within the institution. This information can be disseminated through formal on-the-job training programs or informal meetings by the supervisors or co-workers. Workers can further get involved in other activities such as performance appraisal management interviews or career development activities such as workshops and seminars (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:33).

Hitt *et al.* (2012) and O'Hair *et al.* (2011:34) continue to elaborate on the importance of knowledge acquisition within the organisations. Due to their distribution of power, resources and rewards with the aim of achieving organisational goals, organisations consist of characteristics and elements of politics. This involves the struggle for power from the managers' side versus resistance from the employees' side. Managers require employees to follow instructions in order to pursue organisational goals and at the same time maintain their individuality in communicating their ideas for the benefit

of the organisational growth. Politics are viewed both with negative aspects that are basically destructive, and important communication aspects that can be relied on in the strategic communication plan (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:34).

One more aspect of situational learning is the communication climate that prevails within the organisation. It is vital for stakeholders to establish the type of communication climate; to establish if it provides psychological and physical support to the superiors, subordinates and co-workers; to establish if all stakeholders get a chance to participate in the decision-making process and if the organisation is reckoned to have characteristics, such as trust, confidence, and credibility; whether the communication channels are considered open and establish if the set goals reach beyond the average level of performance. O'Hair *et al* (2011:34) claim an open institution is that which is receptive and responsive towards information imparted by other regardless of level of authority and responsibility. The following are characteristics of organisations that are believed to be open:

- Managers ask for suggestions.
- Managers listen to complaints and act on criticism.
- Stakeholders ask for manager's opinions.
- Managers follow up on stakeholder's opinions.
- Managers suggest new ideas.
- Stakeholders ask co-workers for suggestions.
- Managers listen to bad news.
- Stakeholders listen to new ideas from co-workers.
- Managers listen to new ideas.

Open institutions are renowned for management that is open to stakeholders' views and stakeholders in return respond positively and ask for suggestions from management. The even interaction allows for effective engagement of the stakeholders in implementation of strategic plans (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:34).

It is further argued that open institutions enable improvement of performance, job satisfaction, role clarity and information adequacy to perform one's duties. Open communication also encourages conscientious, open-minded, and innovative people to interact and influence one another. It has, however, been discovered that open communication can be of negative influence considering the complexity of communication within the organisations in so much that strategic ambiguity can be preferred over open communication. Strategic ambiguity may be preferred when discussing issues that cannot be discussed in open communication, where people do not feel comfortable discussing issues relating to a co-worker's private life or the organisational politics (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:34).

### 5.3.3 Communication competence

According to this model, the process of communication does not only entail message transmission from the communicator to the recipient and the recipient, in return, providing feedback, but also the two, communicator and recipient, must communicate effectively and appropriately (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:46). In support of this, Jablin and Sias (2001:820) maintain that communication competence involves analysis of how organisational tasks, situations and employees interact to effect suitable communication behaviour. Messages, internal communication, external communication and platforms are considered important factors to accomplish communication competence (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:46).

Communication competence is further based on the ability of the organisation to effectively communicate its goals and objectives to the stakeholders for the successful running of the organisation. Individuals are communication competent if they show abilities to understand specific behaviours portrayed by others, willingness to interact and engage in communication with their colleagues. Communication competence is central to the excellent performance of an organisation (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:4) which originates from the dedicated team of employees that share similar values and

visions. The author continues to postulate that the centrality of effective communication and the role it plays either promotes or destroys organisational excellence. Competent organisational communicators are needed at all levels of organisational structures. Their ability, creativity and commitment are very critical for the excellence of the organisation. The organisational communication competence is believed to be related to the ability to encode and decode the message, and the communication initiation and consumption processes (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:6).

Communication involves a *message* which is the main component of the process. It is the element that gets transmitted from the communicator to the recipient, and can be intended to inform, persuade, compliment, create humour, or criticise. The message should always be competitive regardless of the purpose it is meant to serve (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:46).

The message is used both internally and externally in the organisation. For internal communication, internal stakeholders are involved, whereas external communication involves external stakeholders. O'Hair *et al.* (2011:47) state that managers can use internal communication within the organisation to formally communicate to the members of staff policies, notices of changes in operating procedures, and instructions. Informally, internal communication can be used by anybody in the institution, along the hallway or through phone calls. Tools used in this process include electronic means such as social networks, smart phones, SMS; and face-to-face means such as meetings, hearings; or written communication such as memos and letters (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:47).

Communication competence, as mentioned above, entails effective communication between the sender and the receiver, in which case the manager or internal and external stakeholders can take turns in the communication process. Following is a discussion about communication and leadership; the planning, sending, receiving and providing feedback of instructions/message between the managers or stakeholders

## 5.4 Communication and leadership

The smooth running of organisations has to go along with effective communication and honesty (Achua & Lussier, 2013:192). The stakeholders effectively hear messages that are directly disseminated from the managers of the organisation (Kaplan & Norton, 2005:10). There has been a constant evolution of communication platforms from face-to-face, telephone, cell phone, memos, emails and all upcoming social networks. Managers have used these platforms to send various messages to the stakeholders. It is therefore vital that managers are wary of what platforms to use and when, as these affect the managers' ability to motivate the stakeholders into following given instructions.

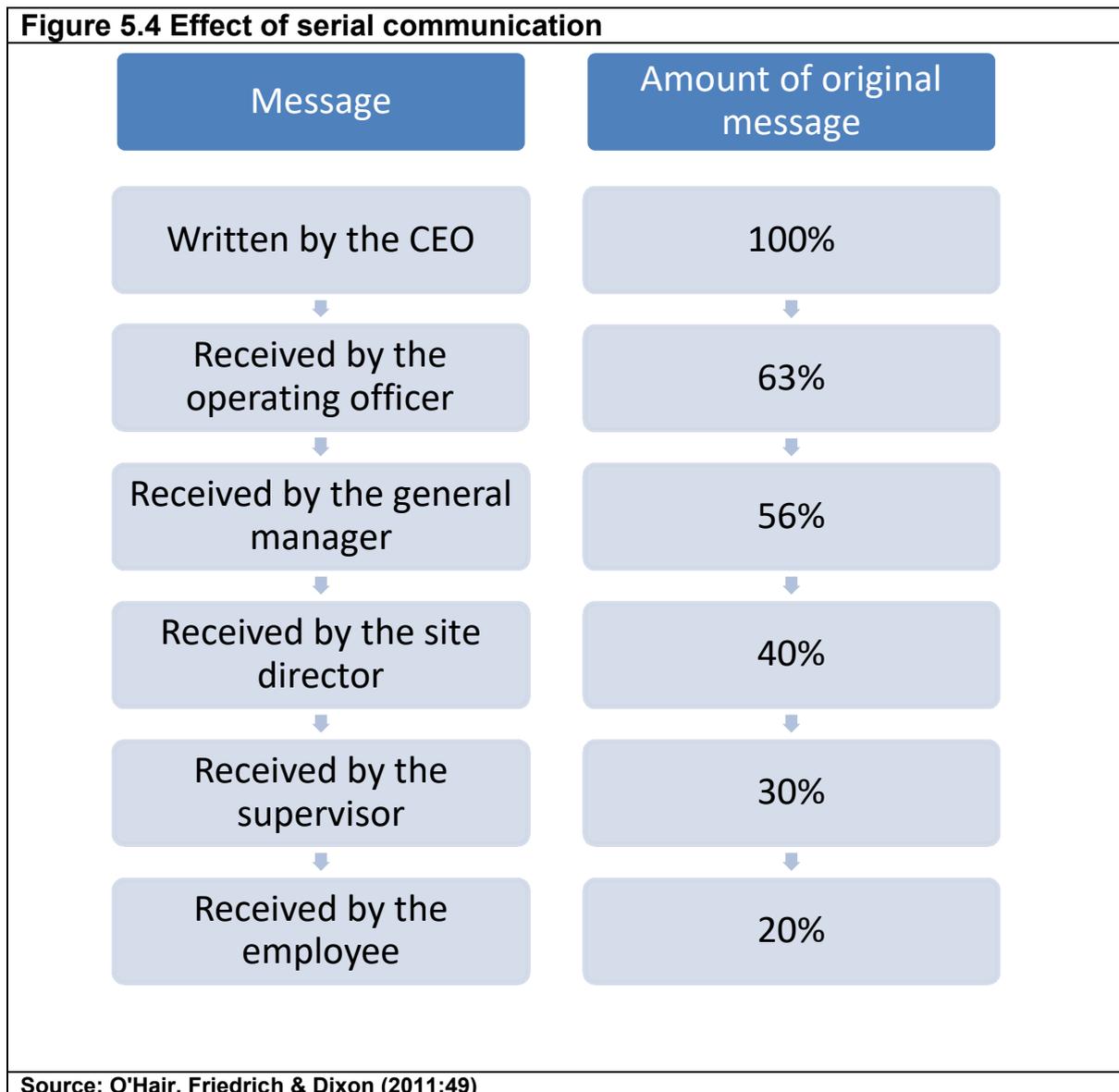
Effective leadership is, in most cases, dependent on effective communication, this may differ from one context to another. Hamrefors (2010:29) postulates that it is imperative for one to maximise their communicative leadership skills. Leaders whose organisations are part of the value network are always in the public eye, they have no way of hiding behind their systems.

### 5.4.1 Internal organisational communication

As has been mentioned in 3.5 *Theory of organisational design*, the process of organisational communication entails downward, upward, and horizontal communication channels (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:47). In the downward movement of messages, information flows from the top manager down the organisational structure to the employees. Purposes of downward communication include that managers and supervisors want to disseminate instructions, job rationale, procedures and practices, feedback and indoctrination of goals, messages that are meant to communicate goals, objectives and missions of the organisation to the employees. This platform is used for both flat and vertical organisational structures. However, it is not considered the most effective way of communicating, as most of the information gets lost on its way

down to stakeholders. Approximately 20% is received by the employees, as indicated in Figure 5.4 below (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:49). It should be treated with caution as it requires a lot of empathy from the communicator. The communicator should always be courteous that the message does not portray any form of disrespect and miscommunication.

**Figure 5.4 Effect of serial communication**



Upward communication involves sending of message from stakeholders to the supervisors up to the most senior manager. Its purpose is to communicate information such as employee performances and job-related problems, information concerning employee problems, attitudes and understanding portrayed by the stakeholders about

organisational practices and policies, and stakeholders' activities and tasks associated with accomplishment of the organisational goals. Although upward communication seems to be somehow biased as it communicates good news to the superiors, it can show how organisational stakeholders feel towards plans, ideas and policies of the organisation; and how active they can be in the decision-making of the organisation. Moreover, stakeholders feel valued and positive when they realise that a supervisor listens to them (Cowan, 2017:19).

In horizontal communication, stakeholders at the same organisational structural level communicate and exchange ideas such as solving problems, sharing and coordination of information and tasks across different departments, enhancement of morale and resolving conflicts, (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:49). This method of communication is considered easier for organisations with a flat structure, however, members from other departments may feel that their ideas and plans are prematurely communicated to their counterparts from other departments; or that jargon used in other departments may be difficult to understand for their counterparts hence ineffective communication; or some members from other departments may feel demotivated to join the horizontal communication as they may not understand its importance (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:49).

There are informal platforms of communication, informal networks (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:50) which prevail in most flat organisations. They are mostly believed to be effective as they thrive in informal set ups such as hallways, coffee rooms or parties. Information is believed to travel fast in these platforms, also known as the grapevine. According to O'Hair *et al.* (2011:50) the grapevine provides indications of employee attitudes and sentiments and travels by cluster. Rumour manifests very easily in this platform.

#### 5.4.2 External organisational communication

An organisation has people who get affected by the operation of the organisation and this is the environment within which it functions. The environment entails the external stakeholders with whom the organisation communicates through newsletters, annual reports, advertising, goodwill speeches, or notices of corporate sponsorship so that the internal stakeholders understand how the external world can affect internal efficiency of the organisation (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:51). The communication between the organisation and external stakeholders is called external communication. External communication helps the stakeholders to acquire new ideas and information about the environment, hence getting rid of uncertainties that may prevail among the internal stakeholders and thus gaining more situational knowledge.

There is a relationship between the external structure and the organisational structure. Communication platforms act as facilitators in the enhancement of the two structures.

### 5.5 Communication platforms

Organisations use communication platforms to transfer information to their recipients through conversations, speeches, interviews, letters, memos, phone calls and computer and satellite networks. It is very important that an organisation utilises platforms that can convey messages properly; in an intended manner; depending on possibility of immediate feedback ability to simultaneously transmit multiple communication cues; ability to formulate messages for specific situation; and ability to use a variety of words. Face-to-face meetings are the richest platform since they convey immediacy about the point of discussion (Patterson & Radtke, 2009:127) whereas written communication such as memos are the least rich platforms of communication (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:52).

O'Hair *et al.* (2011:53) further argue that it is very important to select the right platform when sending messages. Depending on a number of factors (listed below), the employer can select rich platforms for messages that are meant for specific people; when time is important; and where immediate feedback is vital; when the situation is tense or sensitive; in a vague message; otherwise less rich platforms will be used, to communicate routine information, conveying orders or policy; when communicating to large numbers of stakeholders, such as employees or when immediate feedback is not necessary. The following factors can be considered when selecting a platform (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:53):

- Speed: Oral and electronic platforms provide the fastest means of communicating.
- Accuracy: When accuracy is important, written and, to a lesser degree, electronic means are preferred platforms.
- Feedback: Feedback can be obtained from two platforms, namely: oral communication conducted in a face-to-face manner normally provides immediate feedback which can be verbal or non-verbal; written platform is often less likely to encourage spontaneous feedback.
- Selectivity: Very sensitive or confidential messages are best communicated face-to-face.
- Appropriateness: Some platforms are not appropriate for some messages.
- Cost: It is imperative to put into consideration costs when selecting platforms. E-mails can work conveniently for they convey messages as well as photos and other attachments where necessary. In contrast, written messages can be time consuming, whereas telephone conversations can take only a few minutes to complete communication that is passing the message and immediately getting feedback.
- Accountability: Both communicator and recipient have to be accountable for what they say. Accountability is evident in written platforms since there is some form of documentation involved.
- Acceptability: Some people prefer some platforms over other platforms, so it is wise to select a platform that will be most acceptable to the recipient.

Selection of platforms that best facilitate organisational communication should incorporate a consideration of organisational culture. Implementation of communication strategies and strategic plans can be positively or negatively influenced by existing organisational culture.

## **5.6 Organisational culture and strategy**

Culture appears to be an influence in the formulation and implementation of the strategy. Organisational culture is found to be influencing the style in which stakeholders think, thereby influencing the process of strategy formation (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998:269). That is why, within the same organisation, there may be different organisational cultures. These cultures are believed to interpret differently the environment within which the organisation operates (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998:269). What is important is stakeholders with different organisational cultures must learn to agree to a decision that differs from what they might have expected (Cowan, 2017:35). This is the first evidence that culture may also influence the process of strategy formulation and implementation.

Because of the shared beliefs within the organisation, stakeholders tend to portray consistently similar behaviours, which at the end turn to resist strategic change. It has been observed that employees in IHLs in Lesotho, who have long serviced the institutions, tend to be resistant to change hence it has become a culture that things are done according to the way they have always been done (8.4.3.2 Research Question 4 ). Culture, therefore, poses beliefs and unstated assumptions that act as strong internal beliefs to essential change. Managers, however, have to find ways of overcoming resistance to strategic change and Mintzberg *et al.* (1998:270) suggest that managers must accept the significance of flexibility and innovation in order to enhance a communication strategy for effective implementation of strategic plans. They propose that a manager without portfolio be nominated and his/her role will be to put forth questions, challenge beliefs, and suggest new ideas, maybe using directors external to the organisation who will inquire about the appropriateness of the existing beliefs in changing times. The manager will also organise internal education

programmes for middle management with outside experts. He/she will also encourage a rotational system of managers responsible for different functions and businesses (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998:270).

## **5.7 Communicating for strategic alignment**

It seems that organisations consider strategy only when they deal with the annual budget and operational plan. Even with the annual budget, they do not really understand the budget structure because they “cut and paste” previous years’ budgets and adjust according to the year’s inflation rate. Puth (2002:199) however, says that there is a particular order and direction in the relationship between strategy, planning and budgeting. Management fail to adhere to this order mainly because of the leaders’ inability to think and function strategically and that business units and divisions often fail to align to the corporate strategy and to effectively execute the desired outcomes (Puth, 2002:199).

The organisations that align themselves with their stakeholders create a conducive environment for the organisation and its stakeholders to listen to each other’s arguments. The alignment can be established by the organisation building relationships with their stakeholders in order to increase the organisational added value for the stakeholders. Thus, the successful implementation of the strategic plan is dependent on the consent of the stakeholders (Van Riel, 2012).

The management of the organisation should consider the requirements for effective execution of new ideas. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:49) suggest that the organisational managers should inform the stakeholders about the intent of the new strategy and its implications on the stakeholders’ daily jobs and careers, as well as on the future of the organisation. The organisations should motivate the stakeholders through emphasising the availability of opportunities that the new strategy provides and a clear indication of the administration of the expected implications that it will have on their work, whilst the strategy is implemented (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:49).

Unlike the creation of alignment with the stakeholders, the external stakeholders require long term relationship management. This is not an easy task because unlike the stakeholders who rely financially on the organisation, the external stakeholders are, to a lesser extent, influenced by the organisation's finances. The external stakeholders (investors) can always move their investments elsewhere (Van Riel, 2012). The organisations also need to track their reputation at various levels of the industry. The organisations should also track the attitudes and beliefs of the critical stakeholders during the implementation of the strategic plan (Van Riel, 2012).

Puth (2002:202) and Kaplan and Norton (2001:2-8) put forth a consistent pattern to follow in achieving strategic alignment and focus. A pattern that is formed according to the five common principles stated below:

- Translate strategy into operational terms.
- Align the organisation to the strategy.
- Make strategy everyone's everyday job.
- Make strategy a continual process.
- Mobilise change through strategic leadership.

For effective management of strategy, it is rather not easy to separate leadership from strategy. Puth (2002:202) states that the essence of strategic leadership lies in communicating in a way that individual stakeholders, functional units, individual companies and ultimately the total organisation will align themselves and move forward towards the shared strategic goals. The author, therefore, proposes the ten guidelines that will assist in leadership behaviour, that is how the manager interacts and communicates with others on a daily basis. To summarise the guidelines a manager must know his/her position in relation with the strategic destination and be able to give the followers the right direction that leads to their destination. Berry (2007:336) argues that a fundamental reason for engaging in strategic planning is to align or fit the organisation with its external environment, thus getting information about and from the external environment is critical to a successful planning process.

## **5.8 Strategic communication**

Organisations are always involved in communication processes that are meant to convey messages and feedback to the stakeholders' contribution. Such messages include information and its analysis, as well as the selection of strategy. Therefore strategic communication is considered to be goal-oriented and it is based on the knowledge and is resultant of the organisational decision-making (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015:353). Strategic communication enhances the organisation's ability to address the internal and external stakeholders' challenges and provides guidance for future plans of the organisation (Mahoney, 2011:145).

When assessing organisational internal and external communication, Downs and Adrian (2004:3-7) state that the following steps have to be taken into consideration, namely: communication networks have to be plotted, an organisation has to be reviewed as a communication system, communication has to be related to organisational outcomes and internal communication should be linked to organisational strategies.

Thus, a clear distinction between the internal and external stakeholders must be made and this requires a thorough study of the organisational environment. Environmental analysis enables the organisation to determine who to engage in the decision-making and to know what factors can affect the organisation's freedom of action. Deetz (2012:233) postulates Hirokawa and Gouran's functional perspective towards decision-making.

## **5.9 Functional perspective on group decision-making**

In order for the system to function well, all the strategies that were put in place have to be implemented. The implementation cannot be entrusted only to the CEO of the organisation, but to the group of people running and those being affected by the

running of the organisation, namely: the managers and stakeholders. In this context, the group refers to managers and stakeholders of the organisation.

Hirokawa and Gouran (in Deetz, 2012:233) believe that group interaction has a positive effect on final decisions. These decisions should always be based on quality solutions. Both scholars regard dialogue as the social tool that helps groups reach better conclusions than they otherwise would have. The two elements call for the functional perspective that specifies what communication must accomplish for wise decisions. Both theorists see the process of group decision-making as a need to fulfil four task requirements if members want to reach a high-quality solution. They refer to these conditions as requisite functions of effective decision-making; thus the functional perspective label. The four functions are problem analysis, goal setting, identification of alternatives, and evaluation of positive and negative characteristics of each alternative (Deetz, 2012:233).

Although communication is seen as a vital process in decision-making, it should not go without saying that it is best when it doesn't obstruct or distort the free flow of ideas. The distractions or barriers encountered in the process hinder movement towards the achievement of the goal (Dobni, 2003:46). Hirokawa and Gouran (in Deetz, 2012:240) list a number of thorny obstacles namely ignorance of the issue, faulty facts, misguided assumptions, sloppy evaluation of options, illogical inferences, disregard of procedural norms, and undue influence by powerful members. They believe that people go astray through talking, but still believe that communication has the power to pull them back onto the goal-directed path.

According to Deetz (2012:240) Hirokawa and Gouran maintain the above mentioned convictions by viewing three types of communication in decision-making groups, two of which are discussed below:

- Promotive-interaction that moves the group towards the goal path by calling attention to one of the four requisite decision-making functions (problem

analysis, goal setting, identification of alternatives and evaluation of positives and negatives).

- Disruptive-interaction that diverts, hinders, or frustrates group members' ability to achieve the four task functions.

Organisational management and stakeholders (groups) should be aware that concerted efforts towards implementation of strategic plans are vital. However, they should also take note of the possible obstacles that may affect the whole implementation process. There could be influences emanating from the group members or external to the group, which can affect effective e implementation of communication strategy and strategic plans (Deetz, 2012:240).

## **5.10 Lessons to be learned in strategic communication**

There are important points to take note of in order to effectively implement the formulated strategies. According to Argenti *et al.* (2005:88), there are five lessons to be added to the process of translating boardroom strategy to front-line execution as well as the ability of communication to support strategy development.

### **5.10.1 Senior managers must be involved**

The CEO of the company must not only be the manager of the company but also the face and voice of the company, who sets the tone for the executive team and the organisation as a whole. The CEO acts as the senior communications officer of the company.

### **5.10.2 Communication must be integrated**

Communication is not a separate function. It is a process that involves two or more parties. It therefore must be integrated in the proficient delivery of harmonious messages to all stakeholders. That is, the company integrates its communication activities down to specific messages, such as the mandate to be direct at all times.

### 5.10.3 Structural integration is not the only choice.

Some organisations integrate communication functions under one executive (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:35), as is the case with IHLs, except NUL, where communication is managed under registrar's office. They overlook the integral role that can be played by communication executives at the strategy-making tables (Falkheimer, Heide, Nothhaft, von Platen, Simonsson & Andersson, 2017:97).

### 5.10.4 Communication must have a long-term orientation.

Effective institutions are believed to focus on long-term, have a strong set of values (Steyn & Puth, 2000:41-45) and are proactive in communicating. Just like institutions have long-term marketing and budgeting plans, they must have an overall communication strategy which will help them to effectively implement their strategic plans.

### 5.10.5 Top communicators must have broad general management skills

Effective communication professionals speak similar language to that of senior executives and understand business and its strategy. Outside their communication function they can have personal credibility with executives and can hold strong leadership positions in the institutions. To acquire these, they have to work towards building an informal network of contacts within the institution and get involved in every aspect of the institution.

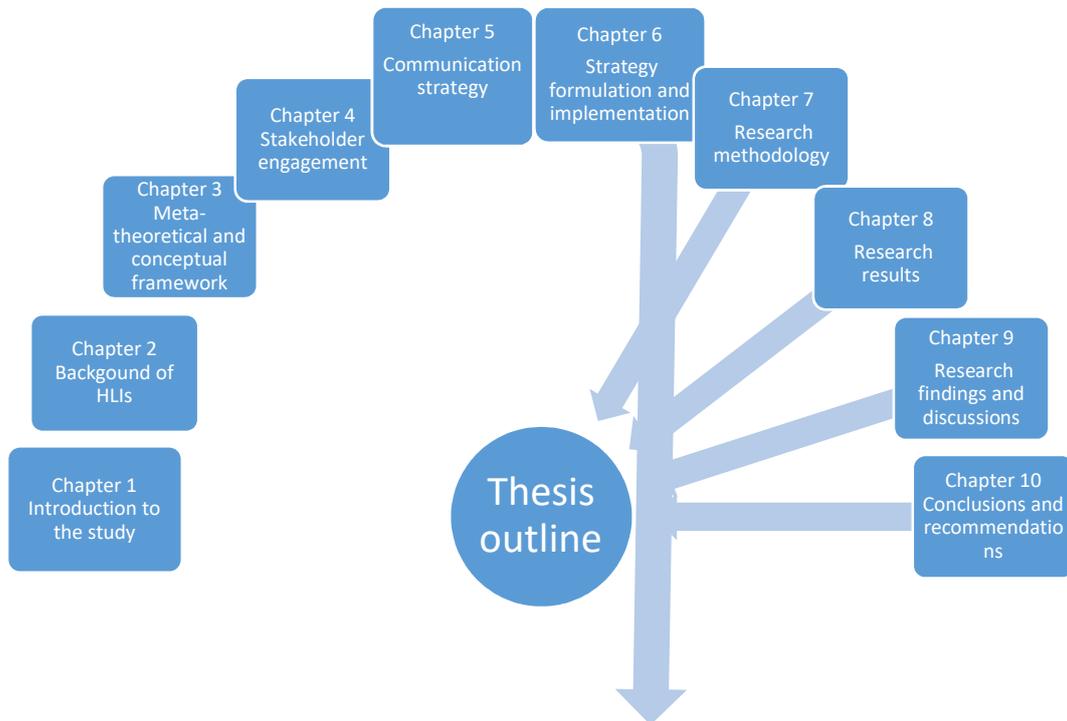
Managers at IHLs should not only manage implementation of strategic plans but should also be part of the implementation process. When they are involved they are able to communicate it effectively to the stakeholders. Again, they should note that it is vital to have communication manned by communication professionals instead of institutional executives who, in addition to access to personal networks with the

executives, have managerial skills and can competently sit at the drawing board with the executives.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

Effective implementation of a communication strategy requires efficient identification of stakeholders; identification of strategic issues; establishing the communication strategy and then aligning it with the organisational strategy. Strategic communication is seen to provide stakeholders and managers with effective ways to facilitate implementation of strategy. This Chapter addresses the specific objective that is concerned with communication strategies used by institutions of higher learning. It also indicates that it is inevitable to manage an organisation without engagement of stakeholders. Hence, it is imperative to engage the stakeholders in the organisational strategic activities, mainly formulation and implementation of strategic plans.

## Chapter 6 Strategy formulation and implementation



- Strategic management
- Strategy
- Strategy formulation
- Strategy implementation
- Drivers for strategy implementation
- Strategic control
- Strategy and sustainability of institutions of higher learning

### 6.1 Introduction

Strategy formulation and implementation can, in a way, be compared to strategic management, both involve integrating and coordinating functions and resources to implement formulated strategies (Ehlers, 2005:2). Although these are two independent concepts, they both contribute well to the reciprocal process of the strategy to ensure effective and successful implementation (Rothaermel, 2017:367). To facilitate this process, organisations should take note of drivers of strategic implementation and

managing strategy as well as strategy and sustainability of institutions of higher learning which will be discussed below.

## **6.2 Strategy**

Strategy is “an approach, design, scheme, or system” (Grunig & Repper, 1992:123) that deals with the changing environment (Chaffee, 1985:90). It is a means to an action (Steyn, 2003:171). The study of strategy incorporates actions and processes involved in the implementation of the strategy. It is further defined as “a statement of the communication ...vehicles that will be used to accomplish a specific objective” (Austin & Pinkleton, 2006:45). In simpler terms, strategy can be seen as a tool used to activate the vision and mission of an organisation into practical terms. The construction of strategy is based on the availability of data that was extracted from a situational analysis and research that was conducted; knowledge of the communication management function and parameters is also included; and this knowledge can enable the researcher to formulate hypotheses about strategies that have a potential to accomplish organisational objectives.

Chaffee (1985:90) discusses the strategy into three models namely linear strategy, adaptive strategy and interpretive strategy.

Linear strategy refers to sequential action involved in plans, actions and decisions set to achieve workable organisational goals. It is in the concept strategy that terms such as strategic planning, strategy formulation, and strategy implementation emanate. According to this model, managers are capable of changing the organisation. Top managers focus on goal identification, establish alternative methods to achieve the goals and assess the possibility of the methods succeeding and then decide which to implement. Profit-seeking organisations mainly focus on this model. Organisations undertake implementation of decisions throughout all the levels of the organisation (Chaffee, 1985:90).

Adaptive strategy on the other hand, compares the opportunities and risks prevalent in the external environment and the chances of exploiting these opportunities. This calls for rigorous assessment of both internal and external conditions of the organisation, in order for the organisation to adjust its relevant environment that will pose pleasant alignments of those opportunities and risks in the environment and will reveal the organisational abilities, as well as resources. Contrary to the linear model, the adaptive model monitors the environment and makes changes; it focuses on co-aligning the organisation with the environment; it does not only incorporate major changes in products and markets, but also, focuses on delicate changes. Although many strategies are not centralised at top management, managers still take full responsibility for the development of a strategy; and the environment is viewed as a complicated organisational support system that tolerates trends, events, competitors and stakeholders. When determining organisational action, focus is on the environment as the boundary between the environment and organisation is more open (Chaffee, 1985:90).

Interpretive strategy relies on social contract rather than the organismic aspect that is considered by other models. The model encourages an organisational image of a unity of cooperative mutual agreements between individuals at free will. The organisation exists because of its ability to attract a reasonable number of individuals. The strategy allows for the understanding between the organisation and its stakeholders. In this regard, stakeholders are encouraged to be productive for the benefit of the organisation. Although interaction between the organisation and environment is open in this, management shapes the attitudes of participants and prospective participants for their outputs (Chaffee, 1985:90).

### **6.3 Strategy formulation**

Steyn (2003:171) and Vivas López (2005:666) argue that strategy implementation should be treated as part of strategy development, it does not succeed the development stage. During strategy formulation, the process, content and context within which the formulation of strategy takes place should be considered. The context

refers to the environment within which the organisation operates and formulates its strategies. The environment, therefore, becomes the main concept in the process of strategy formulation.

For the purpose of this research, the environment is conceptualised taking all factors that surround the organisation and affect the operation of the organisation, as well as the stakeholders internal and external to the organisation into consideration.

Strategy formulation undergoes different phases. According to Steyn (2003:174) an organisation has to carry out an *environmental analysis* by collecting information on stakeholders, events and issues that are occurring and use that information in the process of formulating strategy. The gathered information will help the organisation to set a link between itself and the environment. This is macro-environmental analysis wherein social, economic, technological and political aspects of the environment are analysed (Albright, 2004:42; Ginter & Duncan, 1990:94). The current and potential change of the environment is analysed with consideration of the assessment of the impact the change might have on the environment.

Macro-environmental analysis involves four key steps, namely: scanning where managers study and analyse possible warning signs and potential environmental changes that may affect the organisation. Secondly, monitoring involves the identification of key trends and patterns in the environment. Thirdly, forecasting or anticipating possible directions that might be taken by environmental changes; and assessing the present and future trends based on the effects changes might have on the environment (Ginter & Duncan, 1990:92).

The process of macro-environmental analysis involves managers taking into consideration the significance of the output exceeding the costs involved in the process. Firstly, managers should consider what benefits the process might have on the organisation. The benefits will determine whether the organisation needs macro-environmental analysis. In this process, managers are getting exposed to

environmental changes which will enhance managers' understanding of the environment in terms of multinational settings; improvement of diversifications and resource distribution decisions; facilitation of energy planning and risk management (Ginter & Duncan, 1990:92).

Secondly, managers have to establish areas that need to be scanned (Figure 4.2 Stakeholder Map), monitored, forecasted and assessed based on the macro-social, economic, technological, and political environments (Ginter & Duncan, 1990:94).

Having identified areas that need to be analysed, managers need to think about the amount of information that is required from the environment. A number of factors determines the amount of information, such as the scope of the decision under consideration; urgency of decision; and when the relationship between the decision made and the long term plan increases (Ginter & Duncan, 1990:94).

Managers can think of techniques to be used in order to analyse significant trends and events. Three methods are suggested as techniques to be applied in the four areas mentioned earlier, namely the Delphi techniques which are a systematic solicitation of expert opinion, the diffusion process and scenario development. These methods involve identification of observed experts in the environment and seek out for their participation; provide them with initial position papers and then conduct personal interviews with them (Ginter & Duncan, 1990:96).

The last technique is to consider procedures and organisational structures. Managers have to think of procedures to follow in order to accomplish the macro-environmental analysis which may encompass regular, irregular and continuous models, and to establish proper organisational structures (Ambrosini & Jenkins, 2007:260) such as strategic planning departments; product/market areas, strategic business units; marketing research departments; legal departments; communication management or public affairs departments.

Environmental analysis can then be followed by *strategic thinking* which involves the management of the organisation setting a direction and the vision by thinking through opinions, judgments and feelings of stakeholders. Strategic thinking focuses on external aspects and produces a framework that sets forth operational plans and strategy. It also determines how the organisation should look like. Plans are now put into practice, hence *strategic planning, implementation and control*. In the implementation phase, plans are dissected into shorter-term tasks that are allocated to the available facilities in order to achieve the stated objectives per stipulated time (Steyn, 2003:175).

In comparing the two, Cronjé (2005:177) states that strategy formulation is more of an intellectual phase, that requires a lot of thinking whereas strategy implementation requires these thoughts to be put into practice. Again, strategy formulation is more inclined in market-oriented activities to the external stakeholders, while strategy implementation is more on internally oriented activities. Strategy formulation needs effective intuitive and analytical skills whereas strategy implementation focuses on motivation and leadership skills. Moreover, strategy formulation is well structured, rational and controlled as opposed to strategy implementation that is the opposite.

In addition, strategy formulation mostly takes place in the upper levels of management, and in contrary, strategy implementation becomes every manager's responsibility, from board of directors to supervisors. Middle managers play a very important role in the implementation of the strategy as they are a go-between between the top managers and lower-level managers. Middle managers receive decisions from top management and motivate lower-level managers and stakeholders in performing strategy-critical tasks (Cronjé, 2005:177). Strategy implementation, therefore, affects the whole organisation and participation of every employee is crucial in the process.

## 6.4 Strategy implementation

Cronjé (2005:116), Downs and Adrian (2004:11) and Steyn (2003:175) explain strategy implementation as the process through which strategic plans are turned into action tasks with the purpose of achieving objectives of the strategic plan by using more detailed and short term plans. Strategy implementation involves “communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment of strategic plans” and management aligns leadership, organisational culture, organisational structures, reward systems and resource allocation based on specific strategies (Cronjé, 2005:116). This stage is considered to be the most complicated and difficult to achieve when compared to strategic formulation because it appears to be failing most of the time, whereas it is considered the most important stage, more important than the quality of the strategy. The stage does not only challenge management in terms of motivating stakeholders, but also in terms of discipline, commitment and sacrifice required to achieve the implementation (Cronjé, 2005:116)

### 6.4.1 Communicating strategy implementation

When a strategy is implemented it means a lot of stakeholder participation is required. Also, strategy implementation should take into consideration social responsibility, environmental responsibility, as well as stakeholder engagement and sustainability (Cronjé, 2005:116; Foreman & Argenti, 2005:7-8). Lewis (2007:187) posits four dimensions used by implementers of communication strategy when designing their communication movements to various stakeholders. The dimensions are identified from both theoretical and empirical perspective. These dimensions should not be considered exclusive to other possible dimensions.

The first dimension is positive versus balanced message wherein implementers have to decide if they can emphasise positive issues of change or put more emphasis on a balance of both positive and acknowledgement of negative aspects of a message.

Some stakeholders prefer to be informed about the planned changes regardless of it being positive or negative, whereas some prefer balanced information as it poses significant performance, even though positive information coupled with time of learning the technology produce high performance (Lewis, 2007:187).

Implementers may decide to use dissemination focus versus input focus to distribute information. In this case, implementers may choose to convey information to the stakeholders or extract input from the stakeholders. This is a question of whether to engage in participatory approach of implementation when stakeholders are invited to present or are sensitised to make decisions. Alternatively, emphasis can be put on information or instruction concerning change in top-down messages that are meant to influence compliance. Participation is beneficial in that it reduces resistance or enhances compliance with change initiatives (Lewis, 2007:188)

The third dimension, targeted message versus blanket message, helps implementers to establish the extent at which messages will be customised, whether they should be aimed at specific stakeholders or stakeholder groups, or if they should follow blanket strategy at which the same messages get repeated throughout all stakeholder groups. Lewis (2007:188) states that blanket strategy is normally used in a situation where facilities are limited and the message does not require stakeholder consensus. Targeted strategies, on the other hand, are used when consensus is required for some key stakeholders. This dimension is meant to classify groups of stakeholders with common stakes (Lewis, 2007:188).

Discrepancy focus versus efficacy focus is aimed at the extent at which the message is intended to create urgency that will motivate need for change (discrepancy) or a belief that the organisation has enough resources to close the discrepancy gap (efficacy). Stakeholders change behaviour as soon as they notice a positive reward connected to the behaviour, when they have a feeling that their behaviour will be rewarded as a result of it being embraced and when they find it possible to achieve such behaviour.

However, organisations often face challenges in implementing a strategy. Cronjé (2005:178) states five barriers to effective implementation of strategy:

- Implementation efforts are insufficiently and ineffectively coordinated (Jooste & Fourie, 2009:65).
- Inadequate leadership and direction offered by top and middle management.
- Stakeholders do not understand goals adequately because they are not effectively defined.
- People who formulate the strategy are not involved in the implementation.
- Vital changes in responsibilities of the stakeholders are not plainly stipulated.

In general terms, the barriers indicate the need for effective communication as it is the relevant vehicle for the implementation of the strategy (Heide, Grønhaug & Johannessen, 2002:224). When implementation efforts are *sufficiently and effectively coordinated*; top and middle management *lead and direct adequately*; goals of the organisation are *effectively defined*, stakeholders can *adequately understand* them; people who formulate strategy *participate* in the implementation process; and there is a clear stipulation of responsibilities of the employee in the process, then all these concepts denote communication. To avoid the barriers organisations have to engage in communication as the forefront drive in the strategy implementation process, subsequent to this driver, the following drivers and instruments can be utilised in order to enhance effective implementation: leadership, organisational culture, reward systems, organisational structure and resource allocation (Heide *et al.*, 2002:224).

## **6.5 Drivers for strategy implementation**

This Chapter has shown that top management has to make sure that they take note of the social and environmental aspects in the organisation for the effective implementation of the strategy. Consensus within both the internal and external environment should be reached to secure the successful implementation of the strategy. Cronjé (2005:178) emphasises that to fail in taking the external stakeholders

on board in the implementation of strategy, will result in jeopardising the strategy implementation; because the stakeholders may have the potential to hinder or delay key elements to the strategy. The author illustrates the significance of proper implementation of strategy by suggesting five strategy implementation drivers, namely:

Firstly, Cronjé (2005:178) maintains that in any organisation, there has to be someone with a vision for the organisation and willing to assist the organisation in realising the vision in contributing to the successful implementation of the strategy. The author defines such a person as a leader. For the purpose of this research, the leader will be addressed as the manager as reference has it that leadership and management are similar. They both refer to deciding what needs to be done, forming networks of people in whose relationships agenda can be accomplished (Kotter, 2008:5). Cronjé (2005:178) further attests that “a critical element of strategic success is the ability of top management, through superior leadership and management skills, to respond swiftly to changes in the global business environment”.

Additionally, Cronjé (2005:178) argues that top management should ensure proper implementation of organisational strategy by influencing the behaviour of the stakeholders, perhaps by motivating them into buying the idea of striving to achieve the goal. This, however, is a challenge in itself. Nevertheless, Cronjé (2005:178) stipulates the following major responsibilities of managers in implementing the strategy:

- Managers should develop a strategic direction that is open for optimal participation of stakeholders.
- The vision and strategic direction should be communicated to all stakeholders of the organisation.
- They should inspire and motivate stakeholders in order to enhance achievement of the objectives of the organisation.
- Top management should design suitable reward systems and organisational structure.

- They should develop and maintain organisational culture that will be effective to the organisation.
- Managers should ensure proper incorporation of good corporate governance principles into the strategies and operations.

The above drivers for strategy implementation are worth taking note of in order for the IHLs to enhance engagement with their stakeholders for effective implementation of their strategic plans. The institutions are encouraged to practise an open communication system to allow effective stakeholder participation. Again, institutional visions need to be well communicated to all stakeholders and good corporate governance principles be incorporated into the institutional strategies. If the institution can develop a suitable motivation system to persuade the stakeholders' participation, this may assist develop an organisational culture that is conducive for effective implementation of institutional strategic plans.

Organisational culture is referred to as a group of important, though not written down, assumptions, beliefs, behavioural norms and values shared by members in the organisation (Cronjé, 2005:184). It is a system that determines how things are done in a specific organisation which is evident through the organisation's stories, legends and traditions as well as its techniques to approach problems and make decisions, its policies and its relationships with stakeholders (5.6 Organisational culture and strategy).

Organisational culture is believed to tie together members of the organisation and guides actions of the members. Culture is one aspect that needs attention as it is believed to be much easier to create and maintain in smaller than in bigger organisations. Moreover, organisational culture can be considered valuable or an obstacle towards the successful implementation of the strategy. This can be apparent if beliefs, visions and objectives of an organisation seem to be at par with the organisational culture; then culture becomes valuable to the organisation and simplifies the implementation of the strategy (Cronjé, 2005:184).

As mentioned earlier, managers are responsible for creating institutional culture and should consider the values, beliefs and attitudes of the stakeholders. Managers are normally vested in the culture that is instilled by founders of the organisation, and as the organisation recruits more stakeholders, they join in the sharing of the existing. Cronjé (2005:185) introduces four categories of organisational culture, namely strong, weak, unhealthy and adaptive.

Some organisational cultures are considered strong cultures because they are hard to get rid of as they are deeply rooted in the organisation. Strong cultures become liabilities to the implementation of strategy if they happen to be a mismatch to the proposed strategy. In addition, some organisational cultures are weak because of their fragmented behaviour that is evident in little cohesion which results in negativity that affects the effective implementation of the strategy. Thirdly, cultures can be unhealthy when influential managers operate in their independent domains and the stakeholders, in response, tend to resist change and derive their own ways of doing things. Moreover, adaptive organisational cultures are proactive towards strategic change and this is evident by being open to risk-taking, innovation and experimentation (Cronjé, 2005:185).

Institutions of higher learning should put in place measures that determine their kind of culture. It is imperative that they know if they have a strong, weak, unhealthy or adaptive institutional culture so that they know what kind of institutional culture they want to align their institutional strategy with (3.10 Role of organisational culture in organisational communication).

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that organisations do not have homogeneous culture (Cronjé, 2005:185), they are divided into different subdivisions which operate according to their individual culture, beliefs, values and attitudes. It is important to match the existing culture with a strategy in order to promote internal stakeholder identification with the organisation's vision and mission (Cronjé, 2005:186).

The reward system is yet another driver to effective implementation of an organisational strategic plan. In order to forge commitment to the implementation of the strategy, stakeholders have to be motivated. Firstly, stakeholders' and managers' understanding of the strategy and the required implementation process have to be enforced over and above the establishment of a reward system. Managers should bear in mind that rewards are not presented for being involved in putting strategy in action, but should be awarded for achieving outcomes for the implementation of the strategy (Cronjé, 2005:186).

According to Cronjé (2005:188), managers may consider an award system based on either monetary or non-monetary terms. In monetary terms, the organisation may choose to increase salaries, share profits and options, issue out cash bonuses and retirement packages; whereas, in non-monetary terms, the organisation may consider awarding status, recognising and promoting stakeholders and management, job security and assigning stimulating assignments. In addition, an organisation may incorporate the performance of an individual or a group into the reward system, the latter of which would encourage teamwork.

Moreover, organisational structure is considered as another driver of strategy implementation. Since organisational structure is always used as a framework for setting policies, short-term objectives and tactics, it is vital to align the structure with the strategy (Cronjé, 2005:205). The author further points out that in order to implement the strategy the organisation makes use of the structure to divide the strategy into groups that will ensure coordination of the tasks within the organisation so that organisational goals are achieved. The structure further specifies who is responsible for a specific task.

Organisations are structured in a way that suits the organisation's needs. Cronjé (2005:206) explains different structures which include entrepreneurial structure, functional structure, divisional structure, strategic business unit structure, matrix

structure and network structure. The researcher found it fit to discuss the functional structure as it is the structure under operation at the IHLs.

According to Cronjé (2005:207), in the functional structure tasks are organised based on different functional areas, for instance, human resources, research and development and finance. The structure normally includes the CEO who is supported by a small number of managers such as accountants, legal advisers and functional managers. This structure is seen to be advantageous in that stakeholders are able to focus on one thing at a time and they are able to exchange ideas and specialised knowledge amongst themselves; it encourages specialisation because of its centralised version; and it is inexpensive.

However, functional structure can pose a number of challenges as it can prohibit cross-functional interaction between different functional areas. Differences that may be observed between different functional areas may lead to one functional area being prioritised over others instead of focusing on the whole organisation. Managers get limited exposure to other functional areas and general development because they tend to concentrate in their areas of specialisation (Cronjé, 2005:205).

Although Cronjé (2005:205) states that there is no specific structure that can best suit strategy implementation, there are recommended structures (Cronjé, 2005:205) for specific strategies. Functional structures are recommended for single or dominant-product organisations; divisional structure can be employed in organisations with many business lines; the strategic business unit structure can be adopted by organisations with diverse and unrelated business divisions; and matrix and product team structures may be adopted by organisations that focus mainly on product development and innovation. Organisations may also take into consideration factors such as size of the organisation, departmentalisation, distribution of power and specialisation when implementing the strategy.

Resource allocation is one more driver of strategy proposed by Cronjé (2005:205). The success of strategy implementation, achievement of the long-term goals and the short-term objectives is based on availability of resources per organisation. The author indicates that in organisations that do not operate according to the strategic management approach, resources are not fairly distributed. Organisations have the following resources which they can use to implement strategies: financial resources, physical resources, human resources, technological resources and information resources (Cronjé, 2005:205).

Equally important, budget is a strategy on its own that enhances the proper distribution of resources in the organisation. Cronjé (2005:205) states that budgets assist in the quantification, specification and prioritisation of the resources required to ensure strategy implementation.

Cronjé (2005:205) and Freeman (2010:171) express that implementation and formulation of strategy is not enough, but it should also be controlled by reviewing and monitoring processes.

## **6.6 Strategic control**

According to Cronjé (2005:205), strategic control involves assessment of the strategy against the performance in order to discover if there was progress or whether the results obtained are in line with the proposed strategy objectives and goals. Strategies tend to focus on long-term goals and it so happens that time passes between the formulation and implementation process and the accomplishment of the intended strategy. It is, therefore, vital for management to establish if implementation activities are effectively and efficiently performed and that they take note of any deviations that may occur during the process. As a result, strategic control has to be adopted in order to review the strategy content and evaluate, as well as control the implementation process.

Cronjé (2005:205) further compares strategic control with traditional managerial control which focuses on the process of implementation while strategic control puts more emphasis on the success factors of the strategy. The author, supported by Ahlstrand, Lampel and Mintzberg (2001:53-54), also compares strategic control with operational control that tends to focus on short-term, whereas strategic control focuses on long-term. In both traditional and operational control, active measures are taken only after deviations have occurred, while in strategic control action is taken during the process, even when the end results are still to come.

Strategic control can reveal critical events or change effects that prevail in the environment that may need timely attention from the organisation and inform management of any deviations, problems or potential problems that may indicate a need for corrective measures. The author, therefore, encourages continuous strategy evaluation and not to wait for the end of term when evaluation can be made (Cronjé, 2005:232).

One way of controlling strategy is to apply the process of strategic review, which is the process where top management periodically meets with the stakeholders through review sessions to find out if there was any progress in achieving the set goals and formulate new strategies if needed. According to Freeman (2010:67), this process involves experts in the field of review who are usually well equipped with questions that will be directed at the reviewee. These reviews are normally carried out in a manner of communicating expectations and to evaluate both personal and organisational performances. This process is a less courageous and rewarding method due to external stakeholders' thinking, as they concentrate on impressing the reviewers (Freeman, 2010:67).

Another manner to control strategy, as proposed by Freeman (2010:67), is by evaluating and monitoring the progress made in relation to the proposed strategies. Following are four concepts that are used to control organisational performance:

implementation control, control of strategic programs, control of strategic direction and control of “what we stand for”.

Implementation control is the type of control that Cronjé (2005:234) proposes and is exercised during the implementation process. This control is meant to provide managers with information regarding the success of the implementation process based on forecasted levels of performance, and also shows if the original direction requires an alteration. To add, Freeman (2010:67) states that strategic control involves analysing variances in the budget, but does not overlook the programs that emanate from new actions and support existing actions.

Control of strategic programmes is monitoring progress in strategy implementation. Each programme has two variables. Firstly, there is a set of indicators through which the programme must be implemented. The strategic programme is considered in trouble if these indicators are continuously missed and schedules are repeatedly revised. Secondly, theory of stakeholder behaviour is meant to explain the real corporative and competitive behaviour, to assess the validity of the theory (Freeman, 2010:67).

Control of strategic direction ensures that the strategic programs take the right direction by determining if they are achieving the results as anticipated, or if not establish reasons why they failed to achieve the desired results. Control of strategic direction also checks if things are going according to plan. In this case, managers must set critical assumptions concerning every important stakeholder group and how changes in direction may affect the progress and direction of the organisation (Freeman, 2010:67).

Lastly, the control of “what we stand for” requires the organisation to monitor the progress by interpreting the analysis that was made by management on the values and societal aspects of the stakeholders (Freeman, 2010:67).

## 6.7 Strategy and sustainability of institutions of higher learning

Organisations undergo the hassle and stress of developing and implementing strategies to run sustainable organisations which do not pose symptoms of failure. Corporate sustainability can be defined as meeting the needs of an organisation's direct and indirect stakeholders (such as shareholders, stakeholders, clients, pressure groups, communities), without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders. Organisations have to maintain and grow their economic, social and environmental capital base, while actively contributing to sustainability in the political domain (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002:132-133). According to Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:79) organisations have certain qualities to characterise sustainable organisations. Most sustainable organisations have a number of personality or behavioural qualities in common:

- They are conservative in financing.
- They are sensitive to the world around them.
- They have a keen awareness of their identity.
- They have a tolerance for new ideas.

Their managers, on the other hand, possess the following behavioural qualities:

- Value people instead of assets.
- Slacken steering and control.
- Organise for learning.
- Shape the human community.

Managers of these organisations are expected to hand over to their successors something that is in as good state as it was when handed to them by the predecessors. According to Verwey and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2003:80), to sustain development the organisation must focus on complex, new agenda and do away with the old methods of corporate reporting as they are no longer sufficient, this enables long-term trust and shareholder value.

Organisations maintain the long-term trust and value of the stakeholders by including the social and environmental issues in their daily operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003:107). Although there are no specific features of an organisational sustainability, organisations may tailor their efforts of “transparency, public disclosure, stakeholder engagement, societal approach to business, human capital” in line with the contexts in which they operate (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003:108).

Nonetheless, the organisational decision-makers who are mostly community-focused make decisions that are disastrous to their community. Despite this, and other isolation measures set by the IHLs (2.2 *Institutional culture and stakeholder engagement*), the communities continue to support such organisations because the organisations buy services and products produced by the community (Benn, Dunphy & Griffiths, 2014:10).

Because the decision-makers capitalise on the community, the organisations focus on the maintenance of long-term trust and value with the stakeholders. The organisations ensure that they are more instrumental in maintenance of a wider social purpose than a short-term wealth of its stakeholders (Benn *et al.*, 2014:11). To accomplish the fully sustainable organisation that ensures relentless support by its stakeholders, the organisations may follow phases of development (Benn *et al.*, 2014:13).

Firstly, the model proposes that the organisation should reject the stakeholder exploitation for the purpose of short-term achievement of finances. Secondly, the organisations should discard their conventional ways of running the business whose decision-making does not ensure sustainability. This is the non-responsiveness of the organisations that have strategies that dwell more on compliant stakeholders. The organisations are non-responsive to the issues pertaining to the community and the organisational negative consequences on the organisational environment.

In the third proposition, Benn *et al.* (2014:17) encourage organisations that are compliant, that accept the environmental demands but only limit their responses to the organisational requirements. Such organisations minimise risks as they manage to avoid the non-compliance fines that they may incur with the government legislation. As a result of the compliance, the organisations have easier financial access and improved relationships with their regulators.

Fourthly, organisations incorporate the internal (human resource) and external (environment) stakeholders; policies and practices to minimise the cost but increase the organisation's efficiency. In this stage, value is increased through "significant cost reductions, particularly through the elimination or reuse of what was formerly viewed as waste, increased employee productivity, involvement and engagement, better teamwork and lateral communication" (Benn *et al.*, 2014:17). Such organisations produce more with less

The next stage in the model is strategic proactivity. This stage focuses on innovation potential of an organisation. They see the encountered challenges as the source of business opportunity.

Lastly, organisations sustain themselves by redefining their environment. They strive for a community that supports the environmental viability. In order to accomplish this, an organisation engages its stakeholders such as the government and its community to formulate the public policy through which the organisations aim for more sustainable organisations (Benn *et al.*, 2014:17).

Additionally, such organisations encourage their stakeholder involvement and consider their engagement as an element of their culture. The fundamental aim of organisations in this stage is to make a constructive culture that stimulates openness, innovation and involvement of the key stakeholders (Kenny, 2012:8) of the

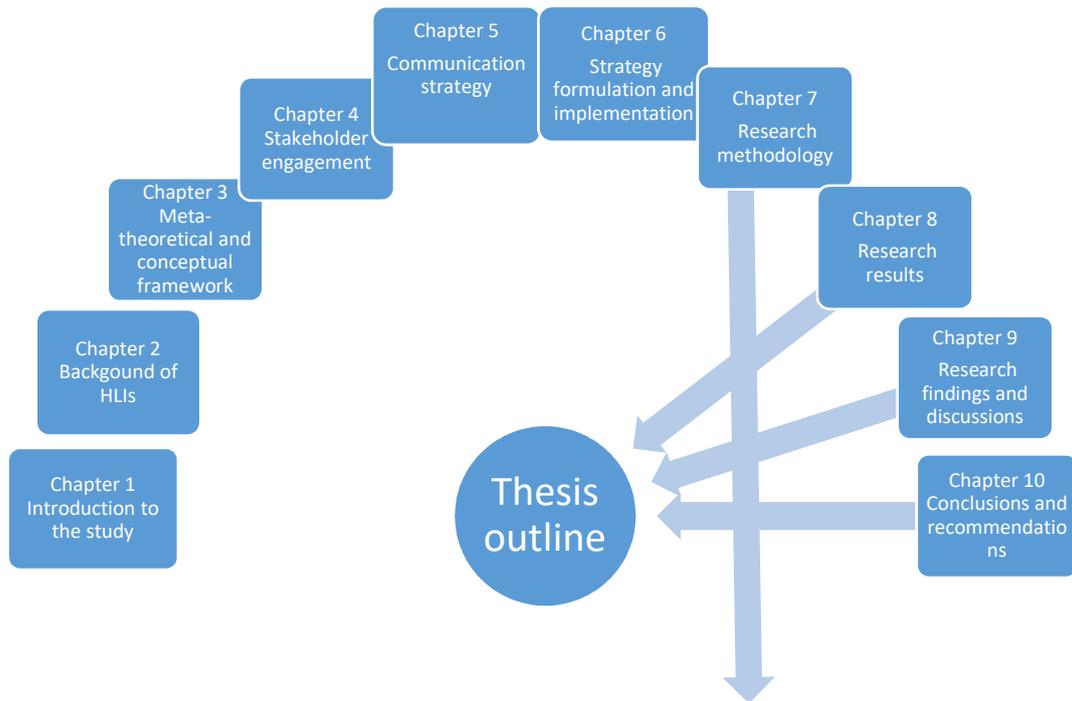
organisation. These organisations are not only interested in their economic growth but also in the transformation of community economy (Benn *et al.*, 2014:20).

## **6.8 Conclusion**

To conclude the discussion of the strategy formulation and implementation, it is the organisational managers' responsibility to oversee the two processes. Organisations are encouraged to effectively manage stakeholders to enhance their engagement in the implementation of the strategic plans. Organisations should also consider various platforms for the effective engagement of the stakeholders. The drivers for strategy implementation are worth considering for the effective and efficient formulation and implementation of the strategy, as well as maintenance of a sustainable development.

This Chapter concludes the literature review of the research and the next Chapter deals with the research methodology employed in order to achieve the research questions of this research study.

## Chapter 7 Research methodology



- Phenomenological research paradigm
- Inquiry strategy
- Brief orientation
- Restatement of research questions
- Sampling strategy
- Data collection (process)
- Data analysis techniques
- Data display formats
- Quality and rigour of the research
- Research ethics

### 7.1 Introduction

This Chapter aims to outline the research paradigm used, strategy of inquiry and methods that were used to collect and analyse data. This section therefore outlines the phenomenological research paradigm, mainly focusing on mixed-method inquiry

strategy. The research paradigm informs and influences the manner in which data was collected, analysed and discussed. The problem statement as well as the five research questions are restated. In addition to the research questions, research hypotheses are restated because of the researcher's interest to establish a relationship between variables. A discussion on sampling strategies, data collection and ensuing data analysis is incorporated.

## **7.2 Phenomenological research paradigm**

As mentioned, the research employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis. The phenomenology paradigm was used to inform the research about the information that had to be gathered from the interviews of the senior management and the open-ended questions from the internal and external stakeholders. According to Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015:45) and Creswell (2014:14) phenomenology is the deliberate analysis of a daily life of the person living it. People perceive and interpret life according to the way they experience it. The phenomenological ability to deal with personal knowledge and subjectivity has alerted the researcher about the kind of information to expect from the respondents. According to Lester (1999:1) and Husserl (2002) phenomenology studies the experiences that are gathered from the individuals' perspectives. As a result, phenomenology understands a subjective experience and explores the assumptions that were, somehow, taken for granted or the phenomena that was previously ignored (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007:173).

Additionally, the researcher's awareness of the phenomenology made it viable to consciously and successfully disregard researcher's own reality, so that the phenomenon was described in its pure sense as presented by the respondent (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007:173). The researcher was cautious of personal bias as thus attempted to dismiss it by engaging an in-depth literature review before the investigation.

The research questions were then developed on the basis of the assumptions of human knowledge and the nature of the realities encountered in research. Saunders *et al.* (2012:128) argue that these assumptions have the potential of strengthening research strategy and the methods used as part of research strategy.

According to Husserl (2002), phenomenology is centred around epistemology because it seeks to clarify the real meaning of actions of cognition in generic terms. Epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge and the creation, acquisition and communication of knowledge to other people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013:7). The researcher incorporated epistemology since it was important to investigate the nature of information gathered from the interviews, questionnaires and strategic plans.

Also, because the researcher aimed to generalise findings of the research, epistemology was aligned with positivism. Klakegg (2015:57-66) states that positivism focuses on the measurable aspects of a phenomenon. The questionnaires were directed at the internal and external stakeholders, and the closed-ended questions addressed the positivist assumption.

As positivism attests, researchers prefer to collect data about real things that are observable and portray qualities of causal relationships between variables. The researcher generated research hypotheses in order to develop a research strategy that would ensure objectivity of the results. A quantitative method was used to enhance generalisation of the results obtained from the “regularities and causal relationships” of the researched phenomena (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:134). This research strategy also enabled the quantification of the results to allow establishment of statistically associated variables.

Furthermore, interpretivism was incorporated to inform the qualitative method of collecting and analysing data. While collecting data, the researcher was cautious of the way people perceive and interpret things, that it is influenced by the meaning they attach to the social actions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:137). People interpret things the way they understand them. Participants and respondents interpret the extent to which they have been involved in the implementation of a strategic plan based on the way they understand the implementation process. Hence it is important for stakeholders to

understand the strategic plan and its implementation in order to enhance its effective implementation (Raps, 2004:51). Interpretivism shows that humans should understand differences between humans, and thus conducting a research between humans differs from conducting research amongst objects. Researchers should be aware of the meaning people attach to social actions that influences the way people interpret things, and that interpreting actions of others with whom they interact also alters their way of attaching meanings to actions.

Additionally, the researcher found ontological stance to be related to the research since the researcher was interested in the reality of the gathered information. The researcher aimed at extracting reality from the institutional stakeholders about implementation of a communication strategy to engage stakeholders for effective implementation of institutional strategic plans. Ontology relates to the nature of reality, the realities known at the level of a concept (Mertens, 2007:215). The researcher was aware that reality about the research could either be objective or subjective since the meaning people attach to implementation of strategic plan is external to their interest or it is a result of the perceptions they have about the phenomena under study (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:131).

While conducting the research, the researcher took note of the nature of reality as one way in which the world operates, in relation to the assumptions of researchers about reality. Saunders *et al.* (2012:128) discuss objectivism as a unit of ontology that the meaning humans attach to the social entities exists externally to the interests humans have about the entities. The researcher had to remain objective towards the data she collected. Subjectivism on the other hand has it that social phenomenon is formulated through social actors' perceptions and actions consequent to their experience. Researchers' ways of seeing things are always influenced by their perceptions and experiences they have about social phenomena (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:131). Since this is mixed-methods research, the researcher allowed subjective and objective influence of the collected results. There has been an emphasis of interpersonal (inter-subjective) nature in this research (Nastasi, Hitchcock & Brown, 2010:6).

The research was further informed by the axiological assumptions wherein the researcher was cautious of the ethical aspects of research and thus showed respect

to the respondents while gathering information and analysing it. While analysing the data the researcher adhered to confidentiality that was promised to the respondents (Mertens, 2010:10-11) and maintained anonymity when analysing and interpreting the research findings.

To add on to the objective and measurable aspects of positivism, and the subjective traits of interpretivism, the research was narrowed down to a more specific research paradigm, to the mixed-method research. Feilzer (2010:7-8) posits that some paradigms require certain research methods and ignore others. There are one or more realities that are open to an empirical study, that focus on solving problems. Pragmatists merge the qualitative and quantitative methods and treat epistemology and ontology under the same stance. Separating quantitative and qualitative methods may no longer be meaningful (Hanson, 2008:103).

According to pragmatism, concepts are only applicable when supported with action (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012:76; Nastasi *et al.*, 2010:6) . The importance of the meaning in research results is revealed in its practical results. Thus the researcher chose to use mixed-method research that would produce credible, reliable and relevant outcomes. In support of this, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:41) and Creswell (2014:11) attest that the focus of pragmatism in mixed-method research is on the consequences of the research, which is the primary importance of research questions and on the multiple methods used to collect data that inform problems under study.

Philosophy of realism on the other hand indicates that what humans sense is real about the world. That is, scientifically speaking, stakeholders' senses about implementation of a strategic plan tell a lot about what is going on around them. Direct realism confirms that the world is well portrayed through humans' senses (Mingers, 2004:92).

Therefore, in order to respond to the question 'How can a communication strategy assist the institutions of higher learning in Lesotho to involve stakeholders to effective implementation of strategic plans?' the researcher used existing knowledge and theoretical and literature support to come to the conclusion of what the research

design should entail. Deductive reasoning was applied as a technique to approach the study in the mixed-method research. The researcher wanted to adopt a theory (Saunders et al, 2012:48) that implementation of a communication strategy enhances effective implementation of strategic plans in IHLs and this was tested through data collection amongst the internal and external stakeholders as well as content analysis of strategic plans.

Formulation of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and establishment of the strategic plans, as well as the existing literature were used to collect, analyse and conclude the collected data. The collected data was then used to deduce reasoning behind the problem of the research. The results obtained from the collection and analysis techniques were corroborated into similar conclusions.

### **7.3 Inquiry strategy**

In order to assess the extent to which IHLs in Lesotho use communication strategy to engage stakeholders for the effective implementation of a strategic plan, the researcher used a mixed-method research approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:256) define this as a mix of qualitative means of collecting words and a quantitative way of collecting numbers in conducting research. Use of multiple techniques enables validity of the results more than if it were only one technique (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:256; Myers & Powers, 2014:300). As a result, this research utilised exploratory and descriptive designs as it attempted to explore and describe implementation of communication strategy to engage the stakeholders for effective implementation of strategic plans of the institutions of higher learning. Since the phenomenon has not undergone any previous exploration and that the researcher found it feasible to generalise the findings to the rest of the population, the researcher considered exploratory design (Myers & Powers, 2014:311).

The research applied an exploratory-based mixed method wherein the applied techniques involved sorting the raw data into four public institutions since they are relatively similar to each other. The entire set of interdependent relationships amongst the institutions was analysed simultaneously (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010:6).

Additionally, instead of within-case analysis, the researcher preferred cross-case analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010:11) which engaged a simultaneous analyses of data produced by the four public institutions. The institutions were further stratified into internal and external stakeholders.

### 7.3.1 Mixed-method research approach

A mixed-method research approach makes use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007:121), the conclusions of which are based on both methods and treated as a whole (Creswell, 2014:4). Throughout the entire research, the researcher concurrently collected and analysed data, which was later merged and interpreted.

The researcher used a convergent design to collect and analyse data. The data analysis per strand was done independent of each other, while interpretation of data results was merged. The key reason behind the choice of the convergent design was to enable triangulation of the results by comparing and contrasting the qualitative and quantitative results (Bergman, 2008:4). The researcher selected this design in order to give equal priority to the qualitative and quantitative information. Therefore, the researcher had to decide on who to sample for the two strands, the sample size per strand, how to design data collection questions and the formatting as well as ordering of the different ways of collecting data.

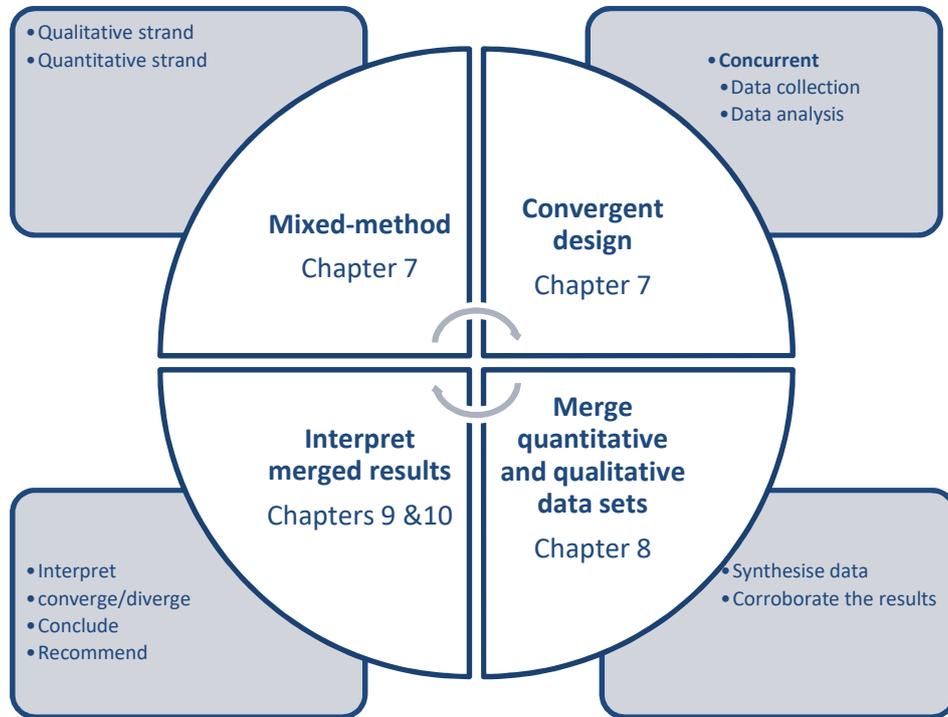
Since the researcher was interested in synthesising the information obtained, she then used different individuals from different levels of the sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:181). In this case, the researcher disseminated the questionnaires to the internal and external stakeholders while the interviews were carried out with senior management. It was of interest to the researcher to corroborate the findings hence the questionnaire was designed as a combination of the qualitative and quantitative strands and as a result was disseminated to the same internal and external stakeholders.

Both the qualitative and quantitative samples were conducted on different sample sizes of participants and respondents, the number of members of the senior management (interviewees) was much less than the number of the stakeholders (questionnaires). The aim of the researcher was to qualitatively apply an in-depth exploration and to enable a severe quantitative studying of the research topic to allow for generalisation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:181) of the findings to the rest of the institutions of the IHLs in Lesotho.

Moreover, the questions in the questionnaires and the interviews were designed to collect data concurrently. The questions addressed the same concepts as those mentioned in the research questions and subsequently enabled the merging of the questionnaire and interview databases. To add, since the open-ended and closed-ended questions from the questionnaires were administered concurrently, the results from the open-ended questions were used to validate those from the closed-ended questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:181).

Figure 7.1 illustrates the design of the mixed-method research used in this research in order to assess the extent to which IHLs use communication strategy to engage the stakeholders for effective implementation of the strategic plans.

**Figure 7.1 Research design**



Source: Researcher

### 7.3.1.1 Strengths of the mixed-method research approach

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:269) a researcher would prefer to use this challenging method because of the following characteristics:

- **Completeness:** a researcher is able to address the research questions and sub-questions effectively because both qualitative and quantitative methods are merged to produce united results (Evans, Coon & Ume, 2011:276-277);

- *Complementarity*: quantitative aspects can be used to supplement qualitative aspects where there is a revelation of weaknesses that would otherwise jeopardise credibility in the qualitative research;
- *Hypothesis generation and testing*: hypothesis formulated under qualitative research can always be tested under quantitative research; *development of appropriate research tools and strategies*: one type of data can always inform the other;
- *Triangulation*: the research can produce more convincing conclusions if the two methods have been used together; and
- *Resolution of puzzling findings*: in cases where the quantitative research seems to produce inconsistent results, the researcher can always explore the meanings behind inconsistency that can be clarified, in this case a qualitative approach will be considered.

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:269) add that the mixed-method research approach enables the researcher to *generalise* the results of the sample to the overall population and as a result assists in establishing credibility of the research. There is an allowance of greater *diversity* of ideas to inform the research. Moreover, the mixed-method research approach enables the researcher to maintain focus, as the qualitative method can be used for one aspect and the quantitative for another aspect of the research. Heyvaert, Hannes, Maes and Onghena (2013:303) argue that when using this approach, researchers get an opportunity to give a clear justification for mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches and this makes an explicit rationale for having a thoughtful decision-making process concerning the design and implementation of the study.

There are more reasons why the researcher considered the mixed-method research design, such as: the rapport that is established by the researcher during interviews with senior management, the design has the ability to reduce the sensitivity of questions asked as thus it is able to decrease reluctance or reactivity of some sort or misinterpretation that stakeholders may have (Myers & Powers, 2014:313). In addition, the mixed-method research design allows for efficiency by having the two types of

data collected in one phase. It further allows for use of traditional techniques of analysis independent to each strand.

#### *7.2.12 Limitations of the mixed-method research*

The researcher was mindful of the disadvantages the mixed-method research design may have on studies that use this approach. Firstly, Myers and Powers (2014:313) stipulate that despite of the common characteristic that makes it time consuming, studies conducted using this method may not be published in the state of a mixed-method design. Data collection and analysis of such articles may appear in two phases in separate manuscripts of qualitative and quantitative studies. Secondly, scholars may be comfortable with just one method of data collection and analysis and because they lack training in the other method they may decide to shy away. Moreover, the author postulates that, more often than not, the scholars find themselves moving back and forth between the data and the design because of uncertainty that may call for full interrogation of the phenomenon.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:269) the mixed-method research approach enables the development of appropriate research tools, that is, one type of data can inform and facilitate the collection of another type of data. The qualitative and quantitative views were conducted in the research study. The four institutions of higher learning in Lesotho and their stakeholders were studied in order to encourage understanding of a communication strategy to assist the implementation of the strategic plan. This research explored and described areas, within the institutions, where it was not clear if there was in existence information with regard to attitudes, trends, needs that were applicable to the units of analysis (Du Plooy, 2009:88). Therefore, NUL, LAC, CAS and LP's strategic plans, interviews and questionnaires were analysed to assess the degree to which the stakeholders were engaged in the communication strategy for effective implementation of strategic plans.

### *7.3.13 Qualitative research instruments used*

The researcher made use of strategic plans, open-ended questions in the questionnaires disseminated to internal and external stakeholders, as well as transcribed text from interviews that were conducted with members of the senior management from the four institutions. Purposes of using this strategy were mainly to reveal stakeholders' perceptions about institutions' communication strategies; to establish stakeholder and institutional focus and attention of activities that take place in the institutions; as well as to describe trends in institutions of higher learning in Lesotho that affect strategic communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1279; Weber, 1990:9).

### *7.3.14 Quantitative research instruments used*

The researcher assessed the degree to which strategic plans are implemented by using measurement and observation to represent communication phenomena in the form of frequencies, degrees, values or intensity (Keyton, 2010:41). This involved the descriptive survey approach where face-to-face interviews and written questionnaires were conducted. The researcher therefore used semi-structured interviews on the standardised questions so that the participants were easily probed with the aim of guiding them into giving answers relevant to the questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:269).

The researcher kept in mind the importance of soliciting as many responses as possible from the participants, therefore, face-to-face interviews were used because of their ability to promote cooperation from the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:269). Furthermore, self-administered questionnaires were provided to the participants. This was a better option than the electronic questionnaires because in the self-administered questionnaires the response rate is higher.

In addition, exploratory design was used to establish if a strategic plan was available in each of the institutions, and to determine the communication strategies that were used to implement the strategic plan. The researcher undertook the explorative research because of the curiosity and desire to understand (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:80) the influence communication strategy has on the implementation of the strategy.

## **7.4 A brief motivation of the research**

The research follows two methods and techniques of collecting data. The first technique is a survey method, which entails a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods, and the review of the literature. The technique comprises content analysis of the secondary data (strategic plans) and open-ended questions in the questionnaires.

### **7.4.1 Restatement of problem and purpose of the research**

Studies have shown that there is a very weak link between a strategy and its implementation (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:83), hence academics at universities spend their careers developing frameworks explaining how to develop better strategies for companies. Still, only a handful of academics and a cadre of tactical consultants primarily at communication management companies struggle with implementation in the area where it matters most, that is communication to the stakeholders.

Implementation of strategic plans has become a challenge to the IHLs in Lesotho, where institutions formulate strategies anticipating to implement them within the recommended time only to find that it does not happen. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in both formulation and implementation has posed a huge challenge. This is an indication that the planning and implementation of communication strategies of these institutions are not clearly spelt out.

The purpose of this research is to explore whether a communication strategy for stakeholder engagement can facilitate implementation of strategic plans in IHL in Lesotho. The research aimed to explore the research questions in order to fulfil the researcher's curiosity and the need for better understanding; to test the practicality of the research; to devise the strategies that may be used for studies to follow, and to clarify the concepts and constructs that are central to the research. The above reasons therefore, have called for review of related literature, a survey of people who have been affiliated with institutions of higher education; and content analysis of strategic plan documents that institutions have in place (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:80). The main purpose of the research can be achieved after establishing if the IHLs have strategic plans in place. Consequently, the research proposes the implementation framework, which can be used by the IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa to best engage their stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plans through the implementation of communication.

## **7.5 Restatement of research questions**

Restatement of the research questions in this section intends to relate each question to data collection instruments as well as with methods of analysis employed in order to answer the research question.

### **7.5.1 Research question 1**

*How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?*

Answers to address this research question are obtained from the data analysis of the questionnaires that were administered with stakeholders; interviews held with senior management; and content analysis of the strategic plans.

### **7.5.2 Research question 2**

*What impact does stakeholder engagement have on the implementation of the strategic plan?*

The question is addressed by the members of senior management through interviews; and (the internal and external) stakeholders through the questionnaires. SPSS and content analysis of the transcriptions as well as open-ended questions in the questionnaires are used to obtain the answers.

### 7.5.3 Research question 3

*To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) the knowledge about the strategic plan and, b) participation in the implementation of the strategic plan?*

The research results obtained from SPSS were used to determine the involvement of the stakeholders in planning, implementation, monitoring and reviewing of strategic plans for the four institutions. Content analysis of the strategic plans, open-ended questions in the questionnaires and transcribed texts from interviews were also used to achieve this objective

### 7.5.4 Research question 4

*What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?*

The results obtained through interviews, questionnaires and secondary data together with their analysis by means of SPSS and Leximancer address this question.

### 7.5.5 Research question 5

*Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?*

The researcher used the literature review together with the research findings of the research to draw-up a communication strategy implementation framework proposed for IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 7.6 Research hypotheses

The researcher had assumptions concerning the association between two variables. The assumption was that the type of stakeholder determines the extent to which institutions engage their stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans. Chi-square  $\chi^2$  test was run to determine the statistical significant association between the two variables in order to confirm or nullify the assumption.

**Table 7.1 Research hypotheses for internal and external stakeholders**

<i>Internal stakeholders</i>	
1. As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff are more likely to:	a) Use telephones to communicate. b) Know about personnel responsible for implementation of the strategic plan. c) Know about availability of a strategic plan. d) Participate in strategic plan activities. e) Believe that the institution is strict about communication protocol
<i>External stakeholders</i>	
2. As opposed to external stakeholders with a short affiliation with IHLs, the	a) Receive communication from IHLs through letters, media, meetings and telephones

<p>stakeholders with a long affiliation are more likely to:</p>	<p>b) Know about the availability of the strategic plan</p> <p>c) Participate in strategic plan activities</p>
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## 7.7 Sampling strategy

The researcher used units of analysis to select a sample of the study from the target population (Du Plooy, 2009:108). Of the eight public institutions of higher learning, data was collected from NUL, LAC, and LP (and CAS as pilot study) based on the knowledge of the population, its elements and purpose of research. Du Plooy (2009:108) defines population as “any group or aggregate of individuals, groups, organisations, social artefacts/objects..., or social interactions and events”. Thus, the target population of this research was treated as the real population from which a generalisation of results can be made (Du Plooy, 2009:108). The focus was based on both internal and external stakeholders of the four institutions. As one of the crucial groups of internal stakeholders, students had to be excluded from the research because the survey was conducted at the beginning of the academic year, August 2015, when students had not yet elected their student representation. Nonetheless, the researcher had targeted the old and out-going Student Representative Council (SRC) members. Even so, a few of the remaining out-going SRC members were not available.

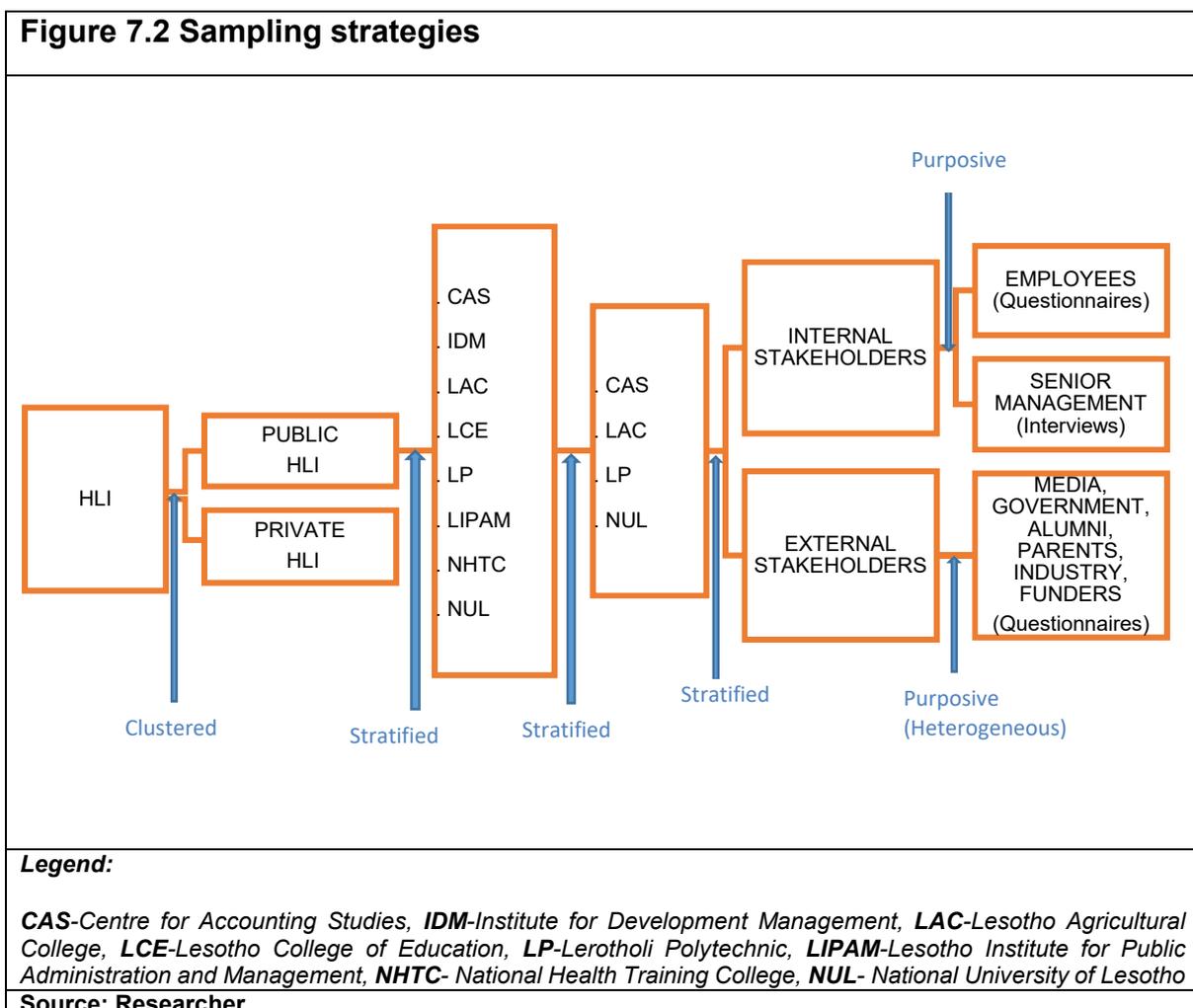
The researcher used probability and purposive sampling to achieve representativeness (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:80) of the internal and external stakeholders of the public IHLs on a broader scope of the IHLs. As mentioned, the selection was based on the researcher’s knowledge of the variety of the institutions’ stakeholders together with their location.

Probability sampling was applied on quantitative strands of the research study and the IHLs were clustered into private and public. Since the researcher’s focus was on the public institutions, this cluster was stratified into four IHLs based on their sizes. Two

IHLs were categorised as the biggest in Lesotho while the other two represented the smallest.

The four IHLs were stratified into internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders were purposively sampled into members of senior management, employees and students' representation (SRC) of the IHLs. Employees, senior management and students' representation of the IHLs formed the target population. While the external stakeholders' selection was based on the heterogeneous sampling as the media, parents, government, alumni, industry and funders were surveyed in order to provide the utmost variation of data (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:287). Most elements of the sample for external stakeholders were easily identifiable though the numeration was almost impossible (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:166).

**Figure 7.2 Sampling strategies**



The concurrent mixed-method research approach was used in order to allow triangulation of the results. The participants responded to the interview and questionnaire surveys of open-ended and closed-ended questions.

### 7.7.1 Target population

The target population included in this research is senior management, middle management, other employees of the institutions and students' representation as the internal stakeholders; alumni, industry, parents, media, funders and ministry of education (government) were sampled as external stakeholders (see Table 7.2). Therefore, the research generalised the results to the population of research.

**Table 7.2 Target population**

TARGET POPULATION	NUL	LP	LAC	CAS	TOTAL
Internal stakeholders	682	210	81	43	1116
External stakeholders	30	10	5	5	50
Strategic plans 2007-12 (NUL), 2008-15 (LP), 2009/10-13/14	1	1	1	1	4

Table 7.3 consists of a list of all subjects of the population from which the researcher drew the sample. The sampling frame was based on both internal and external stakeholders of the four IHLs in Lesotho namely, NUL, LAC, CAS and LP as illustrated in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3 Sampling frame**

SAMPLING Internal/External Stakeholders	NUMBER OF POPULATION			
	NUL	LP	LAC	CAS
Internal stakeholders	204	80	40	22
(Senior management)	(15)	(7)	(6)	(5)
External stakeholders	20	20	10	10
All the strategic plans				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>35</b>

### 7.7.2 Pilot study

In order for the researcher to refine the data collecting instrument, namely the questionnaire, so that respondents attempted questions without problems, and no problems incurred in recording data, the researcher pilot tested the questionnaire prior to using it (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:451). Another reason a pilot test was run was to enable assessment of validity and possible reliability of data that would be collected through both the questionnaire and interviews since the semi-structured interview questions were derived from the questionnaire. Over and above, the opinion of the researcher’s supervisor was sought after to provide an additional view about the reliability and suitability of the data collection. The researcher then followed Bell’s (2010) proposition as adapted by Saunders *et al.* (2012:452) to pilot test the questionnaire:

- the time it took to complete a questionnaire;
- how clear questions were formulated;
- identified vague or ambiguous questions;
- identified questions that made respondents uneasy to respond to;
- identified any major topic omissions suggested by respondents; and

- determined opinions about the physical outline of the questionnaire and any other comments.

#### 7.7.2.1 Execution of the pilot study

Permission was granted by the Centre for Accounting Studies to execute the study. The researcher went from one office to another to invite respondents to fill in the questionnaires. Because the pilot test was run at the end of the academic year when students had just completed their examinations, they were excluded from the research. Each questionnaire was disseminated with a letter of consent which clearly stated that participating in the research was voluntary, confidential and anonymous. The respondents were also urged to sign in the allocated space to indicate that they understood the terms of the letter.

In addition, the researcher requested a week for the questionnaire to be completed; and also requested respondents' contact numbers in case they were not available on the arranged date. The researcher used the contact numbers to call and remind the respondents, a day prior the collection date, that she would come the following day to collect the questionnaire. The two parties would then agree on the right place to hand off the questionnaire, in case the respondents were not available.

To identify the external stakeholders, the researcher was guided by the categories of external stakeholders that she had already planned to survey. The stakeholders were categorised into media, government, parents, alumni. The researcher used her experience of the location of the offices that would address the categories.

#### 7.7.2.2 Consequences of the pilot study

Out of 20 questionnaires disseminated to the internal stakeholders, 16 were collected. In addition, seven questionnaires were disseminated and collected from the external stakeholders. Both sets of questionnaires (internal and external) were collected with minor corrections. Internal stakeholders with *less than one year* of service in the

institution and a *parastatal* category of external stakeholders were added. The suggestions were implemented to the questionnaire prior to the actual collection of data.

However, the researcher could not pilot test the semi-structured interview questions because of the tight schedule of the members of senior management. Instead, three members of senior management were interviewed from the Lerotholi Polytechnic prior to the actual interviews. Since the semi-structured interviews were guided by the questionnaires, there was nothing to be corrected.

## **7.8 Data collection (process)**

Data were collected in two phases, namely survey and content analysis as discussed below. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought and was granted permission to conduct a research from the three institutions (LAC, LP and NUL). The process of data collection lasted for three months, starting from August to October 2015.

### **7.8.1 Survey**

The survey was conducted for gathering information from the stakeholders about their experiences with the communication strategy and strategic plans in their IHLs. Survey research was considered a division of statistics which focuses on the methods and techniques of selecting samples whose results can be generalised to a larger population (Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 2013:21). Interviews were conducted with senior management in order to obtain the managerial experience (Seidman, 2013:9) in as far as communication strategy and stakeholder engagement in the strategic plans is concerned. Paper-based questionnaires were administered to the internal and external stakeholders of the four institutions under study.

### 7.8.1.1 Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were used to enable interaction with the interviewees in order to increase the rate of response as much as possible in an environment that was conducive for interviews. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012:372), the purpose of an interview is to solicit information by asking questions in a very clear and concise manner; with the interviewer establishing a rapport to ensure willingness to respond and the researcher applying attentive listening in return.

The researcher administered 18 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the executive management of NUL, LAC and LP based on the questionnaire in Addendum 3. Access to managers was through appointments made with their secretaries. The main reason for using the semi-structured interview was to allow for further clarifications to the questions and answers where needed. Furthermore, the interviews enabled provision of the necessary background information of the strategic plan which would develop the research further (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:377). Administration of the guiding questions differed from interview to interview, and the order of the questions varied depending on the direction taken by the interview (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:374). During the interview, an audio-recording device (smart phone) was used to assist the capturing of information; it helped the researcher to maintain attentive listening which would otherwise be distracted by note-taking.

### 7.8.1.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as another technique of collecting data (14. *Addendum 3- Internal stakeholders' questionnaire and 15. Addendum 4- External stakeholders' questionnaire*). To avoid low returns of e-mailed questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:208) ) hand-delivered questionnaires were issued to the internal stakeholders; lecturers, laboratory-technicians and the staff members in the non-academic sphere, as well as to the external stakeholders such as government, parents, media, alumni, funders and industry. The researcher used the self-devised

strategy of taking cell /phone numbers from respondents so that they could be reminded of the collection date. The researcher used the same procedure as in pilot testing CAS by going from office to office seeking permission to leave a questionnaire and the letter of consent, and that the questionnaire would be collected within a week's time, if it was convenient for the respondent. Upon the collection of the questionnaires, the researcher checked who had or had not responded; or submitted an incomplete questionnaire and was, asked politely to fill in the blank space or she would fill in the responses on their behalf. However, the researcher was aware of chances of contamination, which pose an uninformed response.

When the questionnaire was drawn up, the researcher considered three important factors. Firstly, that questions maintained clarity as much as possible by using the English language which would be easy to understand; and caters to both highly qualified people and the least qualified. Secondly, the length of the questionnaire was considered so that the respondents did not feel discouraged by lengthy questionnaires, thus consisting of a four-page questionnaire. A cover letter that stipulated the basic purpose of the research and guidelines as to how to complete the questionnaire was attached to the questionnaire. Lastly, the researcher ensured that answers to the first questions did not influence answers to the subsequent questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:446-448).

The researcher ascertained the validity of the questionnaire by ensuring that respondents were able to decode and understand questions the way the researcher had intended, and in return, the researcher should decode and understand the answers the way the respondents had intended to communicate them. Internal validity was used in this case. Relevant and adequate coverage of the investigative questions were ensured through content validity (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:429). Moreover, the reliability of the questions was tested through the use of alternative form, in which the researcher compared responses to alternative forms of the same question.

The researcher pilot-tested the questions by asking the supervisor's input as the expert in the discipline (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:451) to comment on the suitability of the questions. Subsequently, 24 respondents were approached from CAS. The researcher involved another institution to avoid repeating the same questions to the same respondents in the three institutions. The researcher, therefore, considered similar variation in the three institutions.

The questionnaire was based on open-ended questions that allowed free elaboration of responses from the respondents; and closed-ended questions which confined the respondents to the given alternatives.

### 7.8.2 Content analysis

In order to create replicable and valid interpretations of research findings, content analysis of strategic plans and responses to open-ended questions for IHLs in Lesotho was applied. Themes were deductively generated from the content of those documents (Boyatzis, 1998:4). During this process, the researcher ensured a capture of the qualitative richness of the phenomenon as this was of help to the interpretation, and presentation of the research.

The level of approach for content analysis was at words, key phrases and strings of words, at the same time deciding on the number of concepts to code. The researcher tried to maintain focus on the research question by not including any new codes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:492). Coding was done to illustrate occurrence, frequency and contextual similarity. All meaningful data was coded to allow for generalisation of the content (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:492) as thus the use of Leximancer to analyse strategic plans enhanced exploration of instances that relate to the coded concepts (Smith, 2004:5).

Furthermore, content analysis was used at the sentence level. Sentences within which the themes appeared were captured to complement the co-occurrence of the themes and phrases that were captured in the conceptual maps.

## 7.9 Data analysis techniques

The data were collected through the use of the survey method amongst the stakeholders and content analysis of the strategic plans. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were used, and appropriate techniques were considered for closed and open-ended questions. For the survey questions, the researcher studied data collected very closely so that closed-ended question responses were sorted under quantitative techniques and the open-ended question responses under qualitative techniques. Interview transcriptions and strategic plan texts were categorised under qualitative analysis. The table below illustrates the number of questionnaires, interviews and strategic plans realised.

**Table 7.4 Realisation number and data analysis techniques**

<b>SAMPLING FRAME</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>Data analysis techniques</b>
<b>Senior management (interviews)</b>	18	Qualitative
<b>Internal stakeholders (questionnaires)</b>	237	Qualitative and quantitative
<b>External stakeholders (questionnaires)</b>	34	Qualitative and quantitative
<b>Strategic plans</b>	4	Qualitative

### 7.9.1 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data obtained from closed-ended question responses from the internal and external stakeholders was captured into two excel spread sheets. The researcher categorised data into meaningful and relevant categories in the spread sheets. Categories first took the form of descriptive data as there were no numerical values attached to them. Though they could not add any numerical value, they were still counted as they were listed in the spread sheet; in this case the researcher was able to determine which category had highest numbers. In cases where data variables

allowed for two categories, then dichotomous data was formulated. Moreover, rating and scaling questions called for ranked data. Besides categorical data, the researcher made use of numerical data to determine positions of data value. Numerical data was further divided into interval data where the difference between two data values was detected in one variable. To determine the numerical values of the data SPSS was used.

SPSS was further used to determine relationships between variables. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to determine whether the relationship exists between two nominal variables (Bryman & Cramer, 2011:6; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:514) based on the cross-tabulation of the two variables. In the case where there was a relationship, the Chi-squared test further established whether the relationship was dependent or independent. In addition, the chi-square value obtained determined its statistical significance.

#### 7.9.2 Qualitative data analysis

Data was analysed qualitatively to maintain consistency between qualitative data collection and its analysis. Leininger (1994:95) states that, lately, many researchers use quantitative measures to analyse qualitative data without realising the inappropriateness created by the inconsistency. Hence the researcher employed CAQDAS: Leximancer, to analyse the qualitative data and SPSS for quantitative data.

The qualitative data collected from face-to-face interviews and open-ended questions from the questionnaires was analysed in the following ways. First the researcher prepared all data that was captured as a result of open-ended questions and interviews, and converted it from its oral (audio-recorded) or written form as word-processed text. Because of its time-consuming nature, the researcher transcribed audio recorded data each time she had conducted an interview so that it did not pile up into an unmanageable transcription at the end of interviews. Each interview transcription was saved on a separate word-processed file. She created easy to identify but confidential file names.

The researcher took note of the importance of identifying the interviewer from interviewee during transcription of interviews. Therefore, clear speaker identifiers, *I* for interviewer and *R* for respondent were devised. Transcriptions were made more meaningful and consistent by varying text input types, which are capitals, italics or bold faces.

For the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions, the researcher read the sets of answers from both the internal and external stakeholders. The in-depth reading enabled identification of codes in order to generate an index of terms that helped the researcher to interpret and theorise with regard to the collected data (Bryman & Bell, 2014:337). The researcher went on to draw connections between concepts and categories developed. The development of the categories was made from the collected data and literature and was underpinned by the research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:557). Again, the aim was to establish categories that were meaningfully related to the data (internal aspect) and those that relate to other categories (external aspect).

### 7.9.3 Content analysis of open-ended questions

Another form of qualitative analysis technique employed in this research is content analysis. This process entails coding which comprises formulating categories or classes of pieces of data put together with some type of retrieval system (Babbie, 2007). Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012:10) state that codes are developed to represent the established themes and then applied to the data as summary markers for further analysis. Content analysis involves the counting of the frequencies of co-occurrence of the categories established (Joffe & Yardley, 2004:56).

The content analysis was manually applied (without the help of software) to the open-ended questions of the questionnaires. For this data set, the researcher developed a categorisation matrix and coded the data according to the structured categories (Elo

& Kyngäs, 2008:111). All data aspects that fitted into the categories were categorised accordingly and those that did not fit were categorised under the concept *other*.

Moreover, a thematic analysis was employed to determine a specific pattern of codes observable. Mention of a word (manifest term) in a series of texts or mention of a word (latent term) is implicitly referred to. The aim is to understand the latent meaning of the targeted manifest theme (Bryman & Bell, 2014:301; Joffe & Yardley, 2004:56).

#### 7.9.3.1 Leximancer thematic analysis

The researcher used a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program to improve validity by feeding transcribed text in to the program for coding. Themes were formulated through automated coding. In this case, content analysis was used to analyse concepts derived from interview transcriptions. The programme also analysed relationships between identified concepts in order to measure co-occurrence of such concepts (Leximancer, 2011:9). Moreover, the researcher found it worthwhile to analyse the summaries produced by Leximancer in order to find the in-depth relevance of the themes and concepts.

The researcher utilised this Leximancer because of its systematic and graphic nature of portraying data as it creates a map of concepts and themes that reappear in the texts and summaries of excerpts obtained from the text. Leximancer was used for the following reasons (Indulska & Recker, 2010:295): its ability to (a) establish main concepts in a text and their relative significance using scientific and objective algorithm; (b) identify centrality of a concept; (c) help to apply grounded theory analysis to a textual dataset; and (d) help visually explore textual information for related themes.

Concepts are further clustered into themes and their importance is identified by coloured circles. The brighter the colour of a circle the more frequent the concept occur, that is faint circles denote less frequent concepts. The most frequent and connected concept determines each theme.

## 7.10 Data display formats

Once the data had been collected, the researcher found it imperative to apply the techniques and formats that would be used to display data. The matrix was used for collection and arrangement of data to create the ease of instant view, order data accordingly, and enable comparison where necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2014:338-339). Additionally, charts were used to compare values to the variable.

### 7.10.1 Quantitative data display formats

To analyse quantitative data, the researcher used an Excel spreadsheet to show different variables in different columns. Each column has its short variable name so as to create distinction between columns. Each row computes data collected from each completed questionnaire. The data was then transferred into SPSS where numerical codes were used to code all data types. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012:482) keying in numbers is faster than entering alphabets. In cases where new variables came up, re-coding was added in the matrix. In addition, categorical data was also coded. Even for categorical data, the researcher created a coding scheme after determining the highest level of precision in instances where endless list of positions and titles held in the institutions that were coded into fewer precise codes. Saunders *et al.* (2012:482) argue that this should be considered important as it facilitates analysis. The researcher coded all data, including the variables where missing data occurred. When entering data into the computer the researcher ensured that it was entered correctly and that labels replicated the exact words used in the data collection, this reduced chances of misinterpretation during the analysis.

Data computed on the matrix was then transferred into other data display formats such as Excel spreadsheets. To illustrate the categorical statistics, the researcher used a bar chart. Bar charts display numerical information that provides more visual emphasis of the frequencies within which units appear. Saunders *et al.* (2012:482) state that because of their ability to create an accurate presentation, bar charts should be used

in research reports. In some cases, the researcher made manual calculations in order to get to the actual counting of the responses that would otherwise be falsely interpreted with the sole reliance on the charts.

Additionally, the researcher found it ideal to display some types of data on a stacked bar chart since it clearly portrays the components of each bar right on top of the other component. The reason behind the choice was that the researcher wanted to put more emphasis on the proportions per category (Buglear, 2012:38).

Therefore, to present a clearer picture of highest and lowest values the researcher reordered the bars in a descending manner so that the first to appear are the highest in value with the most length or height of bars. In the case where the data called for comparison between the highest and lowest values, multiple bar charts and stacked bar charts were used. Additionally, pie charts were utilised to illustrate proportions amongst values. The prepared categorical and numerical data were grouped so that it fitted into at least six segments, the number of groups and segments determined the number of pie charts produced. Measures of central tendency, mean, median and average were used to describe data, and the software used for matrix table construction did measures of central tendency.

#### 7.10.2 Qualitative data display formats

The researcher converted transcribed data into easier-to-use reduced data by formulating analytical categories. Each category has its appropriate label or name based on the variables of the research. The categories were concept driven and data-driven (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:557). Saunders *et al.* (2012:557) further state that categories should portray two aspects; the internal aspect, which satisfies meaning in relation to the data, and external aspect whose meaning relates to other categories. The researcher identified units of data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences and listed them under the relevant categories. Unitising was based on the research objectives of the study. If units of data appeared to be too many, more labels were formulated to the existing categories, by so doing, she gave a clear definition of the new categories. On the other hand, if units had a close relationship she created more

categories. Moreover, she tested for a relationship between categories before she could conclude that there was an actual relationship.

The process of data reduction (that produced extended text) prepared for data display, where the researcher used matrices, networks and concept maps. The summarised data was computed into cells of the matrix table or in the collection of boxes joined together by lines/network. Saunders *et al.* (2012:557) state that the boxes contain labels that were meant to indicate variables from the data. Since the extended text was haphazardly organised, and difficult to analyse, matrices and networks were used to assist the researcher to formulate conclusions. They were convenient as they allowed the researcher to tailor-make them into the data whichever way the researcher saw it fit. Data interpretation became manageable because of matrices and networks.

### 7.10.3 Content analysis display formats

The researcher made use of strategic planning documents from the four institutions in order to identify themes present within the text of each document and determine similar and different themes. Graphing techniques were used in order to compare thematic patterns portrayed. Relationships between variables were displayed through conceptual maps. Furthermore, having identified the frequency of occurrence and co-occurrence of the concepts through Leximancer, the researcher made use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to statistically explore differences in textual content (Smith, 2005:5).

## 7.11 Quality and rigour of the research

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:272) emphasise the trustworthiness of the mixed-method research by pointing out that in this approach, a researcher is able to measure reliability and validity of the research in terms of internal validity, external validity and general credibility and trustworthiness. These criteria are briefly discussed below.

### 7.11.1 Reliability

It has been argued that reliability is mostly concerned with consistency in findings if they were replicated by another researcher or if the techniques and analytic procedures were used in another population, and that it would produce consistent results. According to Baxter and Babbie (2004:122) reliability has the potential of posing some problems relating to instances that where one researcher is involved, reliability tends to be jeopardised. They, however, argue that this can be rectified by involving a number of techniques. Firstly, the researcher can apply the test-retest method where the same measurement is performed more than once, in which case test-retest reliability is ascertained. Another technique is the alternate-form method where the researcher formulates two versions of the same measure and administers them to the same group of respondents, if the results are found acceptable, then the same alternatives will be administered to the subsequent sub-groups.

### 7.11.2 Validity

To ensure the quality of the research, the researcher employed a measurement that measured exactly what the researcher intended to measure. Content validity is one important technique which measures how effectively a range of meanings has been covered in a concept. This can be done in three ways, namely face validity, expert panel validity, and criterion validity. In this research, validity will be tested in terms of internal and external validity. *Internal validity* becomes apparent when the causal-effect is demonstrated between the two variables. This is qualitatively based therefore the mixed-method research covers it in its quantitative measures. External validity, on the other hand, is concerned with the chances of results being generalised to other contexts (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:172-174). Therefore, the researcher is concerned with generalising the results of this research to other IHLs, hence the implementation of mixed-method research approach.

## 7.12 Research ethics

In order to address the research questions successfully, the researcher had to put into practice the set principles to follow when collecting and analysing data. Research ethics guidelines were followed with much emphasis on avoidance of any malpractice or harm against the participant and respondent as well as the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher took into consideration the importance of privacy and respect for the participants and respondents, and involved maintenance of anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and objectivity.

During data collection, the researcher requested the respondents to sign a letter of consent, *12. Addendum 1-Letter* of consent as a sign of understanding and agreement of providing the researcher with information. Although they had signed the letter of consent, the researcher avoided any signs of harm to the interviewee, as well as to herself. The respondents still maintained their right to withdraw whenever they wished, while the interviewer maintained hers by withholding any personal information. For instance, one respondent returned the questionnaire because they were not feeling comfortable with the questions and the researcher, understandably so, accepted the questionnaire. In addition, the researcher remained objective in recording the interviews. The recording device recorded all the information which was later transcribed without any alterations to the content. Anonymity and confidentiality were also maintained by avoiding telling the subsequent interviewees the names of the prior interviewees or their points of discussion. Moreover, interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the prospective interviewee and once started, the researcher avoided pressurising the interviewee with demeaning questions. The researcher was successful in keeping to the agreed time of the interview.

During data analysis and reporting, the researcher avoided being selective about the reported data. Even at this stage, the researcher still maintained confidentiality and anonymity by reporting the research results in a way that the participating stakeholder or institution would not be associated with the results. She ensured total protection of the participants and respondents by not revealing their names and locations and actual names of the institutions.

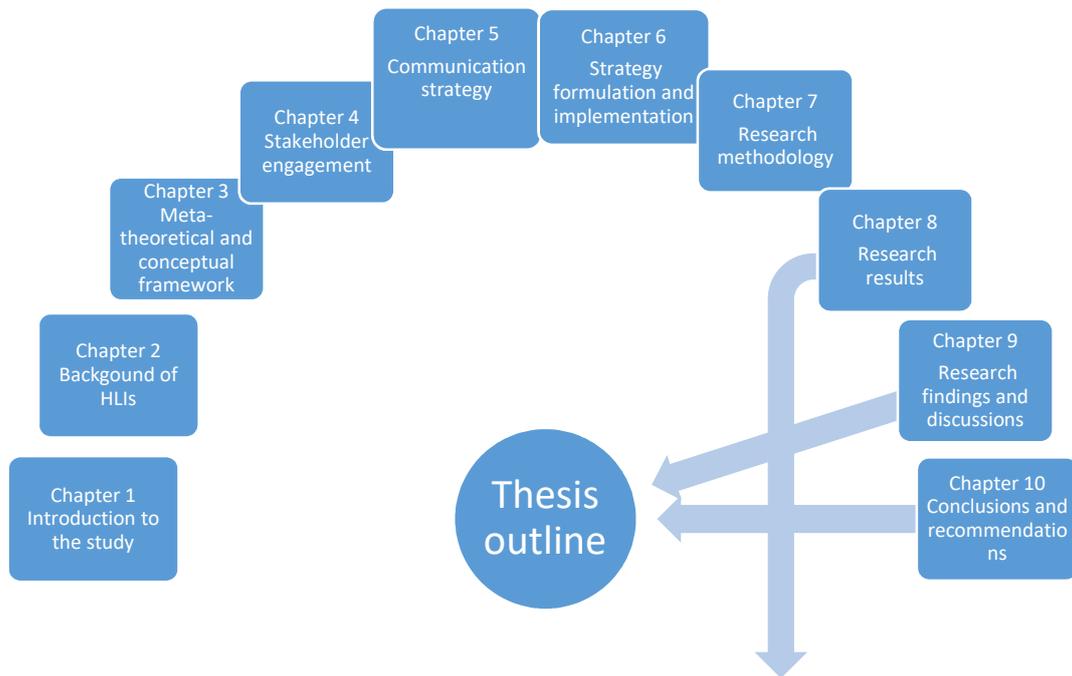
### **7.13 Summary**

The Chapter started by discussing the phenomenological research paradigm which informed the entire research process. The nature of social reality was taken into consideration, despite the ontological stance of the researcher's objectivity in collecting and analysing data, another stance still prevails that the research can be influenced subjectively by the participants', respondents' or the researcher's external interest and past experience.

Furthermore, the strategy of enquiry was discussed therein indicating the utilisation of the mixed-method research for the collection and analysis of the data. The instruments for collecting data and the analysis and display methods were explained.

In addition, the Chapter restated the problem statement and research questions governing the research. In order to ascertain rigour and quality when addressing the research questions, the researcher had to be mindful of research ethics, the principles considered in data collection and analysis. The following Chapter addresses results obtained from the research.

## Chapter 8 Research results



- Quantitative strand
  - results of Research Questions 1-5
  - Research hypotheses
- Qualitative strand
  - results of Research Questions 1-5
  - Research hypotheses

### 8.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the empirical evidence of the research results. The results are presented in two phases. Firstly, quantitative analysis (phase 1) comprises discussion of results obtained from internal and external stakeholders' closed-ended questions in the questionnaires; and qualitative analysis (phase 2) comprises the discussion of results obtained from open-ended questions in the questionnaires from the internal and external stakeholders and content analysis of strategic plans and interviews with the senior management. The results are structured according to the research questions as set out in Chapter one. Following is the general background and discussion of the research results of phases 1 and 2.

## 8.2 General background

This is an exploratory and descriptive research that employs mixed-method research of collecting and analysing data with the convergence of quantitative and qualitative strands.

The target population of this research consists of the internal and external stakeholders of the IHLs in Lesotho. Internal stakeholders include senior management, middle management and employees. Although they are part of internal stakeholders, students were not included in the research since the institutions did not yet have student representative bodies available since the research was conducted at the beginning of the academic year. The media, alumni, parents, community, donors, parastatals and government employees constitute the external stakeholders of the institutions. A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed to internal stakeholders of the four institutions. Of this number, 237 (109 males and 128 females) were returned, which represents a response rate of 84.6 percent. An additional 34 questionnaires were disseminated to the external stakeholders, where a 100 percent response rate (obtained from 7 males and 11 females) was received. Of the seven groups of external stakeholders, only six (media, alumni, parents, community, parastatals and government employees) were represented, while donors were not.

To tackle the qualitative research data collection, 7 females and 11 males of the 33 members of senior management were interviewed, which is a 54.5 percent response rate. Lastly, secondary data was gathered from four strategic plans of the four institutions.

Table 8.1 illustrates the response rate from the four target populations.

**Table 8.1 Sampling realisation and response rate**

<b>SAMPLING FRAME</b>	<b>NUMBER TARGETED RESPONSES</b>	<b>OF NUMBER RESPONSES</b>	<b>OF RESPONSE RATE (per category)</b>
<b>Senior management (interviews)</b>	33	18	54.5%
<b>Internal stakeholders (questionnaires)</b>	280	237	84.6%
<b>External stakeholders (questionnaires)</b>	34	34	100%
<b>Strategic plans</b>	4	4	100%

### **8.3 Quantitative strand - results for Research Questions 1 to 5**

This section provides quantitative research results of research questions one to five.

#### **8.3.1 Internal stakeholders**

In order to address the research question namely; *To what extent do IHLs in Lesotho utilise a communication strategy to engage stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy?* The analysis of the results is discussed based on the research sub-questions along with identification of the questions in the questionnaire that address the sub-questions.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted. Descriptive analysis is based on frequency tables. The discussion is based on the response rate obtained per question. The inferential statistical analysis comprised the application of

the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence which tests the existence of a statistical association between two nominal variables.

#### 8.3.1.1 Research Question 1

*How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?*

In Questions 9, 10, 13 and 14 respondents were asked firstly, if their management regularly gave them or their representatives any information about the strategic plan. Secondly, they were asked if there is someone or a division in the institutional structure that has a specific responsibility for communication within the institution. Thirdly, respondents were asked if they ever receive instructions to perform their duties. They were, further, asked to provide platforms of communication used in their institutions to transfer information.

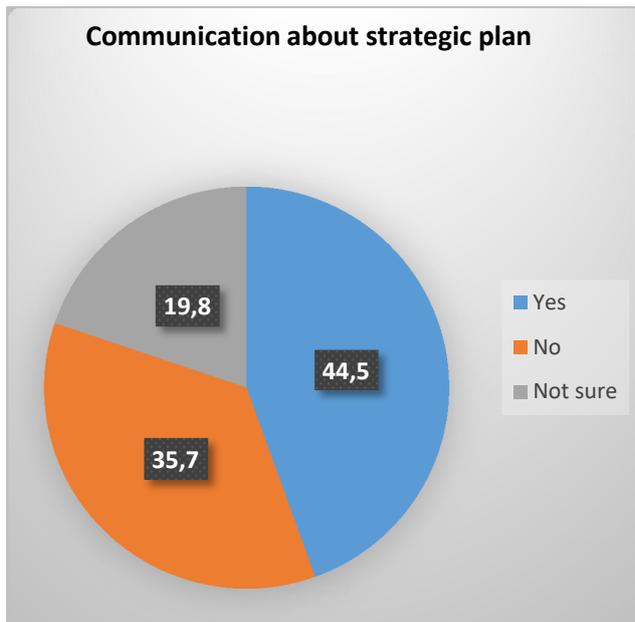
When asked if they ever received any kind of communication regarding strategic plans, less than half (44.5%) of the employees answered yes, while the majority (55.5%) indicated *no* or *not sure* (35.7% and 19.8% respectively) as indicated in Figure 8.1.

The results indicate that the institutions do not clearly state the purpose of the information disseminated to the employees. The general picture obtained from Figure 8.1 is that management do, in some institutions, communicate to the employees about the strategic plans, but it is an issue that needs to be addressed in the institutions where employees indicated no to the question.

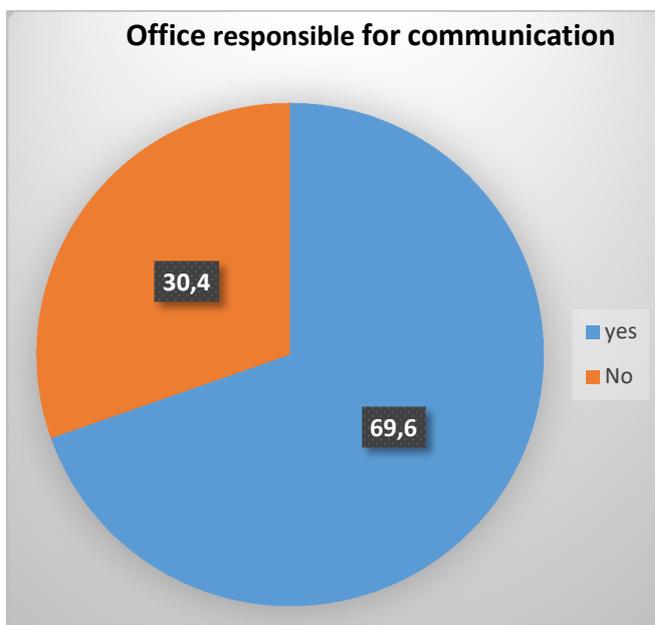
When further asked if their institution has an office that is responsible for dissemination of information within and outside the institution, 69.6 percent of the respondents answered that there is such an office whereas 30.4 percent said there is not, as indicated in Figure 8.2.

The fairly high majority (69.6%) is a good indication that the institutions do take responsibility for communication through the establishment of offices responsible for communication. However, it still raises a concern as to why 30.4 percent of the employees say there is no such office or they are unaware of such an office. This could mean that either there is no such office, or there is, but employees are not aware of its existence.

**Figure 8.1 Communication about strategic plan**



**Figure 8.2 Office responsible for communication (%) N=237**



In response to whether internal stakeholders are given instructions on how to perform their duties, a fairly high number (62.9 %) said *yes* while 37.1 percent indicated *no* (Figure 3). This is an implication that a significantly large number of internal stakeholders do not receive some information regarding their duties.

**Figure 8.3 Instructions on how to perform (%) (N = 237)**

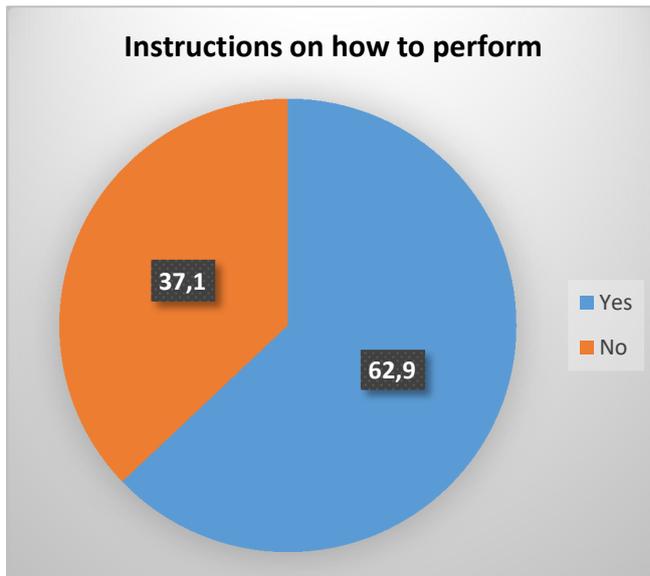
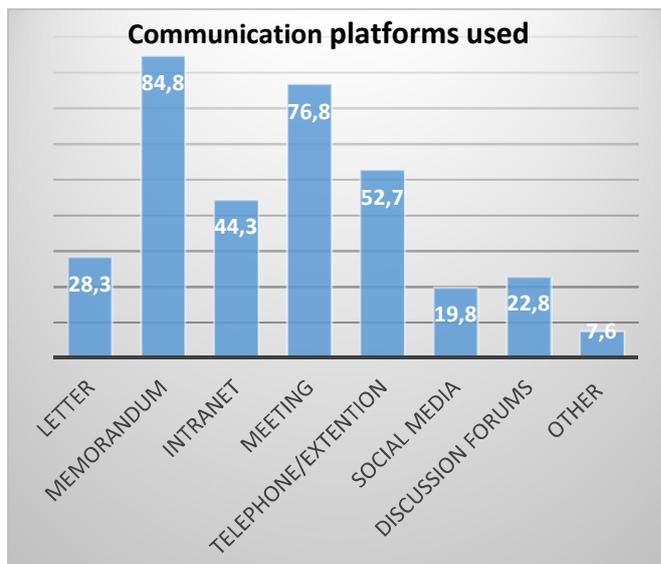


Figure 8.4 indicates responses to the question pertaining to the platforms of communication that are used in the institutions. The most used platform is memorandums at 84.8 percent followed by meetings at 76.8 percent, with social media used the least at 19.8 percent.

**Figure 8.4 Communication platforms used (%) (N = 237)**



### 8.3.1.2 Research Question 2

*What impact does stakeholder engagement have on the implementation of the strategic plan?*

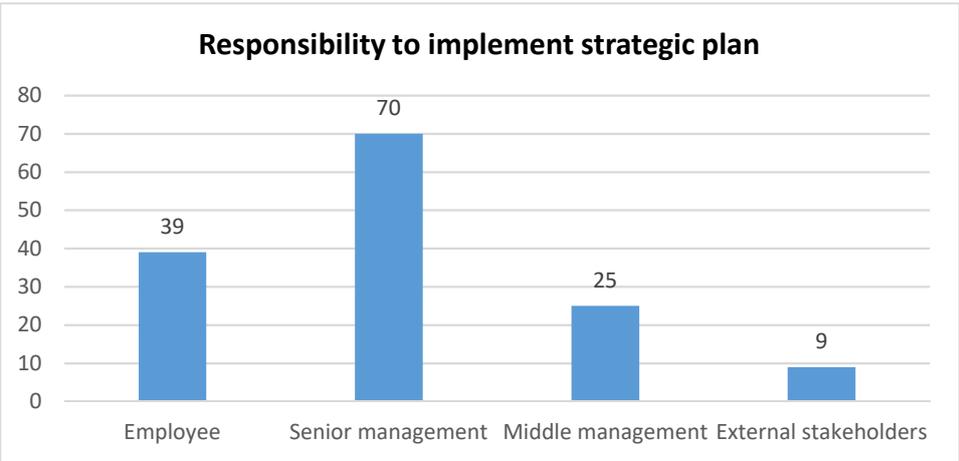
Questions 5 and 7 required respondents to indicate activities that they have been involved in and the degree of their involvement in as far as the strategic plan activities such as planning, implementation, monitoring and review are concerned. The researcher also wanted to establish which of the following categories: employees, senior management, middle management or external stakeholders are responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan.

**Figure 8.5 Strategic plan activities involved (%) (N= 237)**



Figure 8.5 illustrates strategic activities within which the internal stakeholders were involved. Respondents were at liberty to choose all the answers that were applicable to them. Somewhat similar responses were observed for strategic planning (38.4%) and implementation of the strategic plan (34.6%). Monitoring (7.2%) was the least involving activity while more than a third (35.9%) indicated they were not involved in any of the activities.

**Figure 8.6 Responsibility to implement strategic plan (%) (N=237)**



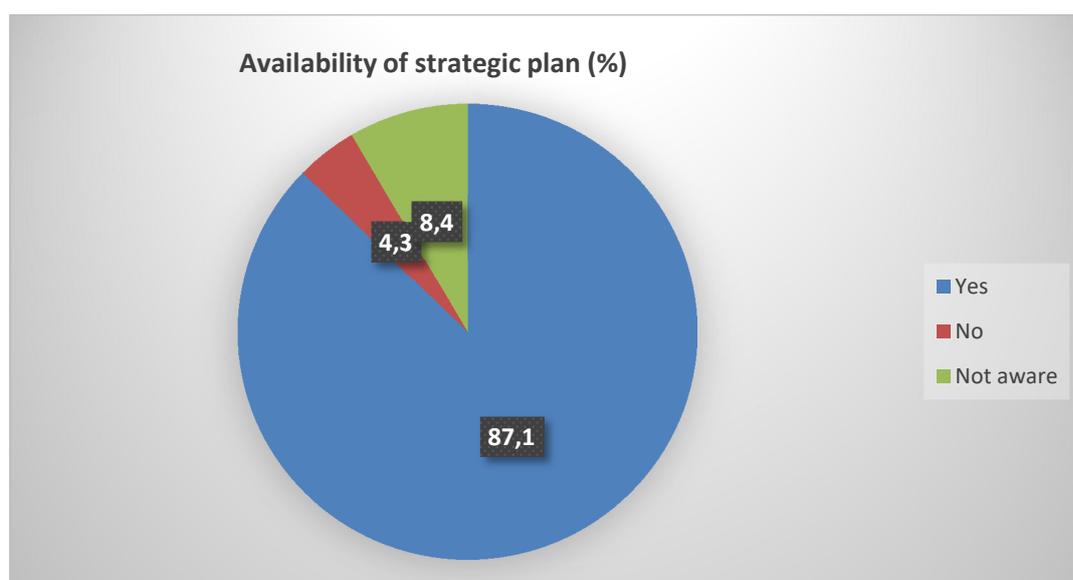
In the above bar chart (8.6), most employees (70%) believe that the implementation of the strategic plan is the senior management's responsibility, while 39 percent of the respondents believe it is the employee's responsibility. Whereas 25 percent and 9 percent have a feeling that it is middle management and the external stakeholders' responsibility. The respondents were allowed to tick any suitable answer.

### 8.3.1.3 Research Question 3

*To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) knowledge about the strategic plan and, b) participation in the implementation of the strategic plan?*

In Question 4, employees were asked if their institution had a formal strategic plan that sets out objectives and how they will be achieved. An option was given for those who were not aware of the availability of the strategic plan. Figure 8.7 illustrates the percentage of people who were aware of the availability of a formal strategic plan. The majority of the respondents (87.1%) indicated that a formal strategic plan exists. However, a concern is that 8.4 percent of the respondents do not know, clearly indicating a lack of communication of the strategy.

**Figure 8.7 Availability of strategic plan (N =237)**



In Question 6, respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they have been involved in the implementation of the strategy in their institutions.

**Figure 8.8 Degree of involvement**

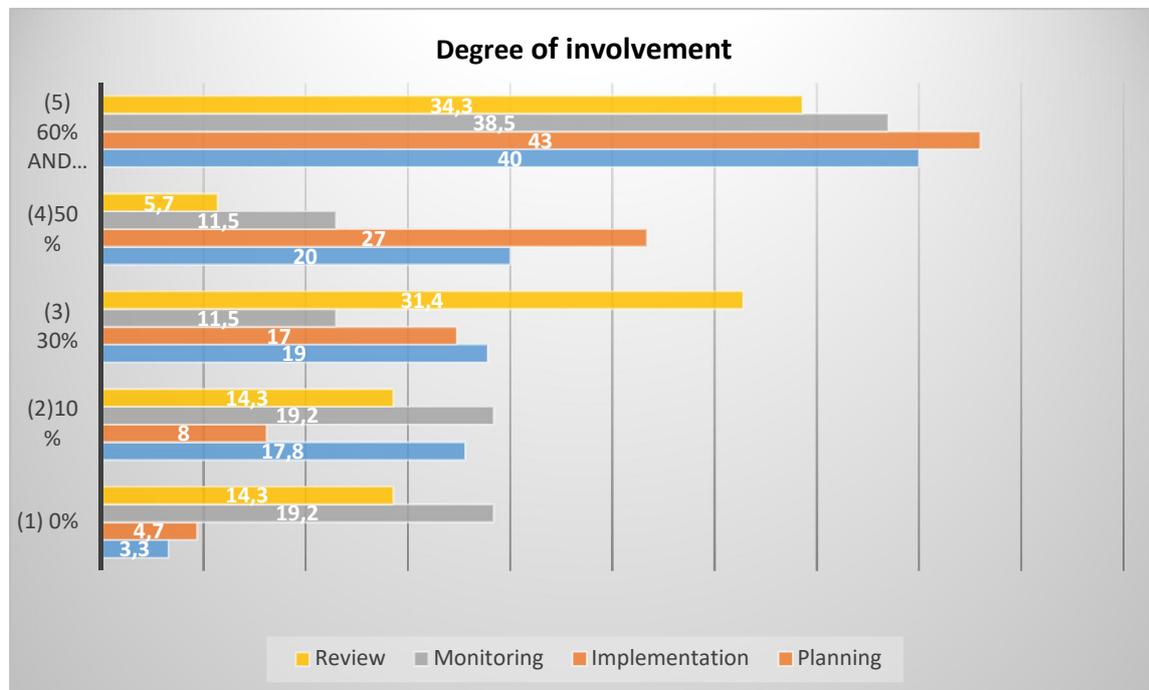


Figure 8.8 illustrates the degree to which the institutions involve employees in the strategic plan activities. 43 percent of respondents were engaged in 60 percent and higher of the implementation activity; 27 percent were involved at the rate of 50 percent; 17 percent were engaged at the rate of 30 percent; 8 percent at 10 percent and 4.7 percent at 0 percent. In other words, most respondents were involved 60 percent and higher of the implementation than any other level. However, to be more specific 37 percent (manually calculated from Addendum 7) of the employees have been engaged in the strategic implementation.

#### 8.3.1.4 Hypotheses test - The statistical association between variables

As there are both academic and non-academic staff respondents in the survey, it was of interest to know whether there was a relationship between the type of staff and a variety of variables in the questionnaire. The establishment of the statistical association between the variable partly addresses the research sub-question which reads as: *To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) the knowledge about the strategic plan and b) the participation in the implementation of the strategic plan.* The researcher utilised the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence to determine the relationship that may exist between the type of staff and the chosen variables. In some instances, small cell sizes can result in invalid Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) values if more than 20 percent of the cells had expected counts of less than 5 for the cross tabulations. Therefore, the Cramer V was used in these cases. Cramer V is a measurement of strength of association between two nominal variables.

The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was run to establish the association between the type of staff and their knowledge pertaining to: the existence of a strategic plan; ability of communication to facilitate implementation of strategic plan; dissemination of information about strategic plan; existence of an office responsible for communication; the effect of organisational culture on communication flow; reception of instructions to perform; evaluation of institutions' openness/closedness; decisions made without consultation; communication being vital in decision-making; institution is strict in communication protocol; practice of one/two-way communication. The results are tabled below (Table 8.2):

**Table 8.2 Chi-square test indicating statistical association between type of staff and other variables**

Cross-tabulation variables	Tested hypotheses	Pearson Chi-square value or Cramer V (where applicable)	Approximate significance (p-value)	Result
Type of staff by knowledge about existence of strategic plan (Q4)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between type of staff and knowledge about the existence of the strategic plan  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and knowledge about the existence of the strategic plan	0.096	0.953	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by strategic planning involved in (Q5.1)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and the strategic planning they were involved in  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and the strategic planning they were involved in	0.064	.801	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by strategic implementation involved in (Q5.2)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and the strategic implementation they were involved in  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and the strategic implementation they were involved in	1.941	.164	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by strategic monitoring involved in (Q5.3)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and the strategic monitoring they were involved in	1.345	.246	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

	H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and the strategic monitoring they were involved in			
Type of staff by strategic reviewing involved in (Q5.4)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and the strategic reviewing they were involved in  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and the strategic reviewing they were involved in	.156	.693	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by none of strategic activity involved in (Q5.5)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and non-involvement in strategic activities  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and non-involvement in strategic activities	3.893	.048	Reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of whether it is employees responsible for the implementation (Q7.1)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge of whether it is employees responsible for the implementation  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and knowledge of whether it is employees responsible for the implementation	1.424	.233	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of whether it is senior management responsible for the implementation (Q7.2)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge of whether it is senior management responsible for the implementation  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and knowledge of whether it is senior management responsible for the implementation	9.201	.002	Reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of whether it is middle	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge of whether	0.28	.868	Do not reject the null hypothesis at

management responsible for the implementation (Q7.3)	it is middle management responsible for the implementation  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and knowledge of whether it is middle management responsible for the implementation			the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of whether it is external stakeholders responsible for the implementation (Q7.4)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge of whether it is external stakeholders responsible for the implementation  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and knowledge of whether it is external stakeholders responsible for the implementation	.175	.676	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge about ability of communication to facilitate implementation of strategic plan (Q8)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between type of staff and their knowledge about ability of communication to facilitate implementation of strategic plan  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between type of staff and their knowledge about ability of communication to facilitate implementation of strategic plan	2.019	.568	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by dissemination of information about strategic plan(Q9)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and disseminated information about strategic plan  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and disseminated information about strategic plan	.303	.860	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of office	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge of office	.048	.826	Do not reject the null hypothesis at

responsible for communication (Q10)	responsible for communication  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and knowledge of office responsible for communication			the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by knowledge of the effect of organisational culture on communication flow (Q11)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and knowledge about the effect of organisational culture on communication flow  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and knowledge about the effect of organisational culture on communication flow	.038	.845	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by reception of instructions to perform (Q13)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and reception of instructions to perform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and reception of instructions to perform	1.615	.204	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by evaluation of institutions' openness/closedness (Q14)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and their evaluation of institution's openness/closedness  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and their evaluation of institution's openness/closedness	3.336	.343	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (letter) used for communication (Q15.1)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and letter as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and letter as a communication platform	1.934	.164	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

Type of staff by the platform (memorandum) used for communication (Q15.2)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and memorandum as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and memorandum as a communication platform	.078	.780	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (intranet) used for communication (Q15.3)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and intranet as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and intranet as a communication platform	1.022	.312	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (meeting) used for communication (Q15.4)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and meeting as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and meeting as a communication platform	.033	.856	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (telephone) used for communication (Q15.5)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and telephone as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and telephone as a communication platform	3.872	.049	Reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (social media) used for communication (Q15.6)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and social media as a communication platform  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and social media as a communication platform	.191	.662	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by the platform (discussion forums) used for	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and discussion forum as a communication platform	.072	.789	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

communication (Q15.7)	H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and discussion forum as a communication platform			
Type of staff by decisions made without consultation(Q17)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and decisions made without consultation with staff  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and decisions made without consultation with staff	4.581	.205	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by belief of communication being vital in decision-making (Q18)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and the belief that communication is vital in decision-making  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the type of staff and the belief that communication is vital in decision-making	.438	.508	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by belief that the institution is strict in communication protocol (Q19)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and their belief that the institution is strict in communication protocol  H <sub>1</sub> :There is an association between the type of staff and their belief that the institutions is strict in communication protocol	4.485	.034	Reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Type of staff by practice of one/two-way communication (Q20)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the type of staff and their awareness of practice of the institutions' one/two-way communication  H <sub>1</sub> :There is an association between the type of staff and their awareness of practice of the institutions'	1.347	.718	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

	one/two-way communication			
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*Interpretation*

According to the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test, the p-values in the above table (Table 8.2) indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the type of staff and employees' knowledge regarding the tested variables except for the variables pertaining to the non-involvement of the staff in strategic plan activities, the senior management's responsibility to implement the strategic plan, the use of telephones to communicate and the communication protocol. Thus academic and non-academic staff have a similar level of knowledge/belief regarding strategic plan and communication strategy.

Nonetheless, there is a statistically significant association between the type of staff and non-involvement of staff in the strategic activities. 30.1 percent of the academic staff and 43.4 percent of the non-academic staff indicated that they did not participate in any of the strategic plan activities. This is indicative of the better chance academic staff stand of getting engaged in the strategic plan activities, as opposed to the non-academic staff.

There is another statistically significant association between the type of staff and their knowledge of whether implementation is the senior management's responsibility. 61.6 percent of the academic staff believes that it is the senior management's responsibility to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan, whereas 40.8 percent of the non-academic staff holds a similar view. It can, therefore, be deduced that non-academic staff has a better understanding of the implementation of the strategic plan than the academic staff.

A further statistical significant association is illustrated in Table 8.10 and shows a relationship between the type of staff and the use of a telephone as a communication platform. 59.8 percent of the academic staff and 61.8 percent of the non-academic

staff make use of the telephone to communicate within the institution. This indicates that the academic staff uses the telephone less often than the non-academic staff, thus there is limited interaction with the external stakeholders.

The table further indicates that there is a statistical significant relationship between the type of staff and the protocol followed in communication. Where 45.8 percent of the academic staff feels that their institution is strict about communication protocol, 54.2 percent say the communication protocol is not strict. On the contrary, 30.6 percent of the non-academic staff finds their institution strict about communication protocol, while 69.4 percent feel their institution is not strict about communication protocol. It is evident that most non-academic staff finds it easier to communicate with management since they don't find their institutions strict in following communication protocol.

#### 8.3.1.5 *Research Question 4*

*What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?*

In Question 11, respondents' opinions were sought to establish if they thought institutional culture (which is a possible communication trend prevalent in organisations) can affect communication flow in the institution.

**Figure 8.9 Organisational culture affects communication flow (%) (N = 237)**



According to the pie chart (Figure 8.9) the overwhelming majority (95.6%) of the respondents answered yes, thus agreed that organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution, while only 4.4 percent do not believe organisational culture affects communication.

#### 8.3.1.6 Research Question 5

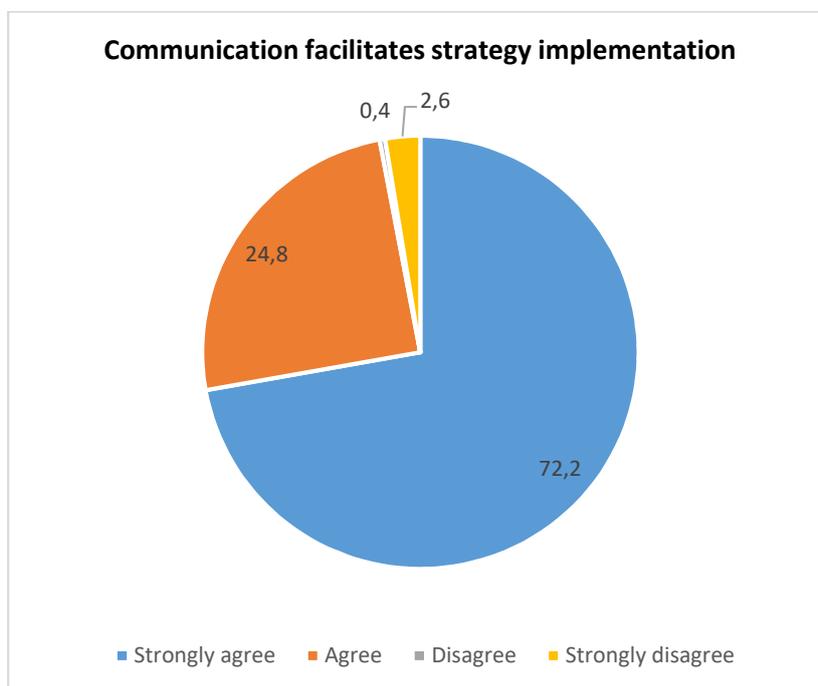
*Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?*

Questions 8, 15, 17, and 20 required the respondents to indicate their level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 4, where a 1 indicated strongly agree and a 4 indicated strongly disagree. The respondents were to decide: 8) if communication can facilitate implementation of strategy; 15) what platforms of communication is information transferred within the institution; 17) if institutions make decisions without consulting the employees; and 20) if their institutions practise a two-way communication process

between the management and employees instead of a one-way communication from the management to the employees.

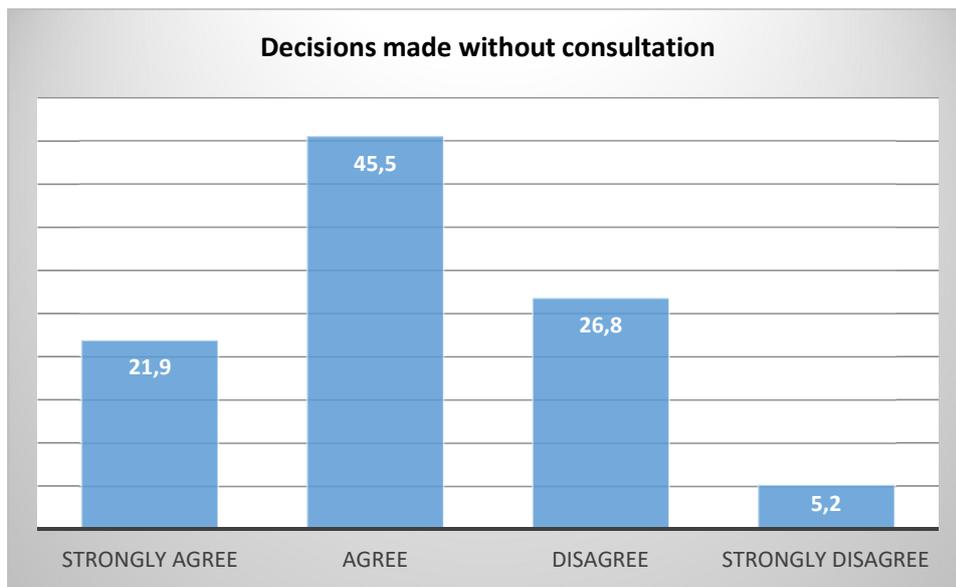
In Questions 18 and 19 the researcher further wanted to find out 18) if the respondents consider communication a vital process in decision-making; and 19) if they consider their institution strict about communication protocol.

**Figure 8.10 Communication facilitates strategy implementation (%) (N = 237)**



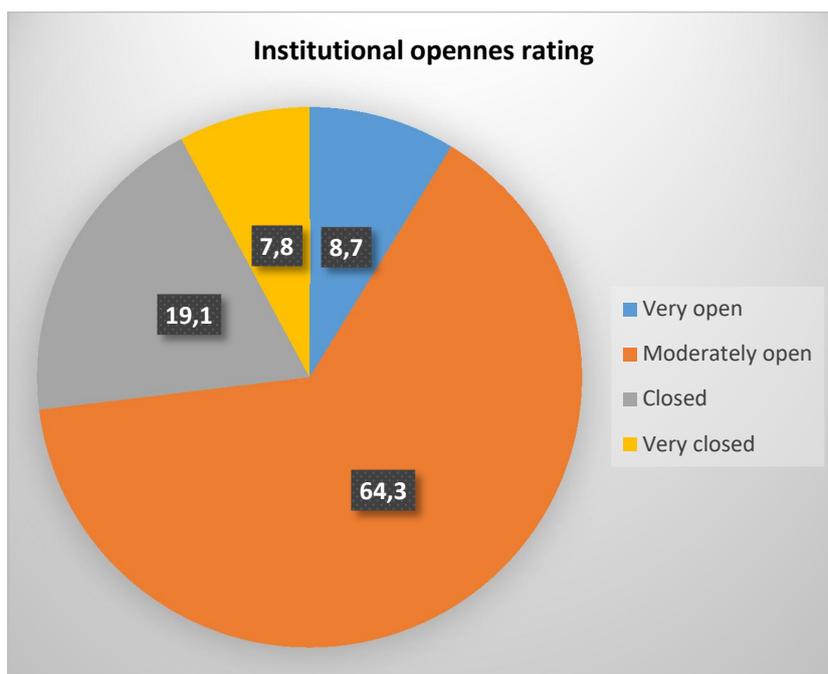
Almost all respondents (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that communication facilitates strategy implementation in the institutions (Figure 8.10).

**Figure 8.11 Decisions made without consultation (%) (N=37)**



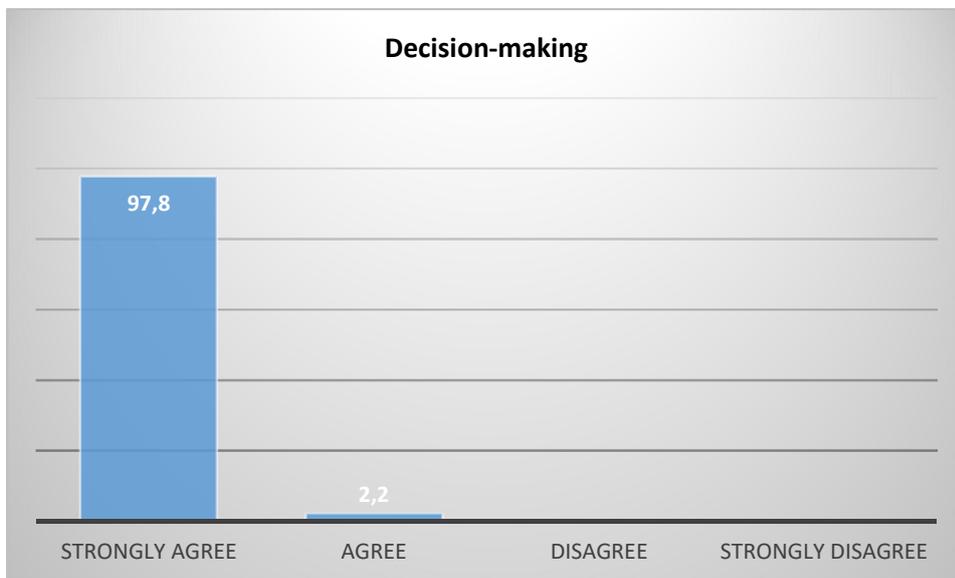
In Figure 8.11, approximately two-thirds of the respondents (67.4%) agreed and strongly agreed that most decisions are made without consultation with the employees. The majority of the employees thus feel they are not consulted in the decision-making process.

**Figure 8.12 Institutional openness rating (%) (N=237)**



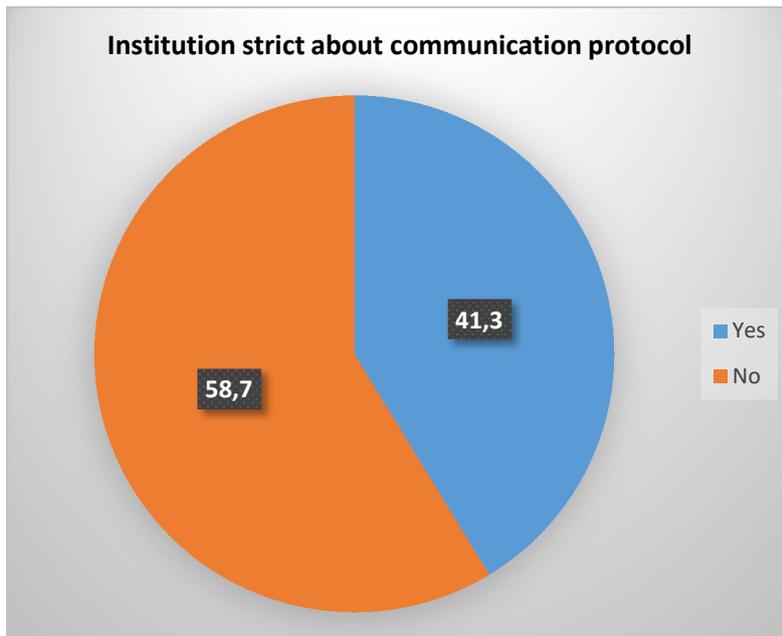
Respondents were further asked to rate their institutions in terms of openness of the institutions. They were to rate if their institutions allow exchange of information between the employees and management. Figure 8.12 shows that a relatively large number of the respondents (64.3% and 8.7%) find their institutions moderately open and very open respectively while 19.1 percent and 7.8 percent believe their institution is closed and very closed.

**Figure 8.13 Communication is vital in decision-making (%) (N = 237)**



All respondents (100%) found communication vital for decision-making as they all agreed or strongly agreed that communication is vital for decision-making (figure 8.13).

**Figure 8.14 Institution strict about communication protocol (%) (N =237)**



When asked whether their institutions are being strict about following protocol when communicating, more than half of the respondents (58.7%) said their institutions are not strict in as far as following protocol is concerned, while 41.3 percent answered that their institutions are strict with communication protocol (Figure 8.14).

**Figure 8.15 Two-way communication (%) (N = 237)**

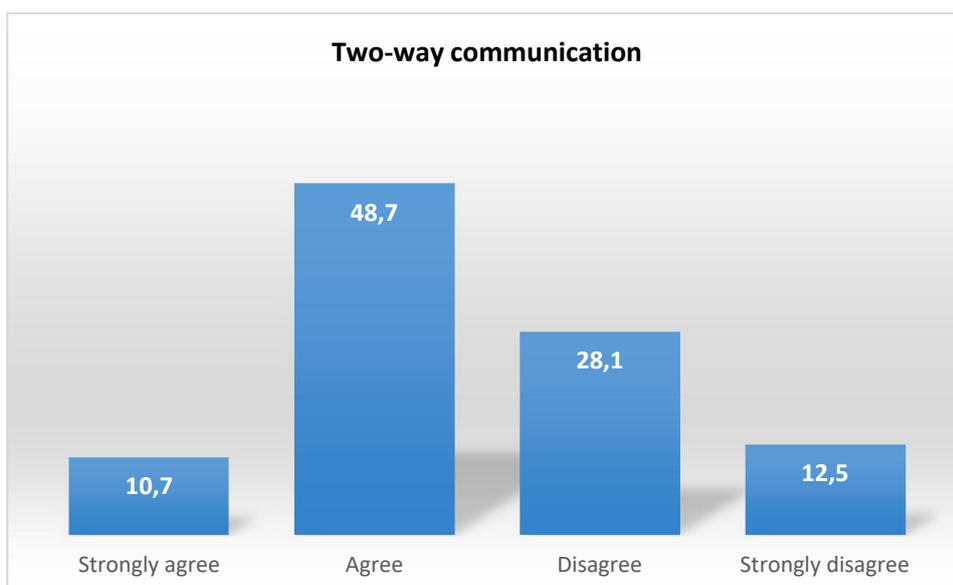


Figure 8.15 indicates the respondents' level of agreement regarding the practice of two-way communication. The figure shows that the majority (59.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that their institutions practise two-way communication which could be a good sign that management do engage the employees in communicating strategy. However, the fairly high percentage (40.5%) of the respondents that disagree or strongly disagree raises concern as to why they do not agree that there is two-way communication and this should be addressed.

### 8.3.2 External stakeholders

In addition to the quantitative data, following is a discussion of the results obtained by means of a questionnaire from the external stakeholders of the institutions under study. Results from the pilot study test were included in the discussion as minor changes and corrections were made on the questionnaires. The participating respondents comprised government, parents, alumni, the media, parastatals, community and other (not mentioned in the provided options).

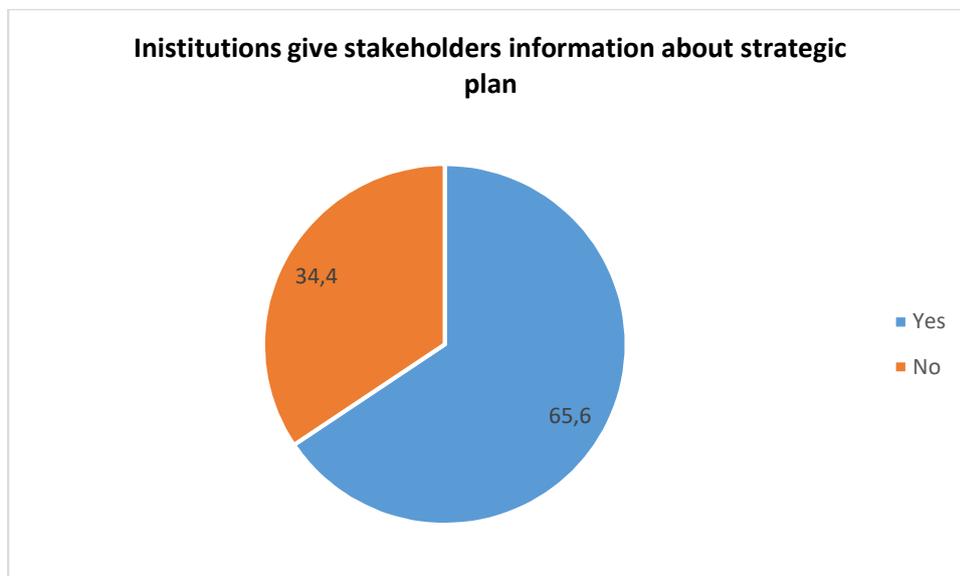
As was the case with the internal stakeholders, the results are reported based on the alignment between the research sub-questions and the items in the questionnaires. The reporting is also based on the descriptive analysis of the responses and the inferential statistical analysis of the results obtained from the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence that tested the statistical association between the two nominal variables.

#### 8.3.2.1 Research Question 1

*How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?*

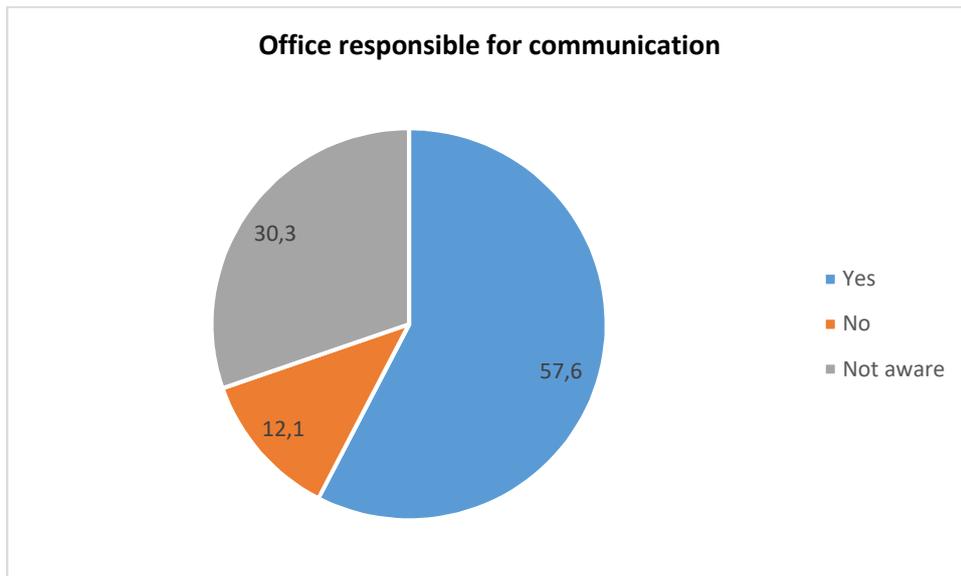
When asked if institutions give stakeholders information pertaining to the strategic plan, approximately two-thirds (65.6%) of the respondents said yes. However, a relatively high number of respondents (34.4%) said no, possibly indicating the need for provision of information to all relevant external stakeholders.

**Figure 8.16 Institutions give stakeholders information about strategic plan (%) (N=34)**



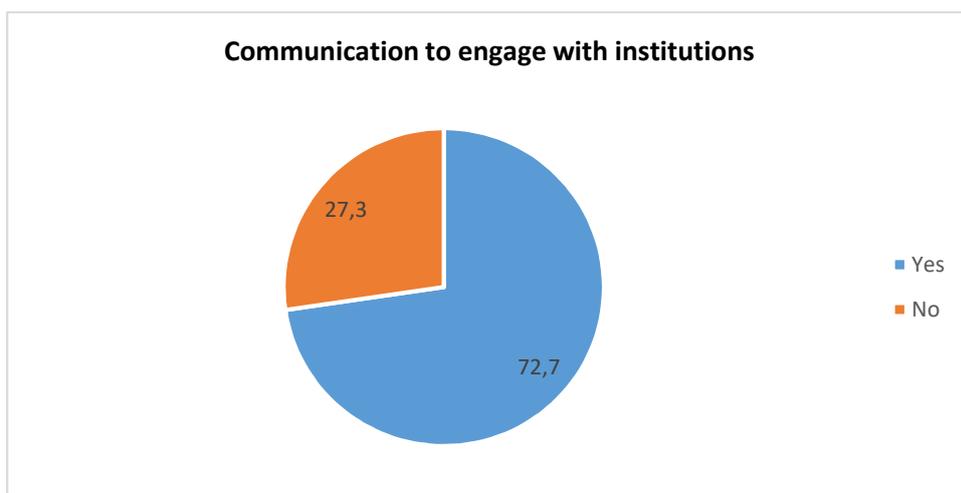
The researcher went on to find out from the external stakeholders if there is anybody or an office within the organisational structure that is responsible for communicating messages. Over half (57.6%) of the respondents said yes, while nearly a third (30.3%) were not aware of such an office or personnel and 12.1 percent said there was no such a person or an office, thereby, indicating the need for informing external stakeholders about the existence of such a person or the office.

**Figure 8.17 Office responsible for communication (%) (N=34)**



When asked if they ever receive communication to engage with the institution (Figure 8.18) almost three quarters of the respondents (72.2%) agreed that they do receive communication. However, 27.3 percent indicated that they do not receive communication. The stakeholders need to be identified to ensure that communication to engage with the institution reached all external stakeholders.

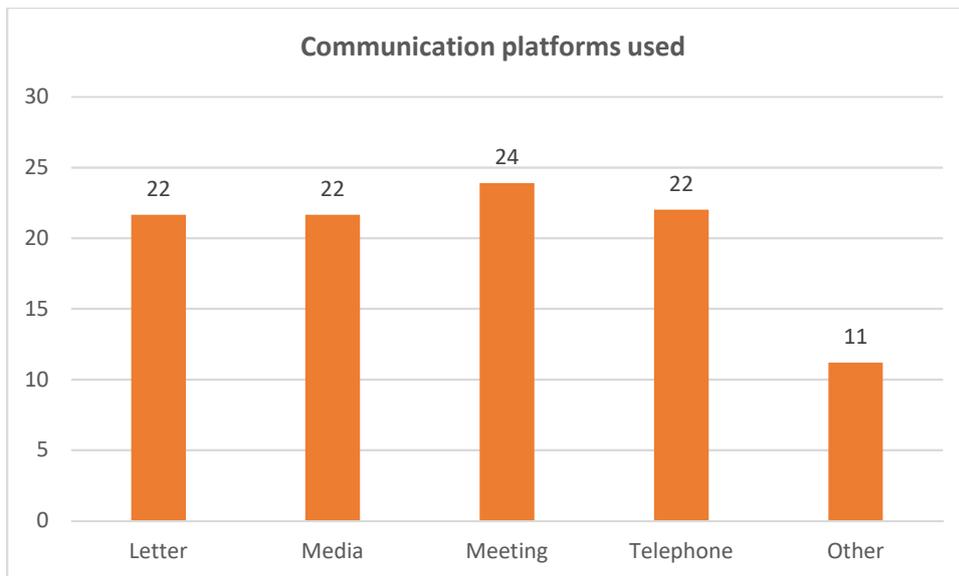
**Figure 8.18 Communication to engage with institutions (%) (N=34)**



Moreover, the external stakeholders were asked to indicate the platforms of communication that the institution uses to communicate with them. Figure 8.19

indicates that the most used platform of communication is meetings (24%), while the rest of the mentioned platforms carry similar weight, 22 percent, except for 11 percent of *other*.

**Figure 8.19 Communication platforms used (%) (N=34)**

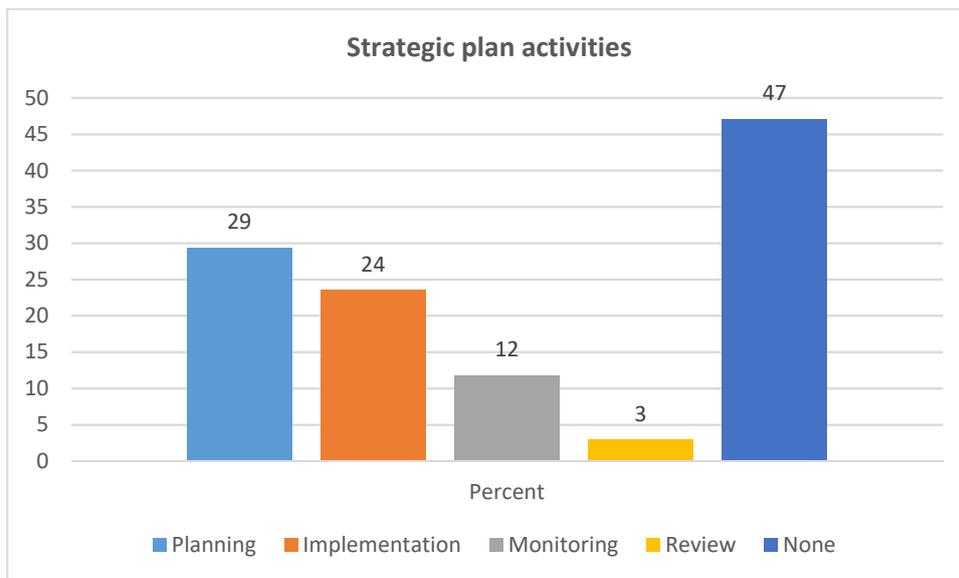


### 8.3.2.2 Research question 2

*What impact does stakeholder engagement have on the implementation of the strategic plan?*

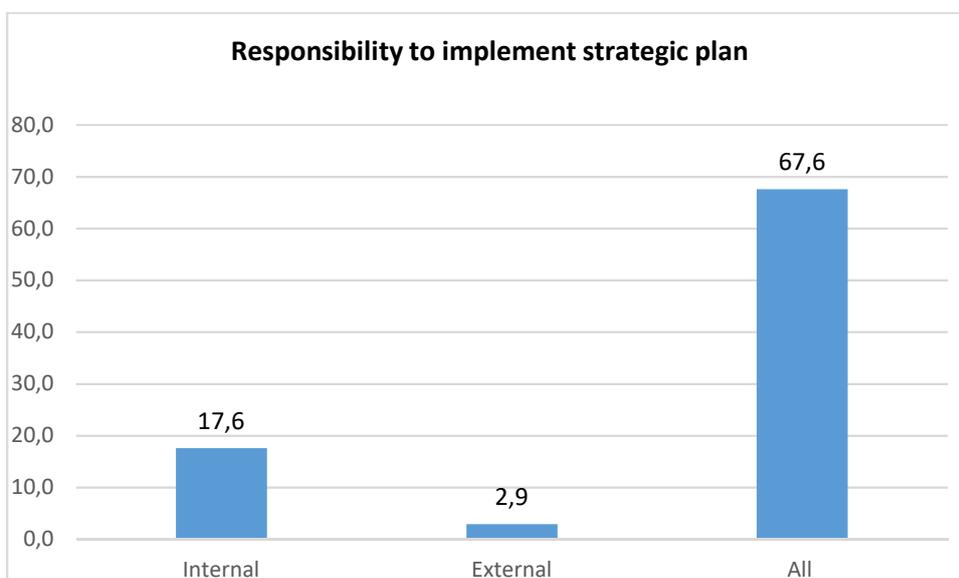
The stakeholders further indicated the strategic activities (Figure 8.20) they have been involved in, namely: planning, implementation, monitoring and review. Respondents were at liberty to select more than one activity. As a result, 47 percent of the respondents were not engaged in any of the activities, while the remaining 53 percent respondents were mostly engaged in the strategic planning process: planning - 29 percent, implementation - 24 percent, monitoring - 12 percent and review - 3 percent.

**Figure 8.20 Strategic plan activities (%) (N=34)**



The view of the external stakeholders on whose responsibility it is to ensure implementation of the strategic plan is indicated in Figure 8.21 below. Just more than two-thirds (67.6%) believe that it is both the internal and external stakeholder's responsibility to ensure implementation of a strategic plan with a further 17.6 percent of respondents thinking it is the internal stakeholders' responsibility, whereas the remaining 2.9 percent think it is the external stakeholders' responsibility.

**Figure 8.21 Responsibility to implement strategic plan (%) (N=34)**

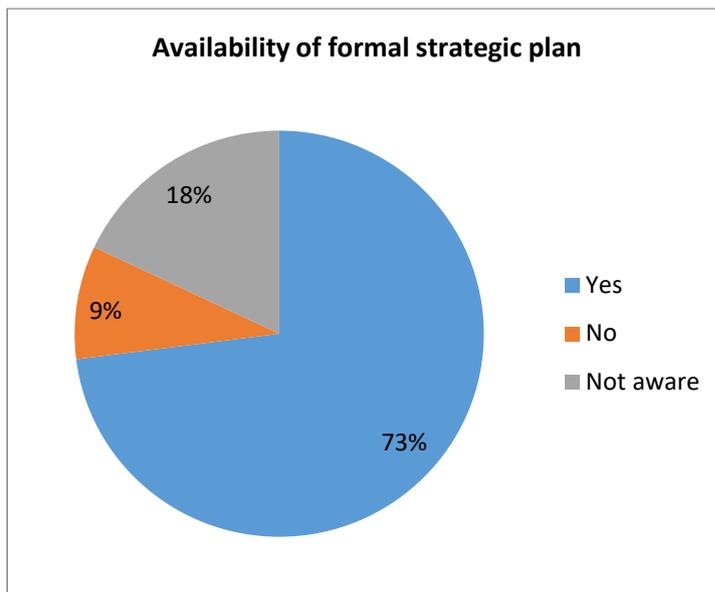


### 8.3.2.3 Research Question 3

*To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) knowledge about the strategic plan and, b) participation in the implementation of the strategic plan?*

External stakeholders were asked if the institution has a formal strategic plan. Figure 8.22 indicates that almost three-quarters of the respondents (73%) responded positively/yes and 9 percent said no, while 18 percent were not aware of a formal strategic plan.

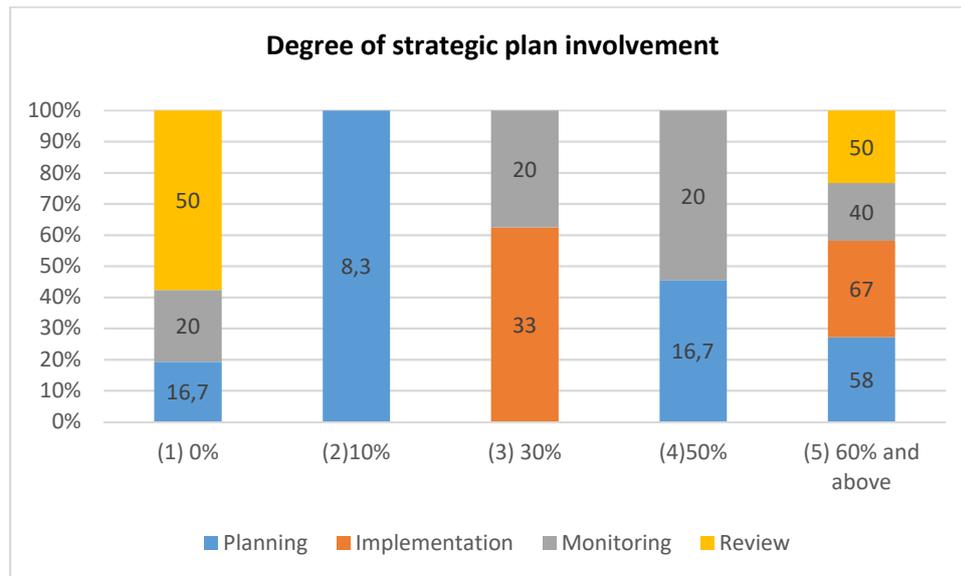
**Figure 8.22 Availability of formal strategic plan (%) (N=34)**



Moreover, the external stakeholders were asked to indicate their degree of involvement in the strategic plan activities (Figure 8.23). In the planning activity 16.7 percent of the respondents never participated, 8.3 percent participated with a 10 percent degree of involvement, 16.7 percent with a degree of involvement of 50 percent and 58 percent with a degree of involvement of 60 percent or more, thereby indicating a high level of involvement of external stakeholders during the planning phase. In the implementation activity 33 percent of the respondents participated with a 30 percent degree of involvement, 67 percent with a degree of involvement of 60 percent and above. In the monitoring activity 40 percent participated with a 60 percent

and higher degree of involvement, 20 percent with a 50 percent degree of involvement, 20 percent with 30 percent, and another 20 percent never participated in the monitoring activity. In the review activity 50 percent never participated, whereas the other 50 percent participated with a 60 percent and higher degree of involvement.

**Figure 8.23 Degree of strategic plan involvement (%) (N=34)**



#### 8.3.2.4 Hypotheses testing - The statistical association between variables

The researcher established if there is a statistical relationship concerning the period the stakeholders have been affiliated to the institutions and a number of variables of interest to the researcher. The researcher wanted to find out if the length of affiliation had an impact in the external stakeholders' engagement with the institutions. The Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was used to establish the possible relationship concerning the period the stakeholders have been affiliated with the institutions and the selected variables. In some instances, small cell sizes can result in invalid Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of more than 20 percent of the cells had expected counts of less than 5 for the cross tabulations. Therefore, the Cramer V was used in these cases. Cramer V is a measurement of strength of association between two nominal variables.

The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was run to establish the statistical association between the length of affiliation of the stakeholders with the institutions and their knowledge about: the existence of a strategic plan; the strategic plan activities they have been involved in; dissemination of information about strategic plan; existence of an office or personnel responsible for communication; reception of communication to engage with the institutions; evaluation of institutions' openness/closedness; decisions made without consultation; institution is strict in communication protocol; practice of one/two-way communication. The results are tabled below (Table 8.3).

**Table 8.3 Chi-square test indicating statistical association between the length of affiliation of stakeholders and other variables**

<b>Cross-tabulation variables</b>	<b>Tested hypotheses</b>	<b>Pearson Chi-square value or Cramer V (where applicable)</b>	<b>Approximate significance (p-value)</b>	<b>Result</b>
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by knowledge about availability of strategic plan (Q3)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and knowledge about availability of strategic plan  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholder and knowledge about availability of strategic plan	7.211	.302	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved (Q4):				
Planning (q4.1)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in planning  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external	1.346	.718	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

	stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in planning			
Implementation (4.2)	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in implementation</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in implementation</p>	3.171	.366	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Monitoring (4.3)	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in monitoring</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders by strategic plan activities involved in monitoring</p>	2.884	.410	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Reviewing (4.4)	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and strategic plan activities involved in reviewing</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and strategic plan activities involved in reviewing</p>	4.138	.247	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and non-	.886	.829	Do not reject the null hypothesis

non-involvement in all the strategic plan activities (4.5)	involvement in all the strategic plan activities			at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by extent of stakeholders' involvement:				
Planning (5.1)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in planning  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in planning	5.264	.811	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Implementation (5.2)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in implementation  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in implementation	3.000	.223	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Monitoring (5.3)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in monitoring  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and extent of stakeholders' involvement in monitoring	8.000	.238	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by dissemination of	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and	4.813	.186	Do not reject the null hypothesis

information to stakeholders (8)	dissemination of information to stakeholders  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and dissemination of information to stakeholders			at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by knowledge of personnel responsible for communication (9)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and knowledge of personnel responsible for communication  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and knowledge of personnel responsible for communication	6.933	.327	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by invitation to communicate with the institution (Q12)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and invitation to communicate with the institution  H <sub>1</sub> There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and invitation to communicate with the institution.	5.048	.168	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by evaluation of the institution's openness/closedness (13)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and evaluation of the institution's openness/closedness  H <sub>1</sub> There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and evaluation of the institution's openness/closedness	9.833	.364	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

Length of affiliation by the platform of communication used to communicate with external stakeholders (Q14)				
(Q14.1) Letters	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of letters to communicate with external stakeholders</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of letters to communicate with external stakeholders</p>	2.431	.488	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
(Q14.2) Media	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of media to communicate with external stakeholders</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of media to communicate with external stakeholders</p>	8.337	.040	Reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
(Q14.3) Meetings	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of meetings to communicate with external stakeholders</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of meetings to communicate with external stakeholders</p>	.985	.805	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance
(Q14.4) Telephones	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of</p>	1.494	.684	Do not reject the

	<p>affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of telephones to communicate with external stakeholders</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the use of telephones to communicate with external stakeholders</p>			<p>null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance</p>
<p>Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by knowledge that decisions are made without consultation with stakeholders (16)</p>	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and knowledge that decisions are made without consultation with stakeholders</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and knowledge that decisions are made without consultation with stakeholders</p>	8.058	.234	<p>Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance</p>
<p>Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by the view that communication is vital in decision-making (Q17)</p>	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the view that communication is vital in decision-making</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the view that communication is vital in decision-making</p>	.892	.827	<p>Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance</p>
<p>Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by belief that the institution is strict in communication protocol (Q18)</p>	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and belief that the institution is strict in communication protocol</p>	4.971	.174	<p>Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance</p>

	H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and belief that the institution is strict in communication protocol			
Length of affiliation of external stakeholders by practice of one/two-way communication (Q19)	H <sub>0</sub> : There is no association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and practice of one/two-way communication  H <sub>1</sub> : There is an association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and practice of one/two-way communication	8.702	.465	Do not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance

### *Interpretation*

According to the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test the p-values in Table 8.3 above show that there is no statistical association between the length of affiliation of the external stakeholders and their knowledge and belief about most of the selected variables. The communication of strategic plan activities is thus similar to all the external stakeholders sampled, regardless of the length of affiliation they have had with the institutions. Nevertheless, there is statistical association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and the institution's use of media to communicate with external stakeholders. Thus 75 percent of the 1-3 years of affiliation; 46.2 percent of the 4-10 years of affiliation; 0 percent of the 11-15 years of affiliation; and 10 percent of the 16 and above years of affiliation of the external stakeholders receive communication through media. Compared to other platforms of communication used by the institutions media seems to take more recognition than letters, meetings and the telephone.

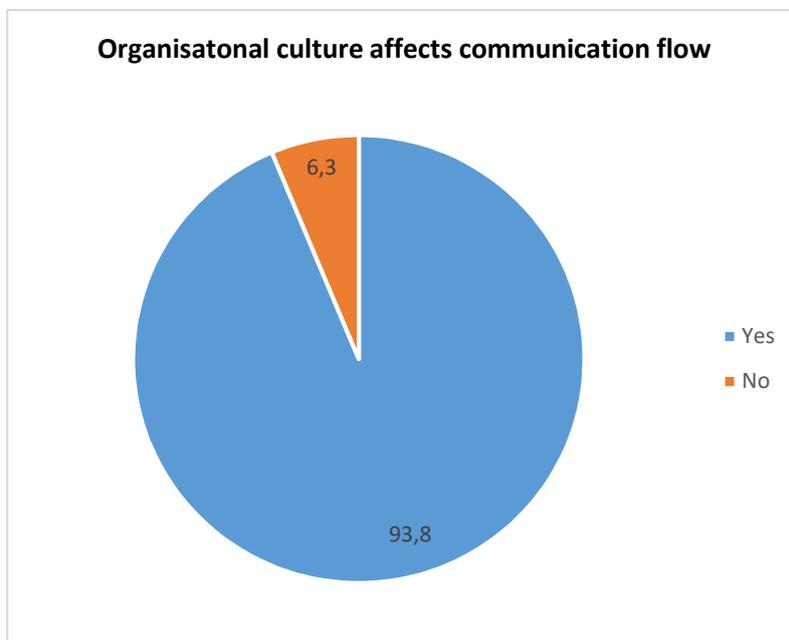
The small sample size of the external stakeholders did influence the results and, in future research, a larger sample should be used to confirm/reject the findings above.

### 8.3.2.5 Research Question 4

*What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?*

When asked if the organisational culture can affect communication within the institution, the overwhelming majority (93.8%) said yes, (Figure 8.24) while only 6.3 percent said *no*.

**Figure 8.24 Organisational culture affects communication flow (%) (N=34)**



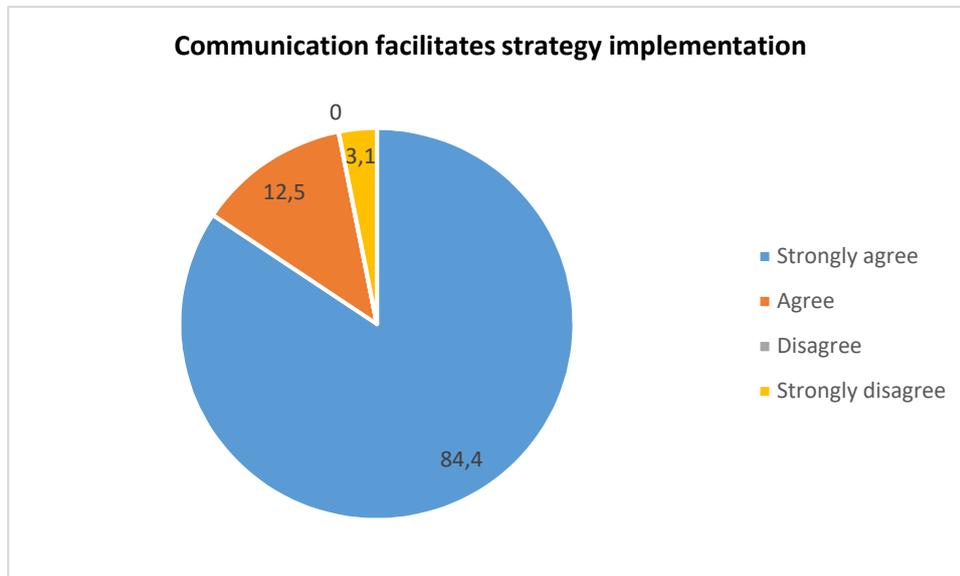
### 8.3.2.6 Research Question 5

*Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?*

External stakeholders had to indicate their level of agreement with regard to whether communication facilitates strategy implementation. Almost all respondents (96.9%) strongly agreed and agreed that communication indeed facilitates strategy

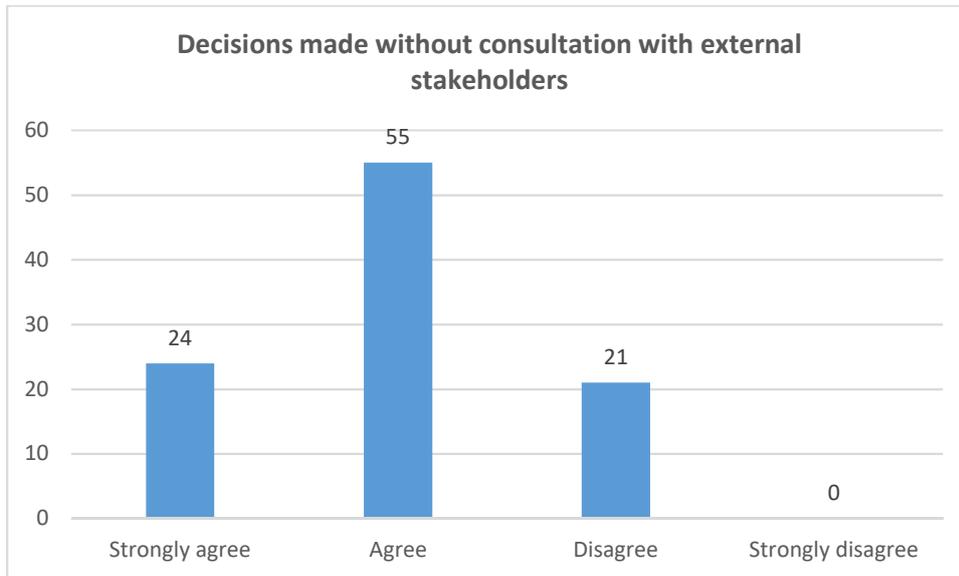
implementation (Figure 8.25) whereas, 12.5 percent and 3.1 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 8.25 Communication facilitates strategy implementation (%) (N=34)**



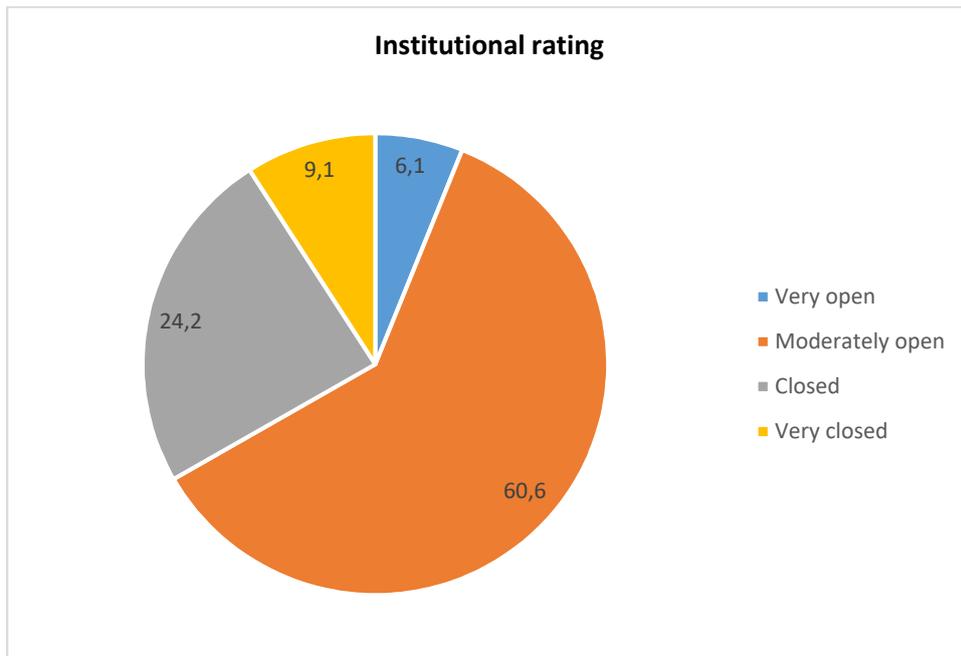
The external stakeholders' opinions were sought to find out if they agree/disagree with the saying that most of the decisions in the institution are made without consulting them. Over three-quarters of the respondents (79%) feel that most of the decisions are made without consultation with them whereas only below a quarter of the respondents feel they are consulted before the decisions can be made.

**Figure 8.26 Decisions made without consultation with the external stakeholders (%) (N=34)**



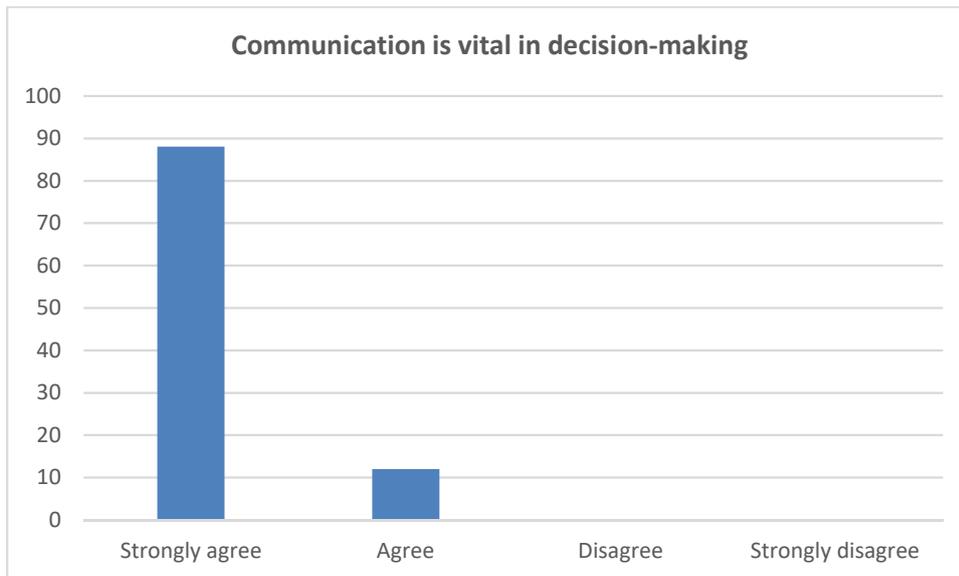
Respondents were asked to rate their institutions of affiliation in terms of an open/closed institution regarding communication flow (Figure 8.27). Open indicated allowance of exchange of information between the stakeholders and management while closed indicated no allowance for two-way communication flow between the stakeholders and the management. Two-thirds (66.7%) believed that their institutions are moderately/very open, while a third (33.3%) believed that their institutions are closed/very closed.

**Figure 8.27 Institutional rating (%) (N=34)**



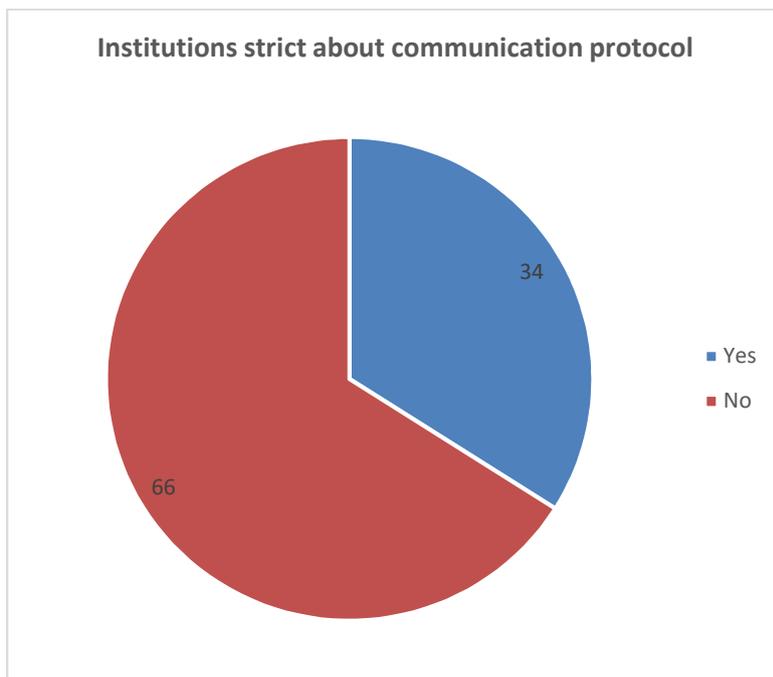
When the external stakeholders were asked if they perceive communication to be vital in the decision-making all the respondents agreed with the statement (Figure 8.28).

**Figure 8.28 Communication is vital in decision-making (%) (N=34)**



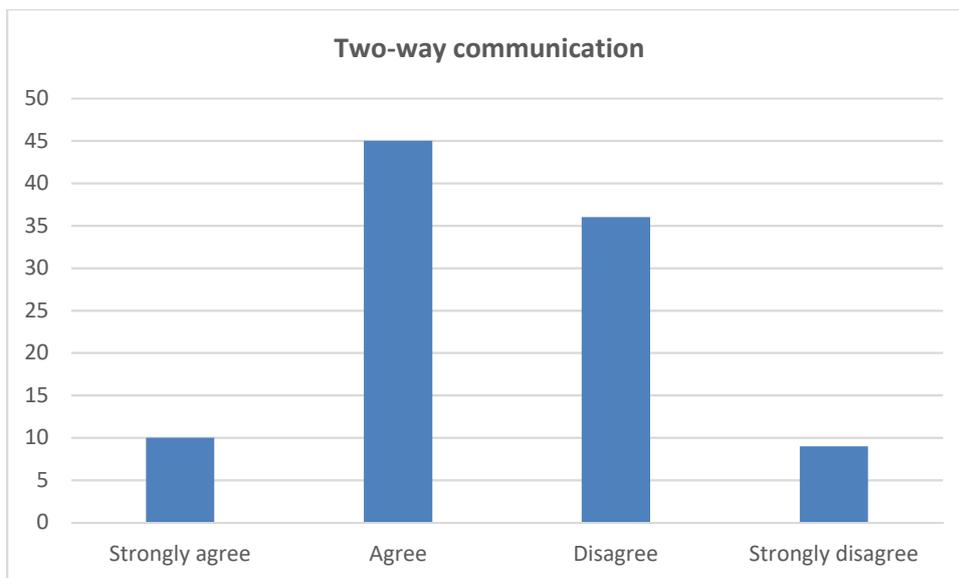
Furthermore, the researcher wanted to identify if the external stakeholders found their institutions of affiliation strict about communication protocol. 66 percent of the respondents feel that the institution is not strict, while 34 percent say it is strict.

**Figure 8.29 Institutions strict about communication protocol (%) (N=34)**



Lastly, the respondents were asked if the institution practises two-way communication between the internal and external stakeholders instead of one-way from the institution management to the external stakeholders. A fairly larger portion of the respondents (55%) feel the institution practises two-way communication, while 45 percent feel the kind of communication practised is one-way.

**Figure 8.30 Two-way communication (%) (N=34)**



#### **8.4 Qualitative strand-results for Research Questions 1 to 5**

In order to address the overarching research question, the researcher further assessed the extent to which communication strategy is used to engage stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan. Content analysis was engaged in order to encode qualitative information obtained from the interviews conducted with the members of senior management, responses to the open-ended questions from the questionnaires, and the strategic plans for IHLs in Lesotho. Coding was conducted to illustrate occurrence, frequency and contextual similarity of the themes and concepts obtained from the interviews and the strategic plans. The level of approach for content analysis of the interviews and strategic plans was made at word-level, key phrases and strings of words determined by Leximancer. Leximancer further clustered concepts that co-occurred into coloured circles that were heat-mapped to indicate their

importance. Nonetheless, the responses to the open-ended questions were manually analysed to categorise words and themes of contextual similarity.

The following section illustrates findings obtained from the interviews held with senior management of the four institutions.

#### 8.4.1 Interviews with senior management.

The researcher used concepts and themes that were automatically generated by Leximancer in combination with user generated concepts. The focus was mainly on the word-like concepts that occurred instead of name-like concepts. The findings indicate words obtained from the interviews, the relationship between the concepts and themes, and the relevance of the concepts to the themes

**Figure 8.31 Concept Map (Topical Network View) interviews.**

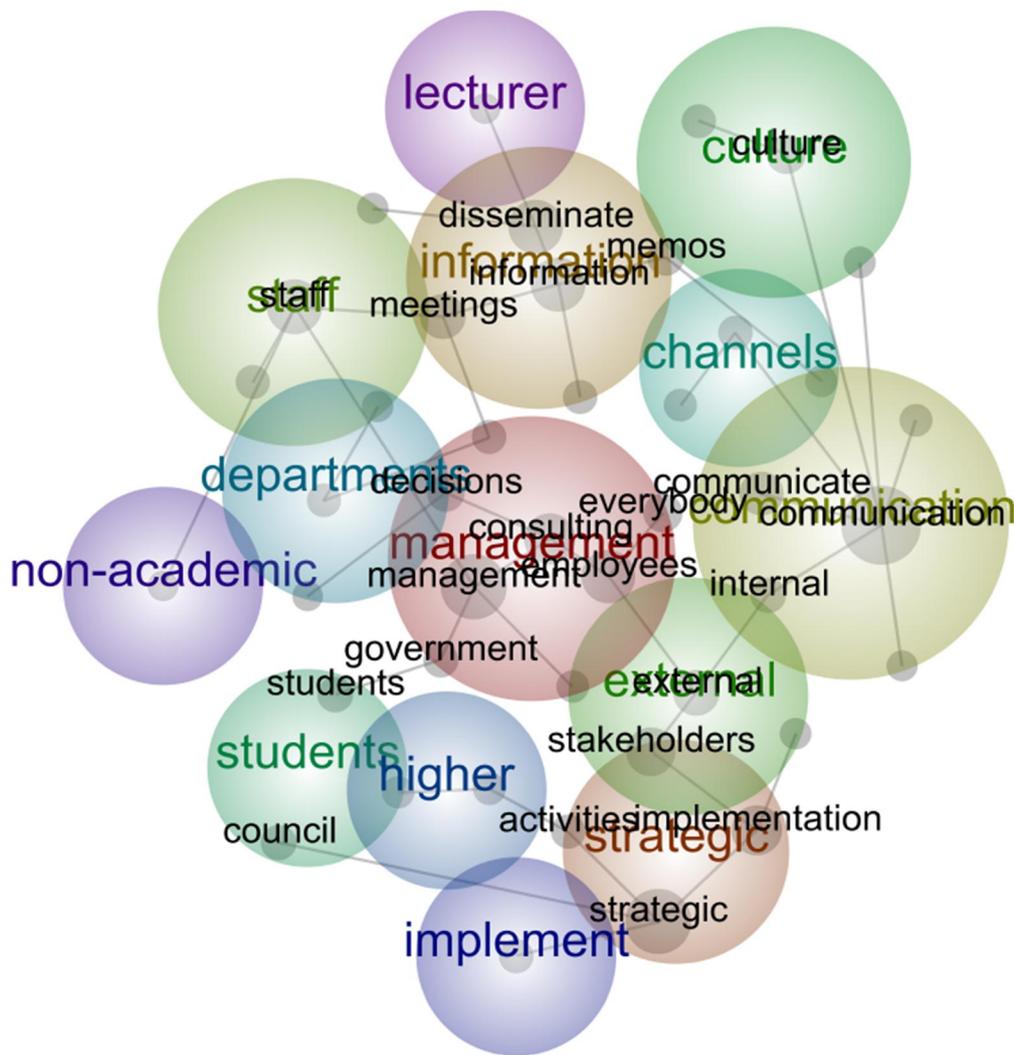


Figure 8.31 is a concept map of the interviews conducted with members of senior management of the institutions under study. The concept map illustrates themes in ranking order from the most to the least co-occurring themes. There were 14 themes, together with the associated concepts identified and are illustrated as follows (Table 8.4).

**Table 8.4 Themes and associated words**

Theme	Colour of circle	Hits	Relevance (%)	Associated words
Communication	Yellow	292	100%	Communication, communicate, internal
Strategic	Pink	223	76%	Strategic, implementation, stakeholders, activities
Management	Red	190	65%	Management, employees, consulting, everybody, decisions, government
Information	Light Brown	123	42%	Information, disseminate, meetings, memos
Staff	Light green	109	37%	Staff
Students	Blue	59	20%	Students, council
Culture	Dark Green	49	17%	Culture
External	Green	38	13%	External
Implement	Purple	21	7%	Implement
Departments	Blue	17	6%	Departments
Platforms	Light Blue	13	4%	Platforms
Higher	Dark Blue	11	4%	Higher
Lecturer	Light Purple	8	3%	Lecturer
Non-academic	Purple	5	2%	Non-academic

*Communication* is the most co-occurring theme, which is associated with *communicate* and *internal*. It co-occurs at the rate of 292 hits (100%) and it is within the yellow circle, which is the most heated circle that illustrates the most important theme in the text. The concepts that surround it indicate that the members of senior management do communicate messages across the institutions. According to the Leximancer synopsis the interviewees believe that communication is very important for decision-making,

Quote:

*Very much so, because without communication, really... if you want people to do anything, you must communicate.*

Quote:

*You know communication is very very very important when it comes to decision-making. I cannot make decision on my own. I believe when you have something in mind, communicate it with other people, get their views on it and find out whether they agree with you.*

Of many quotations, the above two quotations confirm the believe held by members of senior management in IHLs that communication is vital for decision-making and effective implementation of strategic plans.

*Strategic* is the next most co-occurring theme. It co-occurs at the rate of 223 hits (76%) and it is within the pink circle, another colour which is considered warm and demonstrates occurrence of important themes. The theme is associated with concepts such as *implementation*, *stakeholders* and *activities*. One can therefore deduce that members of the institutions' management do engage stakeholders in activities such as implementation of the institutions' strategies.

Quote:

*Everybody has a role because the strategic plan is really the driver to all our activities, saying where do we want to go, let me say for example, the core business is to provide higher education and that we do through the faculties and that means the faculties have a key role in the program development and delivery, but then we have other supporting structure like office of the Registrar and HR.*

Quote:

*The external stakeholders will also be involved especially our ministry, you know we rely on subvention for our operations, ...of course they are going to be needed for sure ...If the stakeholders are not communicated to, or are not aware of what is happening then the implementation will become a problem. But each time activities are done in the institution like..., stakeholders; be it the staff, the students, the external stakeholders need*

*to know what is happening because they will have to give in their input on how to improve services for ....*

Members of the senior management feel obliged to engage internal and external stakeholders in the implementation of their institutional strategic plans. All concepts associated with the theme *strategic (implementation, stakeholders and activities)* are key words in the respondents' responses.

Another theme, *management*, is associated with *employees, consulting, everybody, decisions* and *government*. The theme occurs at the rate of 190 hits (65%) within the red circle. The theme together with its related concepts further confirms that members of senior management do consult with employees, government and everybody else before they make decisions. However, they have indicated that at times when they have to deal with an urgent matter, they have to make hasty decisions without involving employees. Quotations below back-up the above themes to indicate that management engage stakeholders in their decision-making.

Quote:

*Every department has representative in management so expectation is that they report back to staff after every meeting.*

Quote:

*The employees are involved in decision-making. But like I mentioned to you there are times when we have to make quick decisions based on the instructions that we get from the government so in that case we don't have control we just have to act.*

*Information* is the next theme to co-occur in the transcription at the rate of 123 hits (42%) and it is associated with *disseminate, meetings* and *memos*. The map illustrates that management use meetings and memos to disseminate information. From this illustration, one can deduce that the rate of the theme's co-occurrence indicates the minimal rate at which management of the institutions disseminate information. It further indicates that the most used communication platforms are

meetings and memos, even though they are used at a minimal rate. One of the interviewees indicated that the employees read the memos if they contain information of interest to them, otherwise they do not read them through to get the information.

At the lowest rates of the hits, themes appear like *staff* at 109 (37%), *students* 59 (20%), *departments* 17 (6%), *lecturer* 18 (3%), *external* 38 (13%) and *non-academic* 5 (2%). The themes do not have words or concepts associated with them. It can, therefore, be concluded that according to management, information is disseminated to the employees, government and stakeholders as they represent the concepts that are related to management. However, the low rate at which the dissemination of information takes place is concerning.

Additionally, although the themes *communication* and *strategic* above indicate that members of the senior management involve institutional stakeholders in the implementation of strategic plans, it is also of interest to note that union bodies of the university were not represented in the development of strategic plans.

*... two main unions have not been invited when we have retreat inputs, I am not aware of a situation where they were formally invited in their capacity as unions, which says it is an advantage that the academic union has particularly the teaching and research members to an extent that deans of faculties have been very key in the development of the strategic plan and because they are executives at faculty level have come to present it at faculties, we could say the teaching and research staff have been communicated to, are aware, are abreast... and I have heard ...members like my secretary for instance saying but we have not been invited to this strategic plan. One of these non-academic staff at council level says but we have not been approached about this so one sees that there is a little problem with it.*

*Implement* is the key word of the study and yet it co-occurs at 21 (7%) amongst the least important themes, it is not related to any concept. It therefore implies that implementation of the strategic plans has not been of key importance in the communication activities of the institutions.

#### 8.4.2 Strategic plans

Four strategic plans of the four IHLs were uploaded into the Leximancer in order to generate the themes and their related concepts. Content analysis was therefore carried out for the strategic plans. Themes and related concepts were identified as auto-generated by Leximancer and as user-generated. The researcher adjusted the Leximancer settings, unwanted concepts were removed, and concepts that are more relevant were added as user-generated. Words of the same derivative or similar origin were merged as follows:

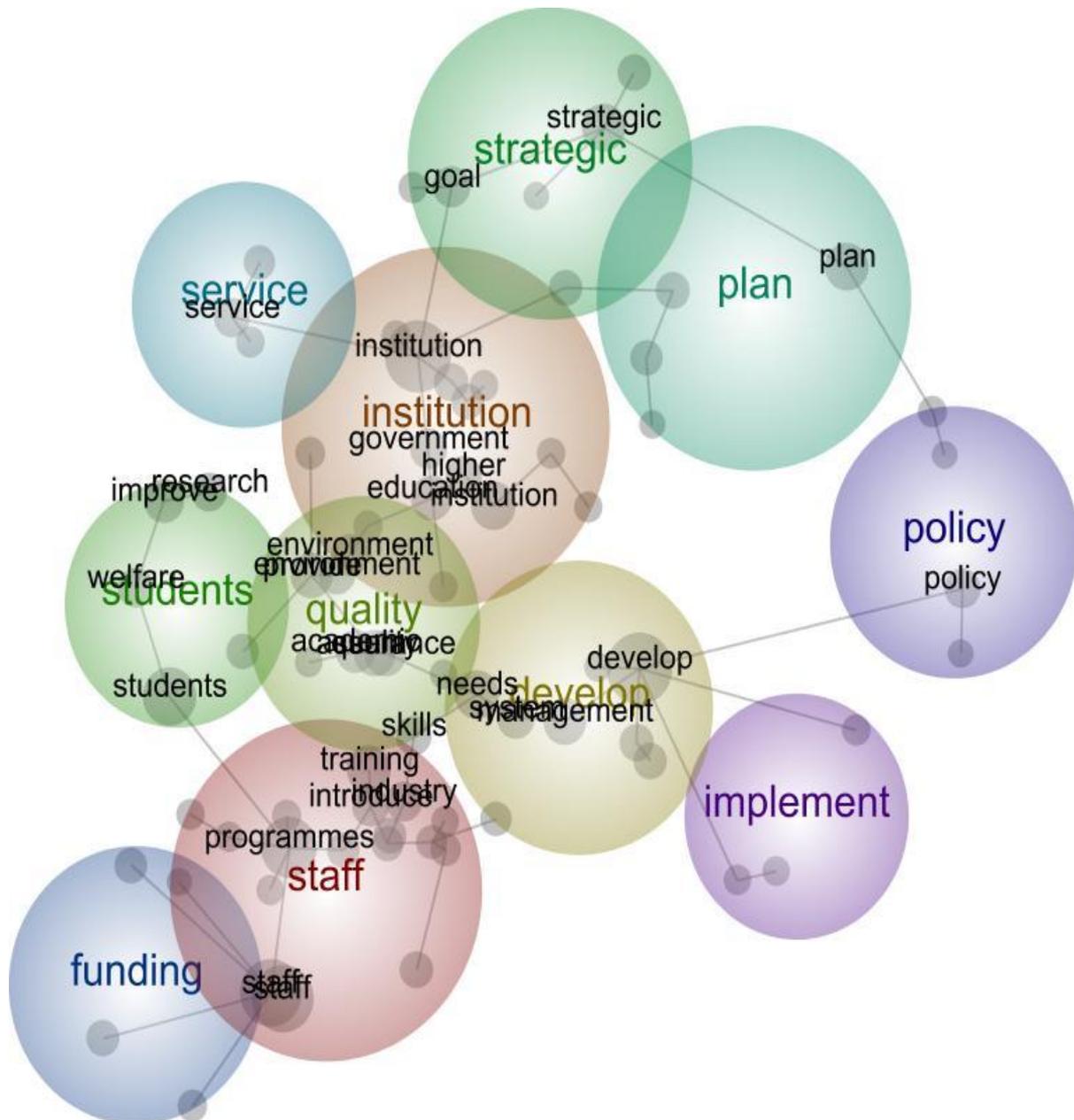
**Table 8.5 Merging of words**

Head Word	Merged words
<b>Implement</b>	Implement, Implementation, implementing
<b>Service</b>	Service, services
<b>Student</b>	Student, students
<b>Develop</b>	Develop, development
<b>Relationship</b>	Relationship, relations
<b>Institution</b>	Institution, university, college, polytechnic, centre, campus, CAS, NUL, LP, LAC

The researcher made use of the auto-generated and user-generated word-like words. Name-like words were excluded, as they were considered irrelevant to the research. The concept map in Figure 8.31 illustrates, in ranking order, the most and the least co-occurring themes and their associated concepts. The researcher chose the topical network view over the social map as the topical network view is more spread out; it is able to demonstrate the direct relationships between concepts and themes. Table 8.6 provides more detailed weights of the themes in the ranking order. A further break

down of the weights is illustrated in Table 8.7 where themes have now been broken down in to related concepts and thus the concepts were listed according to the order of their relevance in the text.

**Figure 8.32 Concept map (topical network view) for strategic plans**



According to the concept map (Figure 8.31), there are ten themes out of which *develop* in the yellow balloon is the most important. Its weight of co-occurrence of 561 hits (100%) as indicated in Table 8.6 is in the biggest grey dot within the yellow balloon in the map. The researcher captured, by default, 33 percent visibility of the concepts, thus the only visible concepts associated with the theme are *develop*, *needs* and *management*, while in actual fact the theme is associated with the two mentioned concepts along with *develop*, *quality*, *assurance*, *system*, *skills*, *performance*, *indicators*, *reference*, *meet*, *culture* and *people* as indicated in Table 8.7. The inference portrayed in this theme is that it is apparent that the institutions' main focus in as far as strategic plans are concerned is the development of the institutions. For instance, as indicated in the summaries extracted from the texts, the institutions aim at forging relationships with industry; identifying development needs of the employees; developing management information systems; quality indicators and measures of performance; and to hold workshops to develop quality indicators.

The second most important theme is *staff* (503 hits - 90%) in the red balloon. It is associated with the following concepts: *staff*, *programmes*, *training*, *introduce*, *industry*, *courses*, *collaboration*, *relationships*, *additional*, *procure*, *entrepreneurship*, *awareness*, *partnerships*, *informal*, *faculty* and *partner* as they appear in both the concept map and Table 8.6. The inferences are that IHLs are mainly composed of the staff who see the achievement of the mission and objectives through. They are the responsible ones who develop and review existing programmes in collaboration with industry; forge relationships with industry; implement training; procure instructional material; organise awareness campaigns of issues related to environment and HIV and AIDS.

*Students* (475 hits - 85%) is the next important theme located within the green balloon. The theme is associated with the concepts *students*, *provide*, *improve*, *academic*, *environment*, *welfare*, *research*, *professional* and *calibre*. The institutions aim to ensure that they provide excellent tuition and a conducive learning environment for improvement of student experience, research, community engagement and administrative purposes; maintain professionalism in all dealings and interactions with clients and partners.

The fourth most co-occurring theme is *institution* (457 hits - 81%) which is associated with *institution, education, government, higher, Lesotho, national, enhance, experience, access, community, information and communication*. In this case, content analysis reveals that the institutions aim to employ innovative strategies including information communication technologies in order to expand access and reduce the cost of higher education; repositioning of the institutions to cater for significant expansion and modernisation of programme offerings to respond to national and regional socio-economic needs and to reclaim a fair market share in local and regional higher education.

*Strategic* (325 hits - 58%) is yet another theme which is associated with *strategic, goal, objectives, financial, agriculture and Lerotholi*. This theme marks the last of the themes that are deemed most important as it has 325 hits and weighs at 58 percent relevance in the text. From the associated concepts it is apparent that the institutions take strategic measures to achieve the set goals and objectives, such as aiming for the promotion of an efficient and effective financial operating environment and improved technological infrastructure; their major focus is based on areas like relevance, access, quality, institutional growth, financial sustainability, effective and efficient management, collaboration and developmental needs.

Additionally, 50 percent and below relevance indicated in Table 8.6 represent the following themes; *plan* (50%), *policy* (41%), *funding* (35%), *service* (23%) and *team* (3%). *Plan* is associated with *plan, resources, human, and engagement*. Institutions aim at embracing and acting in innovative ways with the complete engagement and support of the institutions' council. Furthermore, *policy* is associated with *policy, place, implement, manual, master*. Institutions mean to develop and implement the finance and asset management policy, procedures of the manual policy, ICT policies, and Human Resource policy. The theme *funding* is associated with *funding, facilities, number, and participation*. Institutions are keen to address issues pertaining to inadequate funding and funding strategies, lack of staff development and retention strategies, and workshops, which involved the participation of the Chairman of the Council. *Service* is associated with *service, capacity and delivery*. The concern is about upgrading of programmes and service delivery. *Team* is associated with *team*

and *task*, which only crop up in the appointment of task teams to develop terms of reference.

Table 8.6 displays the quantified concept structures of text obtained in the strategic plans.

**Table 8.6 Quantified concept structures**

Theme	Colour of circle	Hits	%	Associated words
Develop	Yellow	561	100	Develop, needs, management, quality, assurance, system, skills, performance, indicators, reference, meet, culture, people
Staff	Red	503	90	staff, staff, programmes, training, introduce, industry, courses, collaboration, relationships, additional, procure, entrepreneurship, awareness, partnerships, informal, faculty, partner
Students	Green	475	85	students, provide, improve, academic, environment, environment, welfare, research, professional, calibre
Institution	Brown	457	81	institution, institution, education, government, higher, Lesotho, national, enhance, experience, access, community, information, communication
Strategic	Green	325	58	strategic, goal, objectives, financial, agriculture, Lerotholi
Plan	Green	278	50	plan, resources, human, engagement
Policy	Purple	232	41	policy, place, implement, manual, master
Funding	Blue	197	35	funding, facilities, number, participation
Service	Blue	130	23	service, capacity, delivery

Team		19	3	team, task
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The following concept tab indicates the frequency with which the word-concepts appear in the text.

**Table 8.7 Concepts tab**

Word-Like concepts	Count	Relevance
develop	280	100%
institution	274	98%
staff	234	84%
plan	188	67%
programmes	182	65%
students	182	65%
strategic	153	55%
policy	130	46%
improve	118	42%
institution	109	39%
management	104	37%
training	99	35%
needs	98	35%
funding	98	35%
goal	89	32%
system	82	29%
service	80	29%
provide	79	28%
research	79	28%
objectives	79	28%
welfare	77	28%
government	74	26%
education	73	26%
place	72	26%
resources	70	25%
quality	69	25%
financial	67	24%
assurance	66	24%
academic	61	22%
environment	61	22%
facilities	61	22%
capacity	59	21%
performance	57	20%
courses	55	20%

indicators	53	19%
higher	51	18%
Lesotho	51	18%
number	51	18%
human	50	18%
partnerships environment	49	18%
skills	49	18%
professional	48	17%
introduce	45	16%
industry	43	15%
national	40	14%
implement	37	13%
agriculture	35	12%
collaboration	28	10%
	26	09%
information	26	09%
enhance	25	09%
delivery	24	09%
access	23	08%
community	23	08%
communication	23	08%
reference	22	08%
additional	19	07%
team	19	07%
master	19	07%
entrepreneurship	18	06%
meet	18	06%
task	18	06%
procure	17	06%
awareness	16	06%
faculty	16	06%
experience	14	05%
culture	14	05%
partner	13	05%

informal	12	04%
people	12	04%
calibre	11	04%
manual	11	04%
Leretholi	10	04%
engagement	9	03%
participation	5	02%

A further step was taken to address the research question “*To what extent do IHLs in Lesotho utilise communication strategy to engage stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy?*” The four open-ended questions from the internal and external stakeholders’ questionnaires were manually analysed. The researcher categorised words and phrases of contextual similarity. Below is the discussion of the open-ended questions based on the related research questions.

#### 8.4.3 Open-ended questions

The stakeholders were given opportunities to substantiate the answers they had given in response to some of the closed-ended questions. The responses are categorised and discussed below.

##### 8.4.3.1 *Research Question 1*

*How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?*

In an attempt to address the research question about communication strategies used to engage the stakeholders for the successful implementation of strategic plans, the respondents were asked if there are any, other than those listed, platforms of communication used by their institution. Emails and intranet, notice boards, workshops and seminars, congregation meetings, gossip and SMSs were considered some of the platforms that are used in communication. The majority of the respondents did not attempt to answer the question, hence the short list of the platforms, in Table 8.8:

**Table 8.8 More communication platforms (N=17)**

<b>Platforms</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
<b>Emails/intranet</b>	8
<b>Notice boards</b>	3
<b>Workshops and seminars</b>	2
<b>Congregation meetings</b>	2
<b>Gossip</b>	1
<b>SMS</b>	1
<b>Total number of responses</b>	17/237

A further question was asked to the external stakeholders to specify more platforms of communication that the institution uses to communicate with them if they had answered *other* in the preceding question. The response rate was very low as only five attempts were received. The respondents have suggested the use of email, SMS, face-to-face and never (it is unclear what 'never' means).

#### 8.4.3.2 Research Question 4

*What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?*

In order to address the research question pertaining to the factors that affect communication strategy the respondents were asked if they think organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution. Both the internal and external stakeholders were to respond yes/no to the question and then specify their answers. Their open-ended responses were analysed for their content in order to check the frequency of concepts. The concepts were categorised into codes derived from the responses.

**Table 8.9 Categorisation of factors influencing communication**

Negative Effect		Positive effect		Positive and negative		Other	
Categories	Freq. % (N=87)	Categories	Freq. (N=11)	Categories	Freq. (N=13)	Categories	Freq. (N=39)
Alumni/ long serving employees /factions	49	Enhances communication	11	Either improves or disengages communication	13	Irrelevant answers	39
Non communicating/engaging management	20						
Appropriate platforms of communication/structures	20						
Top-down communication	5						
Nature of organisational culture	3						
Organisational culture alignment with communication	3						
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>39</b>
Answered NO 13							

For the internal stakeholders the first categorisation was based on the positive and negative impact the culture has on the flow of communication. Then further categorisation was derived from the most frequent themes, such as *alumni-employees or employees with long term service, top-down communication, non-communicating / engaging management, appropriate platforms of communication / structures, factions,*

*organisational culture alignment with communication, nature of organisational culture, and other* which represents responses that did not address the question.

Table 8.9 indicates that the most dominant effect of organisational culture on communication is negative. About 87 of respondents see organisational culture potentially impacting negatively on communication. The negative impact is seen through a number of factors: firstly, almost half of the respondents (49%) feel that employees, who have served the institutions long-term, either because they happen to be alumni, or have served for a long time, pass on a culture, which negatively affects communication, *“A large percentage of employees in the institution are the alumni, they thus have the old culture of how the institution used to be run.”*

They further argue that such employees are resistant to change, *“long-time serving members sometimes are resistant to changes.”* They are not open to new platforms of communication. They do not want to change the old methods of communication, such as memos on notice boards and use new ways such as sending and receiving email messages. Newly employed staff propose new and creative ideas, but the long-serving staff will not accept them. Employees are not free to air their views for fear of victimisation, as there are factions that are politically or culturally influenced. Again, the respondents say that there is a negative attitude between the employees and management, which subsequently affects flow of information (Addendum 5 and 6 on CD-ROM).

The second cultural factor that influences flow of communication negatively is the non-communication or non-engagement of management. Responses obtained in this regard indicate that management disregard views from the employees and do not or rarely engage employees in meaningful discussions. Withholding information from the employees seems to be a culture of management; if they do communicate, it is to other members of staff or it is delayed communication. In addition, management has a tendency of imposing decisions on employees.

Thirdly, 20% of the respondents feel that institutions use inappropriate platforms of communication. Clear, mandatory and regular platforms of communication are not used to interact with employees across all campuses of an institution and stakeholders. Interpreting culture remains a challenge in the institutions hence the employees rely on word of mouth or grapevine more than on the official platforms. To communicate is not a culture in the institutions; and it is not easy for employees to work together to achieve the goals and objectives.

The respondents further argue that institutions have adopted a culture of top-down communication, which is used to inform and direct employees. The nature of the culture, which they say is toxic, influences communication flow. The culture is not a working culture; hence, employees are negative about everything disseminated by the management. Employees end up demoralised, as they do not feel part of the institution when they are not engaged in decision-making. Lastly, the organisational culture does not align with plans and goals and therefore it is difficult for communication to flow.

The data was further categorised into positive or negative effects of organisational culture on communication as shown in Table 8.10. A total of 13 of the respondents feel that organisational culture can affect communication either positively or negatively. Depending on the prevalent organisational culture, it can improve or disengage communication; or enhance or hamper communication.

Again, some respondents (13) feel that organisational culture does not have any effect on communication because employees are guided by rules and not communication; they know their roles; they are professionals who know how to handle work-related matters, hence culture cannot impact communication.

The open-ended questions from the external stakeholders' questionnaires were put into manual analysis with the similar purpose of addressing the research question "*What factors influence communication strategy in IHLs in Lesotho?*"

From the external stakeholders' points of view, organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution either in a positive or negative way. Respondents view culture as a possible contributing factor towards the enhancement of communication and smooth running of the institution if its culture is to communicate information to the employees. There wasn't any categorisation of the responses as there were only three positive responses out of 24 posed against the effect of organisational culture on communication.

On the other hand, the external stakeholders have a feeling that organisational culture can negatively affect the flow of communication in the institution based on the following categories (Table 8.10). Firstly, 19 percent of the respondents feel that communication flow is affected adversely by culture because of the old habits inherent in the long-term employees. The old employees influence the new employees into adopting the culture and it is therefore very difficult to uproot the existing culture to suit implementation of new ideas.

Secondly, the respondents (10%) find it easy for culture to affect communication negatively as their institution of affiliation has instilled in both the employees and management that communication has to emanate from the management downwards to the employees. Once more, 19% of the respondents came to the realisation that there is a culture of secrecy within management. Most issues are kept confidential from the employees, and employees are not given a chance to share ideas with the management.

A total of 24 percent of the respondents provided responses which could not be categorised, they did not have a common variable to be classified under, hence the category *other*. If organisational culture is not well institutionalised it affects the flow of communication; again, culture can affect the communication flow because it is through culture that the organisation has to strive for the improvement of the institutions. Lastly, it seemed some (29%) of the respondents did not quite understand what the questions required and their answers were treated as missing data.

**Table 8.10 Effect of organisational culture on communication (%) N=24**

Categories	Frequency
Old habits	19
Top-down communication	10
Secrecy	19
Misunderstandings	29

#### 8.4.3.3 *Research Question 5*

*Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?*

In the last, but not the least, research question the researcher attempts to propose a communication strategy implementation framework for the institutions to put in place in order to enhance implementation of strategic plans. To establish the implementation framework, the respondents were asked to elaborate why they consider their institutions to be practising either one or two-way communication, and to suggest ways to improve communication in the institutions.

##### *Two-way communication*

The respondents were asked to substantiate their choice of answer where they were to agree or disagree that their institution practises a two-way communication process between the management and employees instead of a one-way communication from the management to the employees (Question 20/21). Table 8.11 illustrates the frequency of the established categories.

The respondents who agreed with the statement indicated that two-way communication is practised in a number of ways. The most dominant is where management convene different forms of meetings such as monthly meetings, congregation, faculty and departmental meetings in order to share information with every employee. It is during these meetings that employees are allowed to air their views; employees' opinions are asked before management finalise their decisions; and employees participate in compiling budgets. Employees are asked beforehand to propose agenda items to be discussed during these meetings.

Apart from meetings, both management and employees use other platforms of communication to interact. The employees have union representatives who disseminate information to them. Through their unions employees are able to maintain the two-way communication. Another way of applying two-way communication is through the deans who sit in at senior management meetings so that they can mediate between senior management and employees. The heads of department also play a pivotal role in the dissemination of information from both management and employees' perspective. Besides the platforms discussed, all important information is communicated through memos, intranet and notice boards.

Although the respondents in this category agreed that their institution practises two-way communication, they have somehow contradicted this as they have substantiated their choice by mentioning that they only communicate through their immediate supervisors or if they happen to be members of the Senate or happen to acquaint with members of the Senate or management. Management invites them to meetings with their own agenda; management makes decisions on their own and pass orders down to the employees.

**Table 8.11 Two-way communication (%) (N=127)**

Two-way communication indicators	Frequency %
<b>Meetings</b>	34
<b>Employee representation</b>	44
<b>Contradictions</b>	13
<b>Irrelevant response</b>	9
Total of respondents	<b>127/209 (61%)</b>

The second category, disagree/strongly disagree (one-way communication) was sub-categorised into decision-making, downwards communication, non-communicating management and contradictions as indicated in Table 8.12. 54 percent of the respondents feel that management do not consult them for decision-making. They indicate that management makes most decisions without seeking input from the employees and these decisions cannot be disputed. The decisions related to academic issues, such as the duration of the exams are normally made by the management without consulting the concerned lecturers. The management formulates strategic plans and policies without employees' inputs and they are implemented without any consultation. Even if the employees were to make decisions, the management never considers them.

The respondents further indicate that the decisions are imposed on them. This poses clear signs of downwards communication as indicated by 30 percent of the respondents. There are not clear communication platforms that enforce upward communication; they get instructions and announcements from above.

In addition to these, 5 percent of the respondents feel that there is actually no communication from the management. The argument here is that changes to be implemented are not communicated, they just see things happen. Lastly, the researcher noticed a pattern of contradiction or misunderstanding of the questions

where respondents are supposed to give examples of why they see communication to be one-way. They mention points such as suggestions from the employees are incorporated into the institutional goals; inappropriate communication platforms are used to disseminate information.

**Table 8.12 One-way communication (%) (N=82)**

One-way communication indicators	Frequency %
<b>Decision-making</b>	54
<b>Downwards communication</b>	30
<b>Non-communicating management</b>	5
<b>Contradictions</b>	11
Total of respondents	<b>82/209 (39%)</b>

The general picture obtained from this question is that a relatively larger percentage (61%) of internal stakeholders consider their institution to be practising a two-way process of communication, whereas 39 percent of respondents see communication to be one-way, which raises a concern why such a large number cannot identify two-way communication.

The external stakeholders were asked to justify their reasons for strongly/agreeing or strongly/disagreeing with the statement that their institution of affiliation practises a two-way communication process between themselves and the internal stakeholders. Nine out of 21 (43%) respondents who justified their answers for agreeing and strongly agreeing, indicated that their institutions practise two-way communication because the institutions hold frequent meetings with the stakeholders and they always get chances to air their concerns. They receive feedback for their communication with the institutions and get feedback in the same platform as the original message.

On the contrary 12, (57%) of the respondents feel that the institutions do not communicate with external stakeholders, although one of them mentioned that they only hear information over the radio, which could be a positive thing to do, the rest differ. They argue that it is a one-way communication as there are no other means of communicating with the external stakeholders. The institutions do not involve the external stakeholders in neither the decision-making nor the planning process.

Therefore, respondents' input was sought after in order to get their views about the improvement of the communication in their institutions. The responses were coded and categorised into 14 categories. Since this was an open-ended question, each respondent was free to give as much input as they wished. Table 8.13 illustrates the categories and the frequencies in which the themes occurred.

**Table 8.13 Ways to improve communication (%) N=291**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
<b>More communication platforms</b>	39
<b>Regular interaction</b>	13
<b>Inclusive communication</b>	12
<b>Two-way communication</b>	7
<b>Consult before making decisions</b>	6
<b>Access to information</b>	4
<b>Feedback from management</b>	4
<b>Open system</b>	4
<b>Clear communication strategies</b>	3
<b>Honesty and trust</b>	2
<b>Establish communication department/policy</b>	2
<b>Protocol observation</b>	2
<b>Transparency</b>	1

The largest percentage (39%) of the respondents feel that a change in the communication platforms can improve communication within the institutions. They believe that over and above the memorandums, which seem to be the most dominating platforms of communication, platforms such as social media, intranet, university portals, workshops and discussion groups should be incorporated as platforms in communication. Only 13 percent of the respondents believe that regular interaction between management and employees will improve communication. During the actual data collection, the frequency at which the meetings took place was very low; hence, they suggest that there should be more departmental seminars or regular discussion forums. Such forums will encourage employees to express their views and inputs to the management.

The current internet situation needs to be upgraded in order to allow every employee access to information that is disseminated through information technology (IT). Developments in IT will enhance interaction between management and employees. This can also enhance a two-way communication which the respondents (7%) feel is vital for effective communication. They believe that two-way communication will ensure that management updates the employees and that the employees are accommodated in decision-making as indicated by (6%) respondents, hence the employees will belief in the goals and objectives of the institution and commit to their implementation. It is again through these forums that 4 percent of the respondents believe that management will provide feedback to the employees.

It is in the interest of the 4 percent of the respondents that their institution practises an open-door policy, because it facilitates sharing of ideas. The respondents (3%) further believe that institutions must establish a clear communication strategy that will guide the prescribed protocol and inform the formulation of the communication policy. In addition, 2 percent of the respondents feel that an establishment of an office responsible for institutional communication and communication policy; managements'

efforts to gain trust from employees; and encouraging employees to follow protocol; can all contribute to the improvement of communication in the institutions. A few respondents (1%) feel that transparency and involvement of the students in meetings can improve communication.

Lastly, the external stakeholders' opinions were welcomed for the improvement of communication in their institutions of affiliation. A total of 56 percent of the respondents suggested the following as additional platforms of communication: up-to-date website, social media, discussion platforms, press releases, appropriate use of memos, weekly newspaper, market themselves at social events, a radio station for the institution that is available countrywide, meetings, intranet, emails, and pigeon holes.

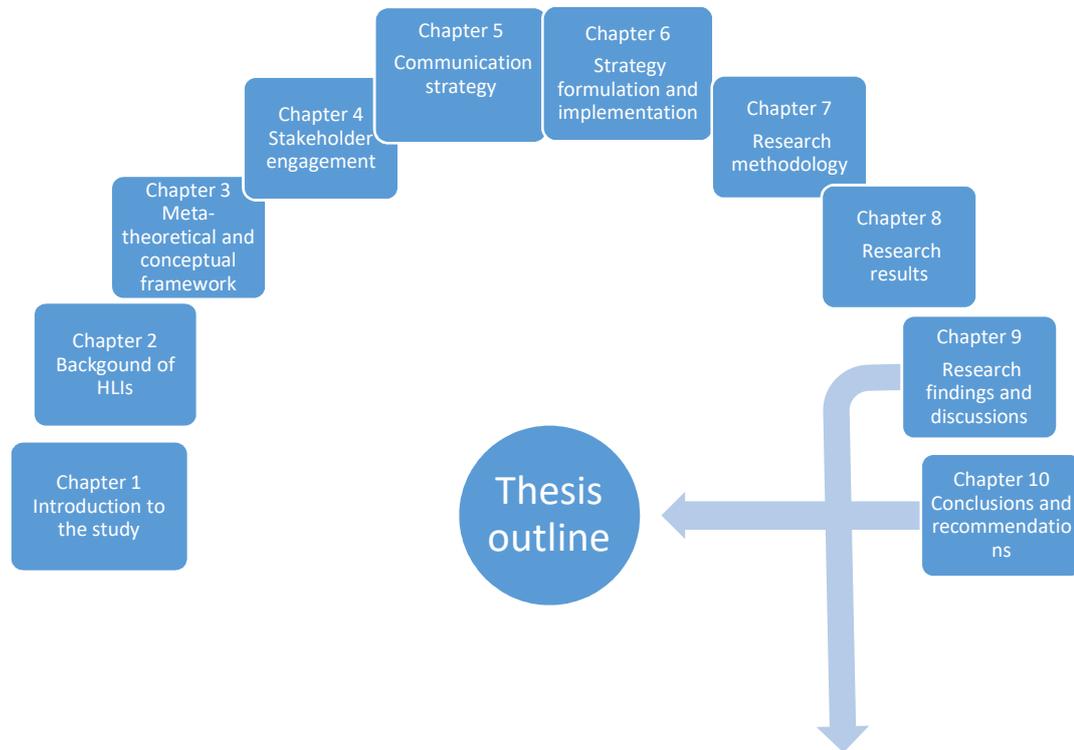
A further 7 percent of the respondents suggested that there should be regular and two-way interaction between the institutions and the external stakeholders. Stakeholders should always be involved in the decision-making process and the annual policing plans. The alumni and current students can be utilised as an effective platform to reach the public and their input in the decisions of the institutions can be of great value. An additional 5 percent of the respondents suggest the establishment of a Communication Management/Communication Office, which will deal specifically with the issues related to internal and external communication. They (20%) also find it vital that the institutions relax communication protocol a little, as it usually delays implementation in instances such as where the external stakeholder asks to meet with a member of management and it takes too long for personnel to invite the stakeholder.

**Table 8.14 External stakeholders' ways to improve communication (%) N=41**

Categories	Frequencies
More platforms of communication	56
Regular interaction	7
Involve stakeholders (alumni)	7
Flexible communication protocol	20
Two-way communication	5
PR/Communication office	5

To conclude, the researcher used the mixed-method research of collecting data to collect information from the internal and external stakeholders. She conducted the interviews with the members of senior management, distributed the questionnaires to the stakeholders of the institutions, and executed the content analysis of the strategic plans of the four institutions under study. The results were illustrated in the form of tables and figures, as well as the descriptions of the results. The aim of the researcher was to triangulate the findings of the research; therefore, Chapter nine outlines a thorough discussion of research findings.

## Chapter 9 Findings and discussion of the findings



- Research Question 1 findings and discussions
- Research Question 2 findings and discussions
- Research Question 3 findings and discussions
- Research Question 4 findings and discussions
- Research Question 5 findings and discussions

### 9.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, the research questions are methodically answered through the analysis of the data. The discussion of the findings is aligned with the research questions guided by the theory as discussed in Chapters Three to Six. Findings obtained from quantitative and qualitative strands are merged to discuss and triangulate the research findings.

## 9.2 Research Question 1:

*How do the IHLs in Lesotho disseminate general information between the institution and its stakeholders?*

The process of strategy implementation involves communication, interpretation, adoption and performance of strategic plans (Cronjé, 2005:116) and thus the institutions base themselves on the specific strategies in order to align their leadership, culture, structures, reward systems and allocation of resources. In his models, Lewis (2011:188) suggests that the implementers of communication strategy must take note of the fact that some employees may not mind receiving either positive or negative information, while some prefer balanced information since it poses significant performance. In some cases, the implementers choose to use a dissemination focus as opposed to the input focus to distribute information. Although the implementers have to decide if they should invite the stakeholders to participate or are, alternatively sensitised to make decisions (Lewis, 2011:188), it would be beneficial for stakeholders to participate as this reduces resistance, but enhances compliance with change initiatives. The implementers also need to decide if they should disseminate customised information to specific stakeholders or if they should just follow the blanket strategy, where they send out messages repeatedly to all groups of stakeholders.

Information dissemination does not only entail information transmission between the institutions and the stakeholders, but also requires communication competence. Institutions must be able to analyse their tasks, situations and encourage stakeholder interaction to influence suitable communication behaviour (Jablin & Sias, 2001:820). The institution must portray its potential to effectively communicate its goals and objectives with the stakeholders to enhance the excellent performance of an institution. Individual employees, functional units, individual companies and the institution have to align themselves with the commonly shared strategic goals. Institutions must have competent institutional communicators whose ability, creativity and commitment are critical to the institution's excellence (Puth, 2002:202).

To communicate with the stakeholders, the institutions can formally communicate institutional policies, notices of changes in operating procedures and instructions; or informally communicate through the grapevine or phone calls (Steyn & Puth, 200:41-45). Institutions use, among others, electronic means such as social networks, smartphones, SMSs; and face-to-face transmission such as in meetings and hearings; as well as written messages such as memos and letters. These platforms of communication enable communication to flow downward from the managers to the employees (stakeholders); upward from the stakeholders to the managers; or horizontally between the departments. Institutions further interact with external stakeholders through newsletters, annual reports, advertising, goodwill speeches, or notices of corporate sponsorship. However, it is important for institutions to use the right and effective platforms for specific messages depending on the type of message.

In support of the above argument, the systems theory attests that the process of communication should be put in place effectively. Elements of communication should be spelt out clearly; namely the communicator, message, platform, recipient, and feedback. The institution takes in materials and human resources (input), processes materials and resources (throughput), and yields a finished product (output) to the larger environment. Along with input, throughput, and output, the ideal system should have a self-corrective mechanism (management) whereby feedback or output from the environment can be processed into adaptation of throughput and potentially, output. In this theory, the multiple action courses should be taken into account in order to achieve their goal, as attested by the law of equifinality (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:115).

Moreover, systems are self-regulated and controlled. They are goal-oriented and regulate their behaviour to achieve certain aims. When they are trying to achieve their aims, they should at the same time try to strike a balance, homeostasis. If a system cannot sense imbalance, it will fall apart. It should always be alert for any deviations and changes that might occur so that it maintains itself (Littlejohn, 2002:29).

According to the questionnaire research results (Chapter Eight), amongst all the communication activities that take place within the IHLs in Lesotho, both internal and external stakeholders rarely receive information specific to the strategic plans. They do receive information from management but it is hardly specified if it is related to the strategic plan activities (Figure 8.1 and 8.16). Moreover, a significant number of the internal stakeholders does not receive information pertaining to how to perform in their jobs, while a larger portion of the external stakeholders receive information to engage with the institutions. However, the institutions do not clearly state the purpose of the information disseminated to the stakeholders as indicated in the questionnaires.

In Leximancer results of senior management interviews the concept map (Figure 8.31) and the table (Table 8.4) show the most co-occurring word *communication* to illustrate that communication does take place, but the associated concepts do not include strategic plan to indicate if communication is specifically related to the activities of the strategic plan. Whereas, Leximancer analysis of the strategic plans (Figure 8.32 and Table 8.5) depicts the theme *institution* being associated with the concepts *information* and *communication*. The institutions strive to make use of the information communication technologies to disseminate messages. Therefore, the findings obtained from the questionnaires and thematic analysis of the interviews and the strategic plans reveal that information is disseminated to the stakeholders, although it is never directly specified to the strategic plans.

According to the systems theory it is the institution's responsibility to see to it that, while they try to achieve their goals and objectives they should at the same time try to strike a balance between themselves and the stakeholders in order to avoid falling apart. Institutions have ways of treating the internal stakeholders and dealing with the external stakeholders (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:17). The implication here is that institutions must communicate specific information to the stakeholders, since they all have a common interest to achieve the goals and objectives of the institutions.

The results further revealed that although a larger percentage of the respondents is aware that the office of the registrar is responsible for both internal and external communication, still a significantly large number is not aware of such an office. To add to this, organograms of Lerotholi Polytechnic, Centre for Accounting Studies and Lesotho Agricultural College do not indicate a presence of a Public Relations or Communication Management office. National University of Lesotho is the only institution whose organogram indicates the presence of Public Affairs and Industrial Relations. On the other hand, thematic analysis of the interviews with senior management and strategic plans reveals good intentions of the institutions to communicate with the stakeholders, but does not mention the office or personnel responsible for communication. The researcher, therefore, relies on quantitative analysis of the questionnaires and the institutional structures that three institutions have the office of the registrar responsible for communication activities. Communication departments that exist in the institutions may raise a concern as to whether their personnel have the expertise to be involved in the strategic planning/implementation. In this case, they are held liable for the failure of the successful implementation of the strategy. Excellent institutions engage their communication departments in their decision-making (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:10).

The institutions must note that by employing communication professionals they stand to gain more than the running costs of such departments. Communication departments identify strategic stakeholders and maintain long-term relationships with the institutions and the stakeholders. The relationships become viable when the institutions consider the legitimacy of the public, listen to their concerns, and address the negative concerns the institutions may have about the public. Therefore, excellent institutions avoid assimilating the function of the communication department into other managerial departments other than communication (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:35).

Amongst the platforms of communication such as letters, internet, telephones, social/media, discussion forums and other platforms, the institutions basically use memorandums (written communication) for internal stakeholders, and meetings (face-to-face communication) for both internal and external stakeholders to disseminate information. In addition, as identified in the Leximancer concept map of interviews with

senior management (Figure 8.31 and Table 8.4), nearly 50 percent indicated information as another frequently co-occurring theme. It is associated with concepts *disseminate*, *meetings* and *memos*. This supports the finding that the institutions predominantly utilise meetings and memorandums to disseminate information. Nonetheless, the strategic plan thematic analysis (Figure 8.32 and Table 8.5) does not capture the platforms of communication used to communicate goals and objectives to the stakeholders.

The research further involved a test of hypotheses assumed by the researcher regarding type of staff and length of affiliation of the external stakeholders concerning communication platforms used by the IHLs.

#### 9.2.1 Hypothesis 1(a)

*As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff is more likely to: a) use telephones to communicate.*

In addition to Leximancer findings, the researcher used chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test to determine the statistical significant relationship between the type of staff and their use of telephones to communicate. The test revealed that there is statistical significant association between the type of staff and use of telephone to communicate. Non-academic staff uses telephones more often than the academic staff. This means that they have more access to communication with the external stakeholders than the academic staff.

### 9.2.2 Hypothesis 2(a)

*As opposed to external stakeholders with a short affiliation with IHLs, the stakeholders with a long affiliation are more likely to: a) receive communication from IHLs through letters, media and meetings.*

The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was further run to test the length of affiliation of the external stakeholders with the institutions and communication platforms used by the institutions. There seems to be a statistically significant association (Table 8.3) between the use of media by the institutions and the length of affiliation of the external stakeholders with the institutions. The external stakeholders with long affiliation with the IHLs seem to observe media more than the other platforms of communication such as letters, meetings and telephones.

Institutions should be able to select platforms that can successfully convey messages in an intended manner based on the possibility of immediate feedback. Such platforms should be able to transmit multiple communication cues simultaneously; have the ability to use variety of words and formulate messages that are specific to a situation. The two richest and most used platforms are face-to-face meetings and written communication, memorandums. Messages that are meant for specific people require rich platforms, otherwise less rich platforms are used for routine information, when communicating to large groups of people or when immediate feedback is not necessary (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:52).

It seems that the institutions focus more on disseminating information to the stakeholders, rather than soliciting their input (Lewis, 2007:188). The institutions' use of memorandums to disseminate information indicates their common practice of the stakeholder information strategy. What institutions mostly do is to ensure communication of the decisions they make and the actions they plan to be taken by the stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:326), but forget to be specific about the

purpose of the information. The institutions might not be aware that some stakeholders prefer to receive either positive or negative information, while others may prefer balanced information for the significant performance of the institution (Lewis, 2007:188). The institutions must engage in communication competence wherein they analyse how tasks, situations and employees interact to effect suitable communication behaviour. Communication competence also enhances the institutions' ability to effectively communicate their goals and objectives to the stakeholders. Hence communication competence is central to the excellent performance of the institutions (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:4).

### **9.3 Research Question 2**

*What impact does stakeholder engagement have on the implementation of the strategic plan?*

Institutions engage the stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans not to manage them but to manage relationships between themselves and the stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:325). The institutions ensure that they understand the expectations of the stakeholders together with their influence on those expectations, so that the expectations benefit the institution. Morsing and Schultz's (2006:325) involvement strategy enhances mutual benefit between the institution and the stakeholders by encouraging the development and promotion of support that is positive in order for the institution to understand and adapt to the stakeholders' concerns.

Engagement of the stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan encourages sufficient and effective coordination of the strategy. Adequate leadership and direction is offered between top and middle management; employees have adequate understanding of the goals (Aaltonen & Ikävalko, 2002:415-417) because they are effectively defined; people who formulate the strategy are involved in the

implementation and there is clear stipulation of vital changes in the responsibilities of the stakeholders (Cronjé, 2005:177).

The process of strategy formulation mostly involves the upper levels of the management whereas its implementation becomes every manager's responsibility. Middle managers play an integral role as they are a go-between between the senior management and the employees. They receive decisions from the senior management and motivate the employees to perform strategy-critical tasks (Cronjé, 2005:177).

Regardless of the type of strategy, institutions need to remain open to the needs of stakeholders. The linear model of strategy focuses on the sequential process involved in the plans, actions and decisions, while the adaptive strategy focuses on comparing the opportunities and risks that may exist in the external environment and the possibilities of exploiting those opportunities. The model calls for serious assessment of the conditions that are internal and external to the institution. Whereas interpretive strategy proposes that institutions demonstrate the image of unity of the institutional mutual agreements amongst the stakeholders at freewill (Chaffee, 1985:90-93). It is therefore clear that it is binding for the institutions to engage the stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of the strategic plan.

The effective running of the institution is enhanced when the institution aims to solve problems and meet the goals of society, the stakeholders and the management of the institution (Grunig & Grunig, 2008:2).

Institutions and stakeholders have consequences upon each other, hence a need to maintain the relationship between the institutions and their stakeholders. It is important to note that stakeholders hold multiple and/or overlapping roles in the institutions, for instance a lecturer may enrol for a course with the same institutions where they lecture. Some may act as opinion leaders and are believed to be leaders, sponsors, diplomats,

salespeople, risk-takers and problem-solvers. In some instances, stakeholders act as counsellors to other stakeholders, whereas some are journalists to investigate and report during change (Lewis, 2011). Because of these various roles the institutions must seriously engage the stakeholders in all activities relevant for successful implementation of the strategic plan.

Excellent institutions become flexible; they do not fuss over lines of communication. They empower people by getting rid of bureaucratic, hierarchical institutional structures. They develop what institutional theorists call an organic structure where they decentralise decisions and manage without managers (Grunig, 1992:237; Olson, Slater & Hult, 2005:49).

Excellent institutions highlight the interdependence, rather than independence of employees, and employee autonomy is encouraged. They emphasise integration rather than segmentation and strike a balance between teamwork and individual effort. It is further believed that giving people autonomy in decision-making is an integral variable in theories of job satisfaction, morale, and communication in institutions (Grunig, 1992:237).

Research results of the questionnaires (Chapter Eight) show that out of the four activities involved in the institutional strategic plans, namely: planning, implementation, monitoring and review, nearly three-quarters of the respondents engaged, in one way or the other. However, a significant number of respondents did not engage in any of the activities. Both the internal and external stakeholders share similar views of their engagement. This is a further confirmation that the institutions practise a stakeholder information strategy of engagement, instead of a stakeholder engagement strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:326). The stakeholder engagement strategy enables persuasion between the institution and the stakeholders. They are both engaged in a symmetric communication model wherein the process of sense-making and sense-giving is enhanced (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:327).

Leximancer analysis of the interviews (Figure 8.31 and Table 8.4) revealed that the theme *strategic* is the second most important theme and it is linked to the concepts *implementation*, *stakeholders* and *activities*. The implication here is that the institutions engage the stakeholders in the strategic activities such as the implementation of the strategy.

On the other hand, Leximancer analysis of strategic plans (Figure 8.32 and Table 8.5) revealed that there is a link between the themes *institution*, *strategic* and *plan*. The associated concepts include *government*, *community*, *communication* (associated with institution), *goal*, *objectives* (associated with strategic) and *resources*, *engagement* (associated with plan). The inference here is that the external stakeholders (government and community) are engaged in the strategic plan activities, for the achievement of the institutions' goals and objectives. This, therefore, supports the external stakeholders' views that it is everybody, both the internal and external stakeholders, that are responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan. The map does not show a link between the mentioned themes, *institution*, *strategic* and *plan* and any concepts related to the internal stakeholders. It does not specify who in particular amongst internal stakeholders, is responsible for implementation of the strategic plan.

Engagement of the external stakeholders into the institution's activities of operation enhances an understanding of the internal stakeholders about how the external world can affect the institutional efficiency (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:50; Berry, 2007:336). When institutions are in a non-stop integration with the stakeholders through their communication managers, they will be able to assess institutional goals, and take advantage of unexpected, but reciprocally advantageous opportunities and maybe prevent conflict before it gets to a critical stage. The stakeholders should be given an opportunity to have a say in the management of the institution. However, the stakeholder inclusion in decision-making should be based on the stakeholder extent of contribution, the greater the share they have the bigger the opportunity they must get (Steyn, 2003:175).

### 9.3.1 Hypothesis 1(b)

*As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff is more likely to: b) know about personnel responsible for implementation of strategic plan*

Moreover, the questionnaire research results indicate that internal stakeholders believe it is the senior management's responsibility to implement the strategic plan. However, the chi-square test (Table 8.2) revealed that there is a statistical significant association between the type of staff and their knowledge about who is responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan. A larger number of the academic staff believes it is the senior management's responsibility to implement the strategic plans. It is clear from this finding that the non-academic staff have more understanding about the strategic plan and the activities involved. The internal stakeholders, with more emphasis on the academic staff, need a sensitisation about the strategic plan and its implementation.

Nearly three-fifths of the external stakeholders are of the opinion that the implementation of the strategic plan is the internal and external stakeholders' responsibility. This indicates that regardless of length of affiliation with IHLs, the external stakeholders understand that every stakeholder has to be involved in the implementation of the strategic plan. As a result, the researcher did not find it necessary to test this variable through chi-square  $x^2$  test since the majority of external stakeholders have a common understanding about implementation of strategic plan.

When the stakeholders are more involved in the implementation of the strategic plan, they tend to be more informed about its activities and who is responsible for what. They will know that it is every stakeholder's responsibility to see to it that the plan is implemented. Institutions have to make a strategy a continual process, as every stakeholder's everyday job (Puth, 2002:202). Unlike the process of strategy formulation that mostly engages the senior managers, the implementation involves every stakeholder since it is middle management's responsibility to assign the strategy

plan tasks to the stakeholders, therefore ensuring the successful implementation of the strategic plan (Cronjé, 2005:177).

Management is responsible for motivating the stakeholders and familiarising them with the discipline and commitment required to implement the strategy. They also provide strategic direction that enables maximum stakeholder participation and ensure that the vision and strategic direction are communicated to all institutional stakeholders (Cronjé, 2005:182).

#### **9.4 Research Question 3**

*To what extent does the type of stakeholder relate to: a) knowledge about the strategic plan and, b) participation in the implementation of the strategic plan?*

Institutions have different types of stakeholders whose roles also differ. It is, however, not so easy for the institutions to draw lines of demarcation between the stakeholders in as far as communication is concerned, because the key purpose of communication is to inform all stakeholders. Internal and external communication are closely intertwined and institutional messages are often set around more than one purpose and for more than one audience (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:232).

In order to successfully implement the strategy, institutions make use of structures to divide the strategy into categories that ensure coordination of the tasks in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the institution (Cronjé, 2005:207). As discussed in Research Question 3 above, institutions have different sections which mainly deal with their fields of specialty such as the support, maintenance, adaptive section and management (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:115). Institutions are further divided into various structures, such as the entrepreneurial, functional, divisional, strategic business, matrix, and network. The functional structure in this case, is compared to the structures identified in the IHLs in Lesotho, and is organised based on areas of specialty, academic and non-academic. This structure poses some challenges, for

instance the prohibition of cross-functional interaction. This may encourage one functional area to be favoured or given priority over the other instead of focusing on all employees (Cronjé, 2005:207).

Information flows in different directions in institutions, horizontally and vertically. It is believed to flow easier in a vertical direction, than when it flows in a horizontal direction. Therefore, the manner in which the management communicate is influenced by the structure of the institution and the roles they play (Grunig, 1992:235). Some institutions prefer to use the centralised way of communication. Most of the communication flows from the top to the bottom of the structure after the management made decisions, whereas some institutions prefer a decentralised structure, where information flows throughout the institutional structure and the institution is readily responsive to environmental changes. The stakeholders are more motivated since they are involved in the decision-making. In addition, stratification involves the distribution of awards in the institution based on the hierarchical positions. Other institutions formalise their means of communication and focus on rule enforcement, while others use complexity based on the departments, job titles, degree of training, degree of professional activity, qualifications held, and frequency of tasks performed (Grunig, 1992:236).

In addition, stakeholders may have diverse and varying interests within the institutions, hence it is important for the institutions to identify legitimate stakeholders during the management process (Friedman & Miles, 2006:151). Institutions become aware of the rate of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the strategy.

Strategy implementation requires participation from all the stakeholders. In most cases, middle management motivate stakeholder inclusion by passing down the decisions from the senior management to the lower-level management and the rest of the stakeholders (Atkinson, 2006:1453). The following are barriers to effective strategy implementation (Cronjé, 2005:178):

- Implementation efforts are insufficiently and ineffectively coordinated.
- Inadequate leadership and direction offered by top and middle management.

- Employees do not understand goals adequately because they are not effectively defined.
- People who formulate the strategy are not involved in the implementation.
- Vital changes in responsibilities of the employees are not clearly stipulated.

As indicated in Chapter Six, strategic implementation has to undergo strategic control. Institutions ensure successful planning and implementation of their strategies by applying strategic reviewing and monitoring. In strategic review, the top management hold frequent meetings with the experts and employees for reviewing. The review sessions are meant to communicate expectations and evaluate personal and institutional performance. Again, progress is evaluated and monitored on the basis of the set strategies. The process monitors progress; it establishes if the set milestones are followed and achieved or if they are continuously missed and to assess if theory is still valid.

Excellent institutions therefore focus on the organic structures that mainly decentralise decisions made and manage without managers. They are flexible and are not concerned about the levels of communication. They get rid of bureaucratic, hierarchical institutional structures (Grunig, 1992:237).

It was found out that the institutional structures follow the functional structures (similar features identified in mechanistic structures) as opposed to the organic institutional structure (Chapter Three). The institutions focus on a high level of specialty and they run formal departmentalisation. Institutions following this kind of model are known for centralised communication.

The research results (Chapter Eight) indicate that the four institutions have strategic plans and most of the internal and external stakeholder respondents are aware of the plans' availability, whereas quite a few are not aware and do not know (Figures 8.8 and 8.23). It has also been identified from the thematic analysis of the interviews with

the senior management that such documents exist since the concepts associated with the theme *strategic plan* such as *implementation, stakeholders and activities* are shown. To confirm the majority observation, the strategic plans were made available to the researcher.

A significant number of the respondents who are not aware or do not know about the availability of the strategic plan indicates that there is an insufficient and ineffective coordination of the implementation efforts by the institutions. Leadership and direction given from the top and middle management is inadequate; or possibly that the stakeholders do not understand the institutional goals adequately because of their poor definition (Cronjé, 2005:178).

Furthermore, it was found that the degree of involvement of the internal stakeholders in the strategic plan activities, such as planning, implementation, monitoring and reviewing is at the highest level. However, employees who have been involved below 50 percent are still of a significantly high number (Figures 8.9 and 8.24). In addition to this, manual calculation of the employees engaged in the implementation of the strategic plan (Addendum 7 in Cd-Rom) counts to 37 percent (87 out of 237), which is an indication of a low rate of stakeholder engagement in this activity.

The concept map of the interviews with senior management (Figure 8.31) also indicates an association between the theme *strategic*, and the concepts: *implementation, stakeholders, external and internal*. Apart from this link, there is another link between *staff* and *non-academic*. From the two links one can infer that there is a strategic engagement between the internal and external stakeholders; between the staff, more specifically the non-academic staff and the management. Nonetheless, the theme *implement* is the least co-occurring which means it is a not so important theme amongst members of the senior management. This theme does not have any related concepts.

The concept map (Figure 8.32) indicates an analysis of the strategic plans. The theme *staff* appears to be the most used word to refer to both academic and non-academic employees. It is related to concepts like *programmes, industry, relationships, and partnerships*. There is no indication of *implement/implementation* to indicate the need for the strategic implementation of the strategic plans.

On the other hand, the high numbers of degree of involvement in the implementation of the strategic plans by the external stakeholders are seen at the highest rank of the involvement (Figure 8.24). However, the manual calculations of the external stakeholders who have been involved in the implementation of the strategic plan indicates that only 17 percent (6 out of 34 respondents) were involved. This is yet another indication of a low engagement rate of the external stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan.

#### 9.4.1 Hypothesis 1(c and d)

*As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff is more likely to: c) know about availability of strategic plans and d) participate in strategic plan activities*

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to determine the statistical significant relationship between the type of staff and their knowledge about the availability of strategic plans. The test revealed that there is no statistical significant association between the two variables. Information dissemination is executed similarly to the two types of staff. However, there is a statistically significant association between the type of staff and their non-involvement in the strategic plan activities. The chi-square test (Table 8.2) shows that of the respondents who were never involved in any of the four activities, academic staff were fewer, hence they stand a higher chance of becoming engaged in the activities.

#### 9.4.2 Hypothesis 2(b and c)

*As opposed to external stakeholders with a short affiliation with IHLs, the stakeholders with a long affiliation are more likely to: b) Know about the availability of the strategic plan and c) participate in strategic plan activities*

According to evidence revealed by the chi-square  $\chi^2$  test, there is not a statistically significant association between the length of affiliation of the external stakeholders and their knowledge about the availability of the strategic plans. They either know or not know by chance. Also, it is clear that in as much as there is a limited level of engagement in the implementation of strategic plans, there is no statistically significant association between the length of affiliation of the external stakeholders and the strategic plan activities of engagement (Table 8.3). It is just at random that they are/not engaged.

One can therefore assume that the institutions slightly engage internal and external stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan. This is a further indication that the functional institutional structures of the institutions prohibit free flow of information and stakeholder engagement, hence the dominant characteristic of centralisation (Cronjé, 2005:207). Cross-functional interaction between the academics and non-academics is limited, academic staff is at an advantage of getting more involved in the strategic plan activities.

### 9.5 Research Question 4

*What factors influence the implementation of the communication strategy in IHLs?*

Culture is one of the factors available in institutions which affects institutional ways of doing things, such as: shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense making (Griffin, 2012:261). Institutions have varying cultures and different sub-cultures

within. Culture portrays beliefs and unstated assumptions which may act as strong internal views to essential change (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998:269-270). Institutional culture can either act positively or negatively towards the implementation of the communication strategy depending on whether the strategy is aligned to it or not (Cronjé, 2005:184).

Some cultures are deeply rooted in the institutions so they can be considered a liability for the failure of the strategy if there happens to be a mismatch between the two. Whereas some are weak, because they are fragmented and can eventually influence the effective implementation of the strategy. Institutional culture can be negatively influential if the managers operate independently from the stakeholders, and the stakeholders on the other hand tend to be resistant to the changes suggested in the strategy. In addition, institutional cultures that are adaptive are proactive towards the strategic change as they are open to risk-taking, innovation and experimentation (Cronjé, 2005:185). It is therefore important to align the communication strategy with the institutional culture so to identify the internal stakeholder with the vision and mission of the institution (Cronjé, 2005:186).

Systems (institutions) comprise sub-systems that must relate and work towards attainment of goals and objectives of the same institution. Institutions consist of different components with different roles. For instance, they consist of a productive subsystem that deals with work accomplished; supportive subsystems that deal with relationships and needed materials support; maintenance subsystems dealing with integration of people into their functional role; adaptive subsystems geared for change; and managerial subsystems that coordinate and control various other subsystems (Shockley-Zalabak, 2005:115). It is important noting that these subsystems can possibly have different institutional cultures from one another.

In addition, people's views of reality are influenced by the language they have been speaking since their infancy. Reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed through the language used in the process of communication (Griffin,

2012:48). Therefore, individual institutions have their means of communication which in a way have been encapsulated in their culture. Certain practices of communication have become factors of their institutional culture and therefore determine whether the institution portrays a participative or authoritative culture (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:17; Pasher & Ronen, 2011:54).

Excellent institutions that practise participative culture are open to the external stakeholders' ideas; they value teamwork, and involve stakeholders in their decision-making, while those that practise the authoritative culture are closed to the ideas from outside the institution. On the contrary, authoritative culture favour asymmetrical communication and value excellent communication management less (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:17).

Internal and external stakeholders (Chapter Eight) agree that institutional culture can affect communication flow in the institutions. Moreover, the association between the themes *culture* and *communication* from the concept map produced by Leximancer analysis of the interviews conducted with senior management (Figure 8.31 and Table 8.4) is another confirmation that institutional culture can affect communication flow. Likewise, the analysis of the strategic plans has revealed that the theme *develop* is associated with, among other concepts, *culture*. To have the institution develop culture is indicative of the interest the institutions have towards institutional culture, hence one can conclude that institutional communication can be influenced by institutional culture (6.5 Drivers for strategy implementation in Chapter Six).

Both internal and external stakeholders elaborated their answers by giving justifications why they believe institutional culture can affect communication. Most of the elaborations indicated that culture could be more of negative influence than positive. The employees with long-term service in the institution, some of them alumni, are resistant to change. They are not accommodating to the ideas of newly employed personnel.

Other institutional norms manifest when management practise a culture of non-communication or non-engagement (or confidentiality). Management disregard views from the stakeholders and withhold information from them. Moreover, they argue that inappropriate platforms of communication are used. Frequent discussions of institutional culture, identity and the change process can result in sensitising and informing stakeholders (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001:292).

Management have a tendency of engaging in a top-down communication to inform and give directions to the employees. A lot of information is lost on its way down to the stakeholders. This channel of communication is considered as not the most effective way of information dissemination, since only 20 percent of the message is received (Figure 5.4 Effect of serial communication). The communicator must always be cautious that the message is courteously disseminated and it does not show any form of disrespect and miscommunication (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:47).

It was also found out that institutional culture in IHLs in Lesotho does not align with the institutional strategic plans. Institutions that align themselves with their culture are believed to perform well in business (Clampitt, 2010:74). Stakeholders are equipped with focus, purpose and motivation through the true culture, structure and strategy.

There is however, a feeling amongst the internal stakeholders that institutional culture cannot affect strategic communication, since employees are professionals and know their roles and are not controlled by culture.

Managers responsible for the creation of institutional culture take values, beliefs and attitudes of the stakeholders into consideration based on the culture that is instilled by the founders of the institution. As the institution recruits more employees, they join in the existing culture (Cronjé, 2005:185).

Senior managers act as faces and voices of the institution. They set the tones for the executive team of the institution and act as senior communications officers. They integrate communication and proficiency in delivering the information to all the stakeholders. On the other hand, the institutions make use of effective communication professionals that speak the same language as senior managers and portray a thorough understanding of the business and its strategy (Argenti *et al.*, 2005:84).

Due to the above reasons, excellent institutions believe that the success or failure of institutions can result from the impact of institutional culture (6.5 Drivers for strategy implementation in Chapter Six). Such institutions turn their attention to the bottom line of the institution, to identify possible opportunities and constraints that can affect the institution (Grunig, 1992:237). Thus, institutions grant stakeholders the autonomy to make strategic decisions.

## **9.6 Research Question 5**

*Which communication strategy implementation framework could the IHLs use to implement their strategic plans successfully?*

Institutions develop a framework that guides them into effectively managing the institutional strategy. Therefore, a communication strategy determines a framework against which the institution can test existing communication decisions.

Institutions that adopt Steyn and Puth's (2000:62) model to develop their institutional communication strategy start by analysing the institutional mission, values, culture and policies. They make strategies and identify the strategic stakeholders to manage stakeholder relationships. This strategic involvement of the stakeholders motivates a two-way communication between the institution and the stakeholders. The institutions further describe and identify the difference between the strategic issues within the

institution's internal and external environments. They detect and prioritise the main sequential strategic issues that may include institutional developments, events and factors that could possibly affect the institution's strategy. They also identify the implications of each of the strategic issues on each stakeholder. Institutions ensure that strategic communication aligns with their business strategy to enhance a competitive institution.

Communication goals are set based on the key strategic issues of the institution in order to enhance the attainment of the mission and goals of the institution. The institution must be aware of the impact of the institution's culture, values and norms. The institutional functional communication areas, functional relationships, communication department structure, the goals and objectives of the institutional communication are reflected in the institutional communication policy. They conduct media analyses to identify types of media that will suit the institution best and finally develop a strategic communication plan.

Functional perspective defines decision-making as a joint process. The institutions engage in requisite functions of effective decision-making, such as problem analysis, goal setting, and identification of alternatives and evaluation of positive and negative characteristics of each alternative (Deetz, 2012:233). Institutions should treat participation of the stakeholders in decision-making as vital in order to avoid resentment from the stakeholders. Stakeholders are doubtful of their contribution when they realise that it is not valued (Glicken, 2001:305).

In addition, two-way communication between the management and the stakeholders is necessary in order to enhance effective institutional communication that will strike a balance between the institution and its stakeholders. However, some institutions tend to engage more in the stakeholder information strategy than in the stakeholder engagement strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006:326). In the stakeholder information strategy, institutions focus more on telling, rather than listening, which results in one-way communication between the stakeholders and the institution. These institutions

use media and brochures (memorandums in the case of internal stakeholders) to inform the stakeholders.

The research adopts Arnstein's (1969) ladder of public involvement (Figure 4.3 Arnstein's ladder of participation (annotated) (1969)) to establish the most suitable step for the effective communication strategy implementation framework. Some institutions tend to be autocratic towards the stakeholders. The lower levels of the institutions are non-participative, the managers just inform them of the decisions made, while some respond to the stakeholders' concerns by directly engaging the stakeholders. The stakeholders get an opportunity to air their views before the decisions are made, even though it is not guaranteed that the views will have an impact on the final decision. Institutions engage with the stakeholders by interacting through workshops that enable two-way communication in order to inform and educate them. Stakeholder concerns call for a direct response that requires concession in order to manage the situation. Sometimes the institutions consult the stakeholders for their opinions before they make decisions, although the outsourced opinions are mostly ignored.

At the last level, when the institutions see that the stakeholders might withdraw their support from the institutions they engage in dialogues with the stakeholders, but if the institution is less dependent on the stakeholder then the institution can easily reduce the changes to negotiate. At the next step, the institutions empower the stakeholders during the decision-making process. The institution willingly gets involved with the stakeholders in order to address issues. At some point the institutions form partnerships with the stakeholders. The stakeholders can take control of certain projects, or the control can be limited to circumstances of delegated power. The stakeholder engagement becomes influential if the institution learns to remain with the minority say in the decision-making process (Friedman & Miles, 2006:164).

An institution is a system of many interrelated components that work together towards the attainment of the same goals and objectives. A system can be classified as either

open or closed, based on the manner in which it relates to the surrounding environment. The interconnectedness amongst the system is indicated by the connection between the suprasystem (larger system) and the subsystem (smaller system) (Conrad & Poole, 2005:31; Littlejohn, 2002:41; Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:41). A system is considered open when it exchanges ideas with its environment and closed when it acts as a self-contained unit that does not exchange ideas with the environment. An open system strives for an equilibrium between itself and the stakeholders (Witmer, 2006:362).

Findings in Chapter Eight conclude that a majority of the stakeholders find communication to be vital for the implementation of the strategic plan (Figures 8.10 and 8.25). The internal and external stakeholders share similar sentiments that the institutions make decisions without consulting with them (Figures 8.11 and 8.26). It was further established that communication is vital in decision-making (8.13 and 8.28).

The internal and external stakeholders further pose a similar feeling about their institutions being moderately open to communication. Quite a significant number of the respondents feel that their institutions are closed, they do not allow two-way communication, while very few consider their institutions open (Figures 8.12 and 8.27). It is therefore inferred that the institutions are reluctant to exchange information between themselves and the stakeholders.

The questionnaire results further revealed that more than half of the respondents indicated that their institutions are not strict about following protocol when they communicate, although a significantly large response consider them strict (Figures 8.14 and 8.29). Because the external stakeholders felt that media is the highly used communication platform by the IHLs, the researcher did not find it worthwhile to test the statistical significant association between their length of affiliation and their belief that IHLs are strict about communication protocol. To receive information through the media does not need one to follow any protocol as information lands directly on anybody with access to media.

### 9.6.1 Hypothesis 1(e)

*As opposed to the academic staff, non-academic staff are more likely to: e) believe that the institution is strict about communication protocol*

Despite a view of the majority that their institution is not strict about following protocol, the chi-square test  $\chi^2$  determined that there is a statistical significant association between the type of staff and the protocol to be followed. Most of the non-academic staff found it easier to communicate with management than is the case with the academic staff.

The results further indicated that with the communication platforms that the institutions use, the respondents consider their institutions engaging in either one or two-way communication (Chapter Eight). Although more than half of the respondents indicated that their institutions positively practise two-way communication, a relatively large number still finds their institution to be practising one-way communication. Their institutions send out information through regular meetings, memorandums, intranet and notice boards, wherein most of their views are heard through stakeholder representation, such as the union representatives, deans, and heads of department. Those who viewed their institutions practising one-way communication argue that their institutions make their own decisions that cannot be disputed by any employee whatsoever; decisions are imposed on them, and the platforms of communication are not clear.

Supplementary to the above findings open-ended questions (Chapter Eight) revealed that the institutions need to improve communication platforms by developing information technology of the institutions, develop social media, websites, workshops, and discussion groups, in order to enhance two-way communication. There should be regular interaction between management and stakeholders, clear communication strategy, open-door policy and establishment of the public relations/communication office that specifically deals with matters related to internal and external

communication. Institutions must involve students in their decision-making and use them to transmit information to the community (Tables 8.13 and 8.14).

Leximancer analysis of the interviews with senior management (Figure 8.31) indicates that management believes communication is important for decision-making. Management should consult with the stakeholders before they make decisions, although there are times when they find themselves making hasty decisions because of urgent matters that need to be addressed. It is therefore revealed that the management consider their institutions flexible enough to allow free flow of information hence their institutions are open. Nevertheless, Leximancer analysis of strategic plans (Figure 8.32) does not show themes and concepts relevant to the research question five.

Strategic communication enhances the institutions' ability to deal with the internal and external stakeholders' challenges. It emanates as a result of the decisions reached by the institutions (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015:353). Stakeholders are valuable assets whose collaboration with the institution is vital in the institutional problem-solving. The stakeholders' economic resources, political support and special knowledge enhance the institutional competitive advantage (Steyn, 2003:173).

The institutions systematically exclude the views of stakeholders who are directly influenced by the decisions made, hence a managerial control of Deetz's model (Figure 4.3 in Chapter Four) befits the institutions' approach to communication. The institutions do not practise the four ways, namely strategy, consent, involvement and participation, whereby decisions are made (Deetz, 2012:278). Likewise, a joint interaction has a positive impact on the final decision, hence talking helps institutions to reach a better conclusion (Deetz, 2012:278). Once the stakeholders realise that their contribution is not valued, they become doubtful (Glicken, 2001:305) and get demotivated to participate.

Moreover, the institutions that clarify their levels of communication have an advantage of effectively engaging the stakeholders. Vertical hierarchy mostly focuses on time spent in vertical communication, therefore information travels more effectively than in the horizontal structure. Managerial behaviour is dependent on the institutional structure (Grunig, 1992:468).

Open institutions are likely to improve their performance through, job satisfaction, role clarity and information adequacy to perform the duties. Such institutions encourage hard-working, open-minded and innovative stakeholders to interact and influence each other (O'Hair *et al.*, 2011:34).

#### 9.6.2 Proposed communication strategy implementation framework for IHLs

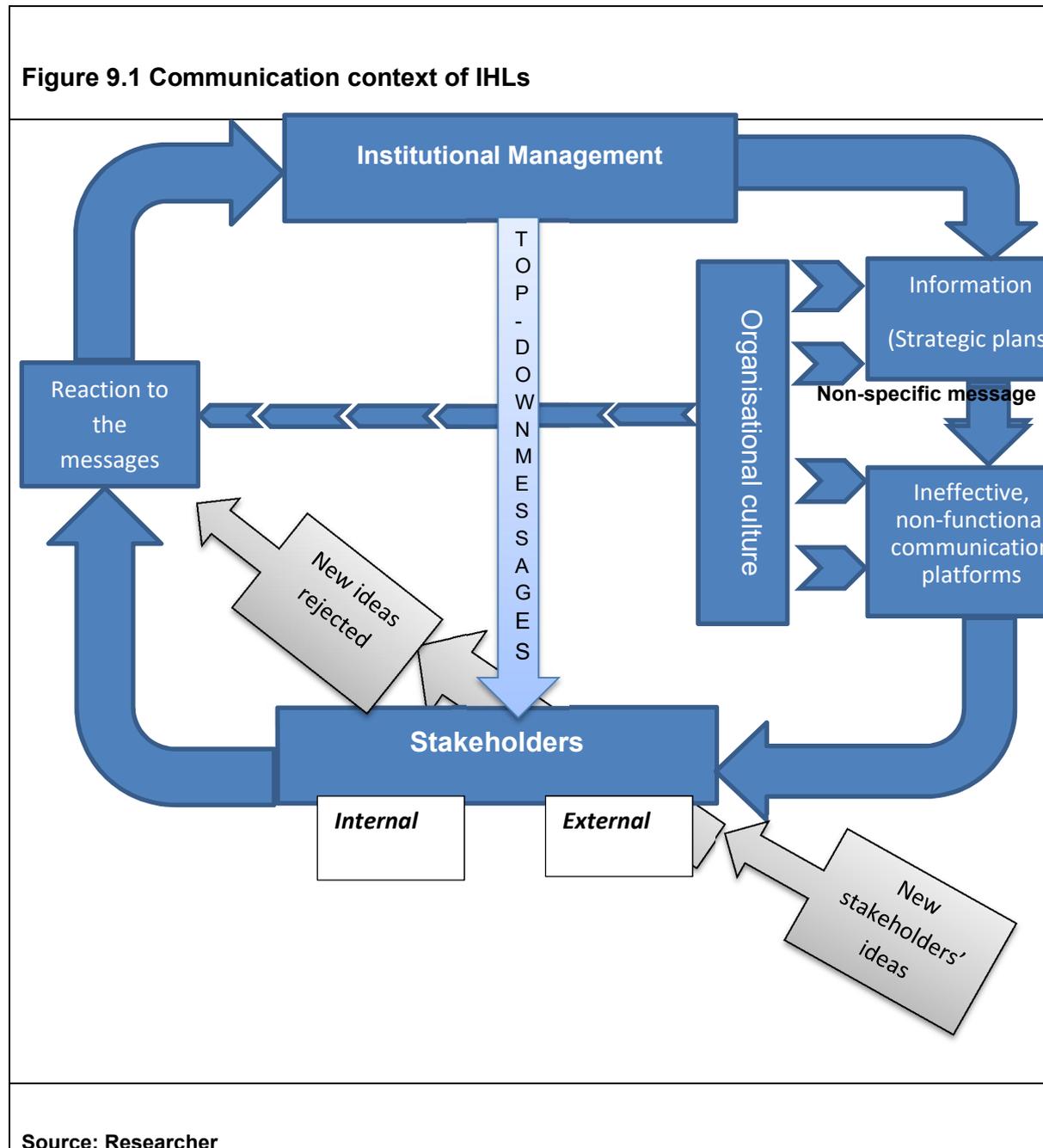
A communication strategy implementation framework is proposed for IHLs to use to engage their stakeholders for effective implementation of institutional strategic plans. Following are discussions of communication context of IHLs and the steps to be followed in execution of the proposed framework.

##### 9.6.2.1 Communication context of Institutions of Higher Learning

The research was underpinned by the body of knowledge regarding use of a communication strategy (Farwell, 2012; Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Welch & Jackson, 2007; O'Hair *et al.*, 2011; Schokley-Zalabak, 2005; Hamferors, 2010; van Riel, 2012) to engage stakeholders (Griffin, 2012; Deetz, 2012; Freeman, 2010; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Frieman & Miles, 2006) for effective implementation of strategic plans (Grunig & Repper, 1992; Steyn, 2003; Cronjé, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Downs & Adrian, 2004).

Research findings from surveys with institutional stakeholders and strategic plans for IHLs reveal communication context of IHLs as indicated in Figure 9.1. This figure

illustrates communication situation of the institutions and aims to reveal the reasons why communication strategy implementation framework is proposed.



It was, generally, concluded that (Figure 9.1) the institutions practise a one-way/top-bottom communication to inform and engage the stakeholders in the implementation of strategic plans. The kind of information transmitted to the stakeholders is not specified whether it is related to the goals and objectives of the strategic plans. IHLs predominantly use memorandums, meetings and media platforms to convey information to the stakeholders. Two of these communication platforms,

memorandums and media, do not allow for immediate feedback. Whereas meetings, which are convened at the most once in a month, allow IHLs' stakeholders to provide feedback to the management. This means that IHLs engage their stakeholders through a stakeholder information strategy instead of stakeholder engagement strategy. In addition, it is apparent that communication platforms preferred by IHLs' management are used regardless of the type of information to be communicated with their stakeholders. Hence a conclusion that management use improper and inefficient communication platforms.

Institutional culture was found to be the most common trend to adversely influence institutional communication. It is a common practice for the management to use top-down communication which encourages loss of some information before it can get to the actual recipient. Some of the information is not communicated to the stakeholders and management keeps it to themselves. It is apparent that in situations like these, stakeholder engagement is ineffectively coordinated.

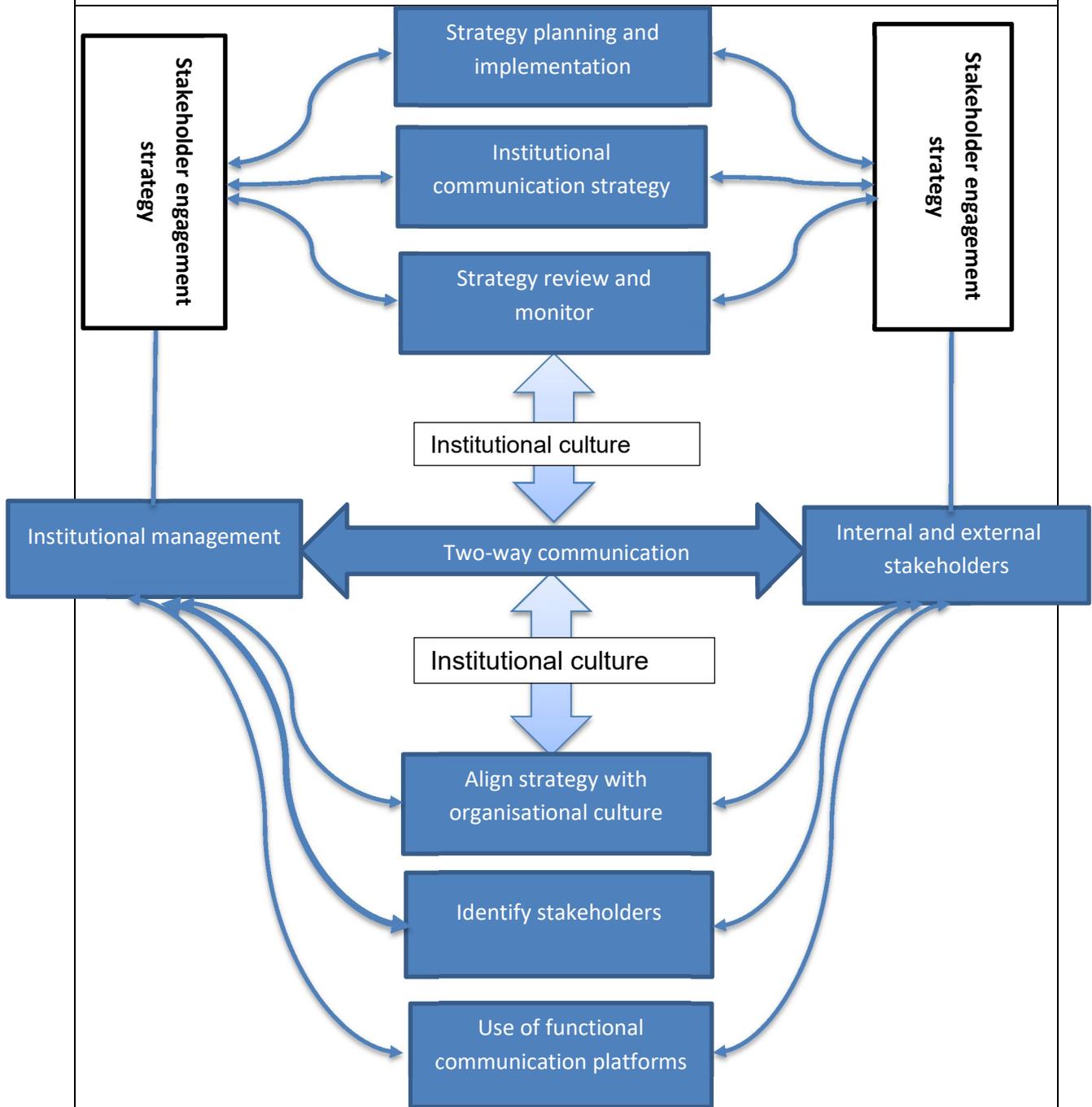
The stakeholders in return, develop a negative attitude towards the management because they feel they are not engaged in the decision-making. They reject ideas that are introduced by the new stakeholders, the newly employed and affiliated stakeholders. This trait is mostly prevalent amongst the alumni, long-service and long-affiliated stakeholders. As a result, stakeholders become resistant to new ideas regardless of the source, whether they emanate from their institutional management or from other stakeholders. It is concluded that there is not alignment between institutional culture and strategic plans

It is generally concluded that institutions of higher learning in Lesotho are closed to external ideas, hence they favour worldviews that practise asymmetrical communication. They place less value on excellent public relations and communication management. Moreover, they do not consider participative institutional cultures and do not realise their potential to produce conducive environment for excellent communication (Dozier *et al.*, 2013:17). Therefore, the research proposes a

communication strategy implementation framework for IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa to engage their stakeholders for effective implementation of their strategic plans.

9.6.2.2 Overview of a proposed communication strategy implementation framework

**Figure 9.2 Communication strategy implementation framework**



Source: Researcher

As indicated in the proposed communication strategy implementation framework (Figure 9.2) the IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as other institutions, are encouraged to practise a similar stakeholder engagement strategy to engage their stakeholders in the formulation, implementation, reviewing and monitoring of institutional strategic plans (5.10 Lessons to be learned in strategic communication). Stakeholder engagement should not only be attempted in these activities but also in the development of institutional communication strategy. The following is a discussion of steps to be followed in the execution of these activities.

As the IHLs are large organisations, two-way symmetrical communication will not be possible for all institutions. The research suggests that the institutions develop institutional communication strategies as proposed in Figure 10.1-Model of developing institutional communication strategy. The institutions should ensure that they keep abreast with the stakeholders' expectations along with possible influence of the stakeholders' and institutions' expectations.

The research does not discard stakeholder information strategy, but proposes that IHLs apply both stakeholder information and stakeholder engagement strategies (4.5 Engagement of stakeholders). Stakeholders can support or oppose the institutions' decisions, and consequently enhance mutual benefit through frequent dialogues.

Frequent dialogues between the IHLs and their stakeholders encourage stakeholder engagement which discourages autocracy wherein managerial decisions are made unilaterally. It encourages open discussions and joint decisions (6.5 Drivers for strategy implementation in Chapter Six).

It is further proposed that stakeholders be granted direct participation to contribute their views and provide inputs during facilitating, before decisions are made. Stakeholders should be empowered through institutional decision-making.

The following are steps proposed for effective implementation of the communication strategy implementation framework:

1. Influence of institutional culture is inevitable in stakeholder engagement and implementation of strategic plans. Thus, the IHLs should consider aligning formulation and implementation of strategic plans with the institutional culture. In an institution, culture can enforce certain types of institutional growths or oppose some institutional values. Depending on the power of the institutional culture, stakeholders devote to tasks that are valued by the institutions.

2. IHLs should know who their stakeholders are. It is proposed that they identify strategic and legitimate stakeholders and maintain long-term relationships with them. Stakeholder identification is important because it is possible to have stakeholder values, needs, goals and objectives that differ from the institutions. Implications of strategic issues on institutions and stakeholders can be identified.

3. IHLs should review their communication platforms. Proper and clear communication platforms should be used to engage stakeholders. In addition to the existing platforms, the IHLs should incorporate more into their communication system. The use of these platforms should be inclusive, regardless of the type of stakeholder or the length of affiliation with the institutions. Also the IHLs should use the right communication platforms for the right type of message.

## **9.7 Summary and concluding remarks**

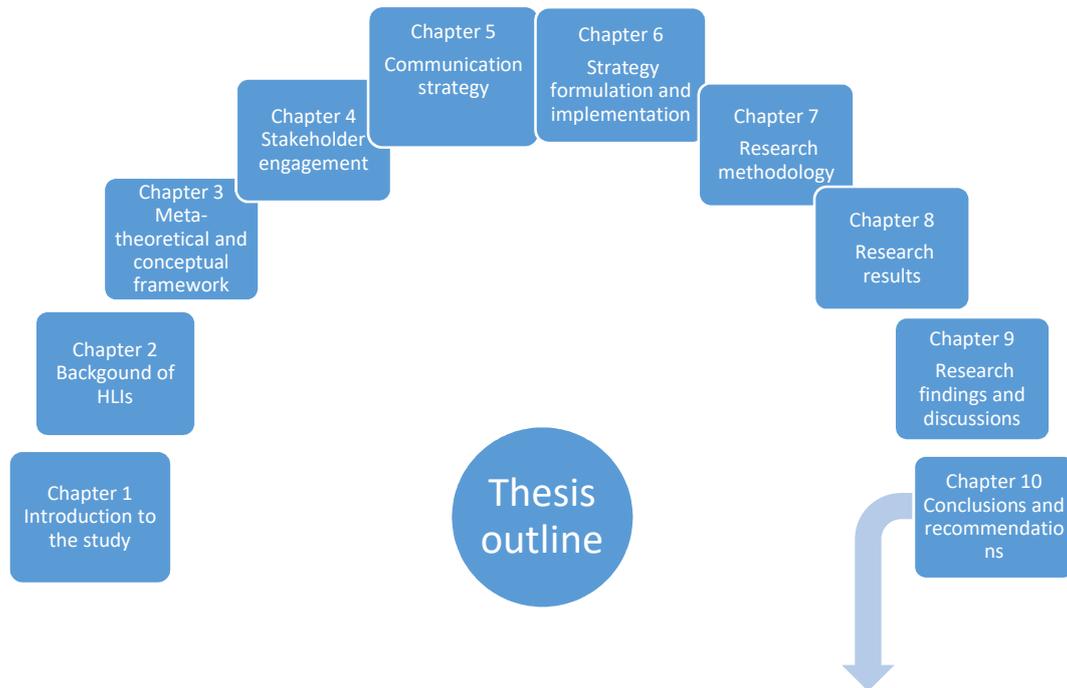
One of the research questions aimed to propose a communication strategy implementation framework for IHLs to adopt for effective implementation of their strategic plans. Firstly, the framework proposes that IHLs practise stakeholder engagement strategy for effective implementation of institutional communication

strategy and strategic plans. Secondly, IHLs should consider the importance of inculcating: participative institutional culture, identification of strategic and legitimate stakeholders, and selection of proper and inclusive communication platforms, into the implementation of their communication strategies and strategic plans.

It is concluded that institutions which practise participative institutional cultures and symmetrical communication are more likely to be valued and considered excellent institutions (Grunig *et al.*, 2006:53). Excellent institutions make use of institutional communication strategies to engage their stakeholders for effective implementation of strategic plans.

Next Chapter concludes the research and details recommendations to the IHLs in Lesotho and Sub-Saharan Africa for effective stakeholder engagement for successful implementation of institutional strategic plans.

## Chapter 10 Conclusion and recommendations



- Conclusions – Research Question 1
- Conclusions – Research Question 2
- Conclusions – Research Question 3
- Conclusions – Research Question 4
- Conclusions – Research Question 5
- Recommendations for further research
- Summary and concluding remarks

### 10.1 Introduction

In Chapter Nine, findings of the research were systematically discussed, based on the five research questions posed. In this Chapter general conclusions and recommendations as per research question are made. The general conclusions form a basis for the recommendations to the management of the institutions of higher learning and for future research.

## 10.2 Conclusions: Research Question 1

The first research question aimed at establishing how the institutions of higher learning disseminate information between the institutions and the internal and external stakeholders. It was achieved by describing: the way in which the institutions disseminate information to their stakeholders; the personnel or office that is responsible for the process of communication; and if the institutions specify the relationship between the instructions they disseminate and the implementation of the strategic plan. A discussion of the communication platforms used to disseminate the information was provided. The discussion was a result of the interviews held with the senior management, the questionnaires disseminated to the internal and external stakeholders and the strategic plans in operation in the institutions.

### 10.2.1 General conclusions

It was established that the institutions disseminate information to the stakeholders. The institutions' area of focus when engaging the stakeholders is more on the information dissemination strategy, than the input soliciting strategy. Most of the communication emanates from top management down to grassroots, in which case abundant information is lost in transit. However, the information is never specific to strategic goals and objectives to be implemented by the institutions. Also the information is not directed to how they should perform in their daily duties.

The stakeholders receive instructions, as well as invitations for engagement from middle and senior management. To receive such information:

1. The stakeholders mostly get memorandums which predominantly allow one-way communication. The memorandums are posted on notice boards in designated areas. If one does not walk past the notice area, then they will not receive the information.
2. Meetings are used as another platform through which the information is disseminated. General staff meetings are held on a monthly basis. This is a

rich platform which allows for feedback but, because it happens once a month, it hinders communication from stakeholders to the management.

3. The institutions also make use of platforms such as telephones and telephone extensions, letters, social media, intranet, and discussion forums. However, these platforms are rarely used and yet they are ideal for effective engagement of the stakeholders since they allow for feedback. Some of the IHLs' internet bandwidth needs major maintenance that is why they are not frequently used or not used at all.

Although the findings indicate that telephones are used as one of the communication platforms, they are mostly accessible to the non-academic staff. Some academic staff do not have telephone extensions for internal communication, and a majority of them do not have access to the telephones for external communication.

Additionally, external stakeholders confirm that they receive information from their institutions of affiliation. The majority of them receive information through media (radio and newspapers). While most stakeholders spend many of their daily hours at work where ideal communication platforms could be social media, email and telephones, in this case they read newspapers or listen to radio which are platforms ideal for information dissemination to people at home. This is possibly the reason a significant number of external stakeholders does not receive information to engage with the institutions. Although they confirm that their institutions of affiliation disseminate information to engage them in the institutional activities, external stakeholders could receive more information if additional platforms were used.

There is absence of communication offices in the Centre for Accounting Studies, Lerotholi Polytechnic and Lesotho Agricultural College. These institutions have an Office of the Registrar responsible for communication purposes. National University of Lesotho is the only that has a communication office and whose organogram shows there is public affairs personnel in existence.

The above conclusions are reached based on the findings obtained from the interviews and questionnaires. Nonetheless, the strategic plans do not indicate the different types of platforms used to disseminate information; whether there is an office or personnel responsible for communication and any instructions and invitations to engage the stakeholders in the implementation of the plans.

### 10.2.2 Recommendations

It is suggested that recommendations for this research question should be considered not only for the institutions of higher learning, but also for other institutions as they generally apply to all organisations. It is therefore, firstly, recommended that the kind of information that gets disseminated to the stakeholders be specific to the goals and objectives in order to enhance successful implementation of strategic plans.

Secondly, platforms of communication should be wisely selected based on the type of information to be disseminated. Management should be able to tell what kind of information requires the rich platforms such as memorandums and meetings (discussion forums) and which needs other forms, such as letters, telephones and social media so that they give room for a thorough discussion of pertinent issues that need the stakeholders' input. Rich platforms (meetings and memorandums) are recommended for information that is specific to certain stakeholders while less rich platforms may be used for routine information.

Thirdly, it is recommended that the institutions should consider the following factors when selecting effective platforms of communication:

1. They should consider the speed at which the information needs to reach the recipient and the accuracy of the information so that they can decide if they should use the oral and electronic platforms.

2. They should also establish if the information needs feedback in order to determine the platform of communication that can easily allow the stakeholders to provide feedback. In this case oral and electronic platforms can serve a purpose.
3. It is important to consider the sensitivity or confidentiality of the message to be communicated, in which case it can be suggested that face-to-face should be selected.
4. The institutions should not only consider the appropriateness of the platforms but also the cost of the platforms. Email can be convenient for it can send both written messages and pictures when necessary. Nonetheless, telephone/extensions may be used to send urgent messages, and provide immediate feedback.
5. Some communication platforms cannot allow for accountability of messages. In cases where both the communicator and the recipient need to account for message correspondence, they may have to opt for written messages, such as memorandums or letters in order to ease documentation.
6. Lastly, it is very important to select the platforms that are acceptable to the recipient.

Fourthly, it is recommended that IHLs make a variety of communication platforms available to stakeholders. Problems pertaining to the existing platforms should be addressed, such as:

1. Improve internet bandwidth. This will enable communication amongst stakeholders, and between the IHLs and the stakeholders. The external stakeholders will not only rely on media in order for them to receive information which does not allow for immediate feedback.
2. Provide each internal stakeholder with telephone extension and access to communication with the external stakeholders.
3. Put up more notice boards in officially designated areas.
4. Social media should be used more often.

Lastly, the IHLs are encouraged to set up offices and personnel responsible for internal and external communication to enhance stakeholder engagement. Setting up such offices will help the institutions formulate communication strategy since they will be having suitable communication professionals to coordinate formulation and implementation of communication strategy. Therefore, the researcher recommends that to develop institutional communication strategy the institutions align themselves with the model (Figure 10.1) adapted from Steyn and Puth (2000:62) and Steyn (2003:180).

**Figure 10.1 Model of developing institutional communication strategy**



**Source: Adapted from Steyn and Puth (2000:62)**

Based on this model (Figure 10.1), it is recommended that the institutions must analyse their internal environment; that is the vision, mission, values, culture, policies and form strategies and identify the strategic stakeholders. The institution's environment is said to be complex, it has stakeholders whose values, needs, desires, wants, goals and objectives vary and possibly differ from those of the organisation. The mergers and acquisitions may have enabling, functional, normative and diffused linkages from the internal and external environment; identify strategic stakeholders before managing the stakeholder relationships. This can result in two-way communication as the top-managers will be attuning themselves to the strategic stakeholders.

Again the institution must describe and differentiate crucial strategic issues in the internal and external environment; identify and prioritise the key sequential strategic issues such as developments, events and factors that can impact the institution's strategy; establish possible implications of each strategic issue per stakeholder; decide what decision should be made in order to formulate the corporate communication strategy. The communication strategy must support the business strategy of the institution and be able to assist the institution to be more competitive and establish what must be communicated to the stakeholders in order to solve problems.

Communication goals must then be set up as a destination to be reached through the communication of the institution. The communication goals are based on the institution's key strategic issues and they have to reflect the goals of the institution and subsequently enhance the achievement of the institution's mission; after setting the communication goals the institution must develop a communication policy. During this stage it is important to consider the likelihood of the influence posed by the institution's culture, values and norms. Institution communication policy incorporates functional communication areas of the internal and external communication, functional relationships, the communication department structure, communication goals and objectives, the institution's 'do's and don'ts' and the inclusion of confidential

information; submit the draft to the top management of the institution and conduct a media analysis; then develop a strategic communication plan and action plans.

To address this research question, the researcher recommends that management should not consider engaging the stakeholders through stakeholder information strategy but, rather through stakeholder engagement strategy in order to solicit their input and action in the implementation of the strategic plan.

### **10.3 Conclusions: Research Question 2**

This research question aimed at determining the influence of stakeholder engagement on the implementation of the strategic plan. A description of different activities where the stakeholders can get involved in the strategic plan was given and a description of the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan was also stated. An analysis of the responses from the questionnaires, interviews and strategic plans was conducted.

#### **10.3.1 General conclusions**

It was discovered that the institutions do engage stakeholders in the activities related to the strategic plans. They are involved in the strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and reviewing, most of which are involved in the planning stage. It was however apparent that a significant number of the stakeholders were not engaged in any of the activities. Non-engagement of the stakeholders in implementation of strategic plans hinders effective implementation thereof.

It was also established that most of the internal stakeholders are of the opinion that senior management are responsible for implementation of the strategic plans. This

insufficient knowledge is more prevalent amongst the academic staff than non-academic staff. The non-academic staff is more informed than the academic staff when it comes to information pertaining to the implementation of the strategic plan. This indicates a need for more training of the academic staff to ensure that every internal stakeholder has an efficient understanding about the strategic plan.

Regardless of length of affiliation with IHLs, external stakeholders think it is every stakeholder's responsibility to implement the plan. This indicates that the external stakeholders have an understanding of the implementation of the strategic plan.

It is further concluded that the institutions make attempts to engage stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plans. Although content analysis of the interviews with senior management and the strategic plans indicates that the stakeholders get engaged in activities, it is apparent that the focus of the institutions is engagement of the external stakeholders, more than engaging the internal stakeholders.

### 10.3.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings obtained from Research Question 2.

Firstly, it is recommended that management of the institutions consider the stakeholder engagement strategy over the stakeholder information strategy, since engagement of the stakeholders attracts more ideas to enhance the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

Secondly, management may take note of the following points when engaging the stakeholders:

1. They should bear in mind that they are the faces and voices of the institutions and therefore they are the ones to set a tone for both the management and the institution.
2. They should integrate communication in the proficient delivery of specific messages to all stakeholders.
3. They should consider the structural integration wherein they are mindful of the communication professionals and their potential for strong personal networks, hence ample access to information. The communication executives are wary of the extent to which their work connects to the overall strategy and their potential to measure their impact on stakeholder value.

Thirdly, IHLs may also consider identifying strategic stakeholders so that there is a fair representation of other stakeholders in some activities, other than the implementation, which calls for concerted efforts from all the stakeholders for an effective implementation of the plan and sustainable institution. Stakeholder identification may help the institutions curb the discrepancies amongst the stakeholders' knowledge and engagement in the strategic plan activities. To identify the stakeholders, the institutions may use structural levels to find the groups that are relevant to all employees, management, departments and divisions and other project teams.

Fourthly, it would also be beneficial to the institutions to ensure engagement of the stakeholders who have been involved in the planning, as well as in the implementation of the strategic plan. It is an ideal decision for management to develop an open strategy that will ensure optimal participation of the stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

## 10.4 Conclusions: Research Question 3

Research Question 3 aimed at establishing the extent the type of stakeholder relates to the knowledge about the strategic plan and stakeholder participation in the implementation of the strategic plan. The findings in Chapter Eight discussed the views from the internal (academic and non-academic staff) and external stakeholders about their knowledge of the strategic plans in the institutions and their level of participation in the implementation of the strategic plan. The discussions were based on the findings taken from interviews, questionnaires and the analysis of strategic plans of the institutions.

### 10.4.1 General conclusions

It was revealed that although it is only a few stakeholders that do not know about the strategic plans, the institutions have tried to reach every stakeholder in informing them about the plans. It is in the nature of academic institutions to invest in functional structures wherein the institutions have to focus on the high level of specialty and formal departmentalisation. The functional (mechanistic) structures of the institutions seem to affect the communication flow and stakeholder participation in the implementation of the strategic plan. The institutions insufficiently and ineffectively coordinate the implementation efforts.

Consequent to the functional structures of IHLs, information flow about strategic plans is low and there is minimal stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the strategic plans. Additionally, the chi-square  $\chi^2$  test nullified the hypothesis that non-academic staff is more engaged in strategic plan activities than their counterparts. It was revealed that academic staff has an advantage of engagement in the implementation over the non-academic staff. This is indicative of a limited cross-functional interaction between the academic and non-academic staff which results in ineffective implementation of strategic plans. On the contrary, it is just by chance that

the external stakeholders are engaged or not engaged. There is no statistical significant association between the length of affiliation of external stakeholders and IHLs.

#### 10.4.2 Recommendations

Since organisational structures of IHLs are arranged according to functional structures, it is recommended that management encourage cross-functional interaction between the academic and non-academic staff in order to inspire decentralisation of information and engagement. This will help IHLs to avoid focussing on specific functional areas when engaging stakeholders in implementation of institutional strategic plans. This can possibly encourage broad engagement of the external stakeholders for effective implementation of the strategic plans.

Secondly, the choice of effective platforms (*10.2.2 Recommendations*) is recommended to enhance the two-way communication to allow exchanging of ideas between IHLs and their stakeholders for effective implementation of the strategic plans.

It is also recommended that IHLs take cognisance of the following points to facilitate effective dissemination of information to all stakeholders for effective implementation of strategic plans:

- Sufficient and effective coordination of the implementation of strategic plans.
- Adequate leadership and direction by management.
- Effective definition of strategic goals and objectives to enhance stakeholder understanding of strategic plans.
- Engagement of every stakeholder in its implementation including those involved in its formulation.
- Clear articulation of responsibilities for internal stakeholders.

## 10.5 Conclusions: Research Question 4

This research question intended to identify factors that can possibly influence the communication strategy. The aim was achieved by discussing the institutional culture as the main trend prevalent in the institutions. This trend was confirmed in the interviews held with senior management, as well as in the questionnaires completed by the internal and external stakeholders, and the content analysis of the strategic plans.

### 10.5.1 General conclusions

It is apparent that institutional culture affects the institutional communication strategy and implementation of the strategic plan. This section discusses the conclusions based on the behaviours prevalent within the institutions. Firstly, the employees with long-term service at the institutions practise the established institutional culture, which influences their receptivity to new ideas from newly employed personnel. They are therefore resistant to the opinions, whether strategic-communication-related or otherwise.

It has also been concluded that the institutions have a tendency of being non-communicative to their stakeholders. Management keeps some information to themselves without sharing it with the stakeholders. This has grown into a prevalent habit that results in stakeholders who remain less informed, hence less engaged.

Moreover, in the cases where the institutions communicate, they use inappropriate platforms of communication. They use memorandums to disseminate all sorts of information, even those that require feedback. Placing memorandums on notice boards necessitates one to walk past in order to get information, and if they do not it could result in stakeholders not getting information.

The top-down communication culture results in most of the information getting lost in transit to the rest of the stakeholders.

It was further established that the institutional culture does not align with the goals and objectives of the institutions. Consequently, the institutions have institutional culture that negatively affects the communication strategy, hence ineffective implementation of the strategic plan.

### 10.5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed, it is recommended that the institutions should be aware of the prevailing institutional cultures. They should study the institutional culture and align it to the goals and objectives. It is important for the institutions to take note of the behaviour and attitudes portrayed by stakeholders with long-term affiliation with institutions against newly affiliated stakeholders. In this case, the institutions will be able to identify behaviours that appear to become barriers to effective communication that result in poorly implemented strategic plans.

Apart from the above, the newly affiliated stakeholders may be given a chance to learn more about the institutions. In addition to this, the institutions can equip them with on-the-job training in order for them to learn and understand the philosophies and means of operations in the institutions. They can learn about factors such as:

- How the institutions operate.
- The chain of command they have to follow when communicating.
- The relationships that exist amongst various departments and sections within the institutions.
- Formal or informal on-the-job meetings can be conducted by the co-workers or supervisors to distribute such information.

It is further important for the institutions to explore the available platforms of communication to establish their effectiveness towards each type of information. They should also consider using rich platforms such as meetings and memorandums when they send out messages that are meant for specific people; that need immediate feedback; or in tense or sensitive situations. Otherwise, they can go for less rich platforms to communicate routine information, to pass down instructions or policy, when the message can do with delayed feedback or when communicating to large numbers of stakeholders.

The top-down communication is biased so the institutions can consider practising a two-way communication between the institutions and the stakeholders to allow effective exchange of information. This will also reduce the chance of losing information on its way from top management to the stakeholders.

It is generally recommended that IHLs consider engaging their stakeholders in the implementation of their strategic plans. This will enhance participative culture that embraces teamwork for effective implementation of strategic plans.

## **10.6 Conclusions: Research Question 5**

This research question aimed at determining a communication strategy implementation framework that may be used by the institutions to successfully implement the strategic plan. An analysis of the responses from the interviews and questionnaires, together with the strategic plan made it possible. The research findings Chapter (Chapter Eight) discussed the likelihood of communication facilitating the strategy implementation. The Chapter further discussed the importance of communication in decision-making and whether the institutions make decisions without consulting with the stakeholders. If institutions are strict about following communication protocol and whether the institutions can be regarded as open or closed in relation to communication flow between the institutions and the stakeholders.

### 10.6.1 General conclusions

It was established that management and stakeholders find communication vital for decision-making. However, the institutions are reluctant to allow exchange of information with the stakeholders (students included). It is also evident that communication between the non-academic staff and management is not as much of a problem compared to that of the academic staff. Management inform the stakeholders and rarely involve them in the decision-making process.

Most of the platforms of communication used do not encourage institutional two-way communication that will result in a regular interaction between the management and the stakeholders. There is no clear communication strategy within the institutions.

Although many stakeholders believe their institutions are not strict with following protocol for communication purposes, a significantly big number finds their institutions strict. Also, the IHLs were found to be moderately open to communication. Management make their own decisions which are not disputed by the stakeholders.

### 10.6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions made, it is recommended that institutions of higher learning should be more engaging in order to enhance implementation of the strategic plans. Stakeholder engagement should include identification of strategic and legitimate stakeholders. This should incorporate students, as they can easily transmit information between the external stakeholders and the institutions. The institutions should establish a clear communication strategy to get rid of any irregular interaction between the management and the stakeholders.

Moreover, the institutions should align their goals and objectives with institutional culture. The institutions may also improve communication platforms in order to enhance two-way communication so that the institutions are open to stakeholders' ideas and engage them in the decision-making. This can be activated by an establishment of the communication office in all the institutions.

It is further recommended that IHLs adopt the proposed communication strategy implementation framework (Figure 9.2) for effective stakeholder engagement and implementation of institutional strategic plans. Generally, the framework suggests that the institutions practise a two-way communication and stakeholder engagement strategy for effective stakeholder engagement. They should also consider aligning their goals and objectives with institutional culture, identify legitimate stakeholders and review institutional communication platforms.

## **10.7 Recommendations for further research**

This section deals with the recommendations for future research determined by the research findings and conclusions discussed earlier. The recommendations are based on the five research questions underlying the study.

### **10.7.1 Research Question 1**

The aim of Research Question 1 was to establish how the institutions disseminate information to the stakeholders. It was determined that the institutions disseminate information that is non-specific to the address of the strategic plan. Further research needs to be conducted to specify the strategies to be utilised in specifying and aligning the messages to the goals and objectives of the strategy.

Furthermore, the discussion indicates that the institutions have the office or personnel that oversee communication processes. This information is revealed from the

quantitative analysis of the questionnaires whilst the qualitative analysis of the interviews and strategic plans does not address the question. Therefore, future research will be necessary to establish if senior management consider their institutions as having the office or personnel for communication. The research should further reveal if it is in the mandate of the strategic plans to mention offices or personnel responsible for communication of the goals and objectives of the institutional strategic plans.

The discussion revealed that the institutions mostly use meetings and memorandums to communicate with the stakeholders, there is a requirement for a proper categorisation of messages against the right platforms to put in place for effective strategic communication. To determine the effective platforms, amongst other factors, the size of the institution will be taken into consideration.

#### 10.7.2 Research Question 2

The second research question was meant to determine the influence the stakeholder engagement has on the implementation of the strategic plan. A comprehensive research has to be conducted to a reasonable representation of the external stakeholders in order to assess their participation in the strategic plan activities. Also, institutional student bodies should be represented in the research since they are important part of institutional stakeholders.

#### 10.7.3 Research Question 3

Research Question 3 intended to establish the extent to which the type of stakeholder relates to the knowledge about the strategic plan and stakeholder participation in the implementation of the strategic plan. It has been established that the institutional structure influences the manner in which the institutions communicate and engage the stakeholders. However, the research does not recommend the best structure that will enhance effective flow of information, hence effective implementation of the strategic

plan. Therefore, future research is needed to assess the best institutional structure to suit the effective communication strategy and implementation of the strategic plan. Again, it is recommended that the sample frame of the external stakeholders be large enough to be a considerable representation of the institutional external stakeholders.

#### 10.7.4 Research Question 4

The research question aimed to establish factors that influence communication strategy and institutional culture has been found to be the main trend. Further research needs to be conducted to establish more factors prevalent in the institutions that can influence the communication strategy. The future research will further indicate the best ways to align the institutional culture with the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

#### 10.7.5 Research Question 5

This research question was meant to suggest a communication strategy implementation framework to put in place for effective implementation of the strategic plan. Figure 9.2 indicates a communication strategy implementation framework proposed to the institutions, nonetheless, the implementation framework needs to be tested for its feasibility.

### **10.8 Summary and concluding remarks**

The research was designed to assess the extent to which the IHLs use communication to engage their stakeholders in order to enhance the implementation of their strategic plans. The research inquiry, therefore, identified that the institutions engage the stakeholders using the stakeholder information strategy. The communication is still dominated by one-way communication and the stakeholders rarely contribute to the institutional decision-making.

Findings of this research contribute towards developing the body of knowledge in communication management and public relations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Lesotho in

particular, by arguing that instead of using stakeholder information strategy, the institutions may choose stakeholder engagement strategy to achieve their goals and objectives. Although it is in the nature of the academic institutions to follow the functional institutional structure, the institutions are encouraged to consider cross-functional interaction for the effective communication and engagement between the institutions and the stakeholders. Cross-functional interaction encourages exchange of ideas, sharing of knowledge and consultation with relevant stakeholders so that the institutions nurture a knowledge sharing institutional culture. The institutions may also consider developing communication strategy based on the adopted Steyn and Puth (2000:30) model, Figure 10.1.

Moreover, the research makes an academic contribution to the discipline of communication management by complementing the existing theory that a communication strategy is vital for stakeholder engagement towards the successful implementation of the strategic plan. The researcher further contributes to the field of academic institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa by proposing a communication strategy implementation framework (Figure 9.2) to prompt the management in the IHLs in Sub-Saharan Africa to adopt for implementation of their strategic plans.

The research further contributes to the research methodology in that the CAQDAS was used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data. SPSS was used to analyse the closed-ended question responses of the questionnaires obtained from the internal and external stakeholders of the IHLs. Again, Leximancer was used to analyse the interview transcriptions of the interviews conducted with the members of the senior management, as well as the strategic plans of the IHLs.

In conclusion, blending communication strategy into the formulation and implementation of strategic plans remains under-researched. Future research should address how best communication strategy practitioners and strategic managers in the institutions of higher learning can appreciate the value of communication strategy by explicitly inculcating it into the strategic management of their strategic plans.

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## 12. Addendum 1-Letter of consent



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Economic and  
Management Sciences**

**Division of Communication Management**

**Implementation of a communication strategy for stakeholder engagement in  
institutions of higher learning in Lesotho**

Research conducted by:

Mrs R. Letlatsa (04556853)

Cell: (+266) 58922878

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Relebohile Letlatsa, Doctoral student from the Division of Communication Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the research is to assess the extent to which institutions of higher learning in Lesotho utilize communication in order to implement strategies set up by the institutions.

Please note the following:

- This is an anonymous research survey as your name will not appear on the questionnaire. The answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this research is very important to me. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 20 minutes of your time.
- The results of the research will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. I will provide you with a summary of my findings on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Prof. R. Rensburg (+27) 0836325332 [ronel.rensburg@up.ac.za](mailto:ronel.rensburg@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign below to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

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**Respondent's signature**

---

**Date**

## **13. Addendum 2- Interview questions of the senior management**

### **Glossary**

*Institution* in this study refers to the centre, polytechnic, college or university, all centres of higher learning that are under this study.

*Protocol* refers to a certain procedure to be followed in order to communicate at different levels of organisational structure.

-----

### **Instructions**

If you decide to take part in this interview, please note that your first thoughts are usually the best. Even if you feel some sections are not applicable to you, please do not ignore them. Your answers are important in building a communication strategy in the institutions of higher learning.

-----

1. What position do you hold?
2. How long have you worked for this institution?
3. Does this institution have a formal strategic plan which sets out objectives and how they will be achieved?
4. Which of the following strategic activities have you been involved in?
  - 4.1 Strategic planning
  - 4.2 Strategic implementation
  - 4.3 Strategic monitoring
  - 4.4 Strategic review
5. If you have been involved, indicate to what extent.
6. Who has the responsibility to implement the plan?

7. Would you say if used effectively, communication can facilitate implementation of the strategy?
8. Does management regularly give employees, or their representatives, any information about the strategic plan?
9. Does someone or a division in the organisational structure have specific responsibility for communication within the organisation?
10. Do you think organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution?
11. Please specify your answer.
12. Besides job description, do you ever receive instructions on how to perform in your work?
13. An open system enables exchange of ideas with employees and a closed system does not involve employees. How do you rate your institution?
14. Through what platforms of communication is information transferred within the institution?
15. Most decisions in this institution are made without consulting the employees.
16. Do you see communication as a vital process in decision-making?
17. Is your institution strict about communication protocol?
18. Does your institution practise a two-way communication process, between the management and employees, instead of a one-way, from management to employees.
19. Give an example for the above answer.
20. Do you have any ideas on how to improve communication in the institution?

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## 14. Addendum 3- Internal stakeholders' questionnaire

### Glossary

*Institution* in this study refers to the centre, polytechnic, college or university, all centres of higher learning that are under this study.

*Protocol* refers to a certain procedure to be followed in order to communicate at different levels of organisational structure.

-----

### Instructions

If you decide to take part in the questionnaire, please use blank spaces provided and this will take you about 20 minutes to complete. Your first thoughts are usually the best. Even if you feel some sections are not applicable to you, please do not ignore them. Your answers are important in building a communication strategy in the institutions of higher learning.

-----

1. Choose the category that best suits you? (*Please tick one*)

Male	1
Female	2

2. What position do you hold?
- 1

3. How long have you worked for this institution? (*Please tick one*)

Less than 11 months	1
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One to three years	2
Four to ten years	3
11 to 15 years	4
16 + years	5

4. Does this institution have a formal strategic plan which sets out objectives and how they will be achieved? (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	No	2	Not aware	3
-----	---	----	---	-----------	---

5. Which of the following strategic activities have you been involved in?

Strategic planning	1
Strategic implementation	2
Strategic monitoring	3
Strategic review	4
None	5

6. If you have been involved, indicate to what extent.

	0%	10%	30%	50%	60% and above
Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Implementation	6	7	8	9	10
Monitoring	11	12	13	14	15
Review	16	17	18	19	20

7. Who has the responsibility to implement the plan?

Employee	1
Senior management	2
Middle management	3
External stakeholders	4

8. If used effectively, communication can facilitate implementation of the strategy.  
(Please tick one)

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	Disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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9. Does management regularly give employees, or their representatives, any information about the strategic plan? (Please tick one)

Yes	1	No	2	Not sure	3
-----	---	----	---	----------	---

10. Does someone or a division in the organisational structure have specific responsibility for communication within the organisation? (Please tick one)

Yes	1	No	2
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11. Do you think organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution? (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	No	2
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12. Please specify your answer.

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12. Besides job description, do you ever receive instructions on how to perform in your work? (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	No	2
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14. An open system enables exchange of ideas with the employees and a closed system does not involve them. How do you rate your institution? (*Please tick one*)

Very open	1	Moderately open	2	Closed	3	Very closed	4
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15. Through what platforms of communication is information transferred within the institution?

Letter	1
Memorandum	2
Intranet	3
Meeting	4
Telephone/extension	5
Social media	6
Discussion forums	7
Other	8

16. If your answer above is other, please specify.

-----1

17. Most decisions in this institution are made without consulting the employees.  
(Please tick one)

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	Disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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18. Do you see communication as a vital process in decision-making? (Please tick one)

Yes	1	No	2
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19. Is your institution strict about communication protocol? *(Please tick one)*

Yes	1	No	2
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20. Your institution practises a two-way communication process, between the management and employees; Instead of a one-way, from the management to the employees. *(Please tick one)*

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	Disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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21. Give the example for your answer above.

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22. Do you have any ideas on how to improve communication in the institution.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Relebohile Letlatsa at relebo@yahoo.co.uk or 58922878.

## 15. Addendum 4- External stakeholders' questionnaire

### Glossary

*Institution* in this study refers to the centre, polytechnic, college or university, all centres of higher learning that are under this study.

*Protocol* refers to a certain procedure to be followed in order to communicate at different levels of organisational structure.

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### Instructions

If you decide to take part in the questionnaire, please use blank spaces provided and this will take you about 20 minutes to complete. Your first thoughts are usually the best. Even if you feel some sections are not applicable to you, please do not ignore them. Your answers are important in building a communication strategy in the institutions of higher learning.

-----

1. Choose the category that best suits you? (*Please tick one*)

Alumni	1
Government employee	2
Parent	3
Community	4
Donors	5
Media	6
Parastatal	7
Other	8

Male	9
Female	10

2. For how long have you been affiliated to this institution?

Less than 11 months	1
One to three years	2
Four to ten years	3
11 to 15 years	4
16 + years	5

3. Does this institution have a formal strategic plan which sets out objectives and how they will be achieved? (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	No	2	Not aware	3
-----	---	----	---	-----------	---

4. Which of the following strategic activities have you been involved in?

Strategic planning	1
Strategic implementation	2
Strategic monitoring	3
Strategic review	4
None	5

5. If any, to what extent have you been involved in those activities?

	0%	10%	30%	50%	60% and above
Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Implementation	6	7	8	9	10
Monitoring	11	12	13	14	15
Review	16	17	18	19	20

6. Who has the responsibility to implement the plan?

Internal stakeholders	1
External stakeholders	2
All stakeholders	3

7. If used effectively, communication can facilitate implementation of the strategy. *(Please tick one)*

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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8. Does the institution give its stakeholders any information about the strategic plan? *(Please tick one)*

Yes	1	No	2
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9. Is there someone or a division in the organisational structure with specific responsibility for communication within the organisation? *(Please tick one)*

Yes	1	No	2	Not aware	3
-----	---	----	---	-----------	---

10. Do you think organisational culture can affect communication flow in the institution? (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

11 Please specify your answer

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12. Do you ever receive communication to engage with the institution (*Please tick one*)

Yes	1	NO	2
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13. An open system enables exchange of ideas with the stakeholders and a closed system does not involve them. How do you rate the institution? (*Please tick one*)

Very open	1	Moderately Open	2	Closed	3	Very Closed	4
-----------	---	--------------------	---	--------	---	----------------	---

14. Through which platform of communication does the institution communicate with you as a stakeholder?

Letter	1
Media	2
Meeting	3
Telephone	4
Other	5

15. If your above answer is other please specify.

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16. Most decisions in this institution are made without consulting the external stakeholders. *(Please tick one)*

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	Disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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17. Do you see communication as a vital process in decision-making? *(Please tick one)*

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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18. Is the institution strict about communication protocol? *(Please tick one)*

Yes	1	No	2
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19. The institution practises a two-way communication process, between the internal and external stakeholders; instead of a one-way, from the institutional management to the external stakeholders. *(Please tick one)*

Strongly agree	1	Agree	2	disagree	3	Strongly disagree	4
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20. Give an example for your answer above.

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21. Do you have any ideas on how to improve communication in the institution.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Relebohile Letlatsa at [relebo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:relebo@yahoo.co.uk) or 58922878.

**16. Addendum 5**  
**Internal stakeholders' SPSS dataset/output**  
**Available in CD-ROM**

**17. Addendum 6**  
**External stakeholders' SPSS dataset/output**  
**Available in CD-ROM**

**18. Addendum 7**  
**Internal stakeholders' questionnaires data set**  
**Available in CD-ROM**

**19. Addendum 8**  
**External stakeholders' questionnaires data set**  
**Available in CD-ROM**

**20. Addendum 9**  
**Strategic plans of the IHLs**  
**Available in CD-ROM**

**21. Addendum 10**

**Interview transcriptions with members of senior management**

**Available in CD-ROM**