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CHAPTER ONE
ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In response to the ever increasing organisational challenges and threats associated with communication dynamics, a number of organisations are recognising that business-as-usual is no longer sufficient for communication to thrive. Effective communication processes are necessary and should be recommended where communication challenges exist. From this perspective, strategic communication is needed to persuade, alert, and help people enact governance initiatives and sustainability programmes within and among organisations. Allen (2016) posits that strategic communication orients people's consciousness by inviting them to take a particular perspective; by evoking certain values and not others; and by creating referents for their attention and understanding. In support of the clarion call to recognise strategic communication, Varey and White (2000:10) posit that communication management, practised at a strategic level, is concerned with the management or governing of the relations between the organisation (and management) and its stakeholders.

Sundaram and Inkpen (2004:370) state in this regard that managers must develop relationships that inspire stakeholders, and create communities that provide a context in which everyone aspires to do their best to deliver value. In the main, organisations engaging in activities designed to primarily increase profit, have become outdated due to the fact that a greater awareness of stakeholders about prosperity in general now demand preference (O'Dwyer, 2005:809). As a consequence, managers have realised that strategic communication encompasses the management of a wide range of relations between an organisation and its stakeholders. This realisation acknowledges that companies should engage in strategic communication management, which involves determining its quality, as well as the position of the function within the organisation (O'Dwyer, 2005:809).

Strategic communication management (also referred to as SCM) is therefore a multidisciplinary endeavour. It has its roots in diverse strands of social sciences (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2007:18-19). Like every discipline, strategic communication did not emerge in a void, but instead is dependent on institutions for its evolution. It implies the intentional communication of an organisation, and therefore theoretically requires a purposeful actor, rationale and deliberate decision-making, as well as the implementation and evaluation of strategic communication programmes (Hallahan *et al.*, in Sandhu, 2009).

As a context to strategic communication, it is therefore suggested by some scholars that what sounds rather easy and straightforward is one of the key problems of strategic communication and management. More and more scholars in strategic management question the ability of actors to act rationally in a contingent environment (Olukotun & Omotoso, 2017; Frost & Michelsen, 2017; Okigbo & Onoja 2017; Lock, *et al.*, 2016; Singh, 2014; Haywood & Besley 2014; Balogun, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2002; Jenkins, Ambrosini & Collier, 2007; Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington, 2002; Powell, 2002; Pozzebon, 2004).

In a contemporary scientific environment, generations of different ideologies and schools of thought have endeavoured to broaden the strategic communication management process through education and literature. To a larger degree, education and the available literature have conceptualised and operationalised 'strategic' communication on various levels at universities, non-governmental institutions, governmental and private sector institutions. Subsequently, African scholars have also begun to revolutionise the practice of strategic communication in various sectors (see Olukotun & Omotoso, 2017; Okigbo & Onoja, 2017; Rensburg, 2007; Niemann, 2005). This endeavour by African scholars ushers in an African perspective on the management of communication, and in particular the introduction of what is to be known as strategic communication, strategic political communication and the African governance system.

However, much of the efforts undertaken to enhance the scope of strategic communication management (SCM) in governance at a provincial level remain minimal. In context, this implies that the role of strategic communication is not yet fully explored, particularly in the Provincial Government level. In some cases, the
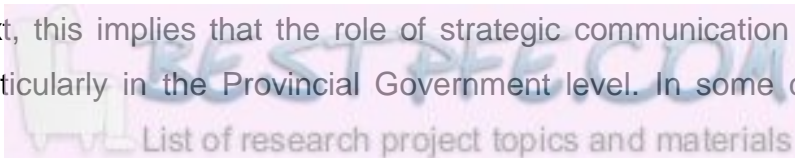
strategic management of communication is not integrated and practised as a managerial function in order to support governance activities and more so sustainability programmes (as developmental programmes) (Rensburg, 2007).

Consequently, it is for the afore-mentioned reasons that this study endeavoured to explore how the strategic management of communication can support governance initiatives from a participatory communication perspective, in order to, amongst others, obtain inclusive citizenry engagement at a provincial level of government. Accordingly, efficient strategic communication about sustainability programmes may be crucial in determining how the expectations, needs, and interests of ordinary citizens are addressed, particularly in the North-West Province, as the study's setting.

Against this backdrop, SCM epitomises an imperative function of government, responsible for improving three principle elements of the latter: efficiency (building broad support and legitimacy for programmes), responsiveness (knowing citizens' needs and responding to them), and accountability – explaining government stewardship and providing mechanisms to hold governments accountable (CommGAP, 2009). Most importantly, understanding and addressing citizens' needs, interests and expectations is crucial to the South African government context, particularly in the Provincial Government sphere as a terrain to empower, render services, and to be accountable for every action to support local communities.

In South Africa, Provincial Governments are therefore entrusted with the responsibility of governing citizens and addressing concerns through governance machinery that encourages public participation. Likewise, the government, as a social institution, should build, maintain, and evaluate citizenry relationships. Accordingly, a citizenry is an authority that gives any governmental structure authorisation to operate (corporate citizenship) within a particular environment – as a result, governmental activities and programmes have to recognise the importance of inclusive stakeholder (citizenry in this case) management and stakeholder engagement though people-centred governance methods.

The importance of governing stakeholders is further highlighted in the King III Report on Governance for South Africa, 2009, which asserts that transparent and efficient

communication management mechanisms ought to be co-ordinated to integrate stakeholders in building trust, making decisions, reporting and assuring stakeholder confidence through organisational programmes. Purposively, a separate chapter is dedicated to managing and governing stakeholders in the King III Report (see King III, 2009; Rensburg & De Beer, 2011).

The King IV Report, issued in 2016, builds on this by stating that there is an interdependent relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders, and the organisation's ability to create value for itself depends on its ability to create value for others. An organisation becomes attuned to the opportunities and challenges posed by the triple context in which it operates by having regard to the needs, interests and expectations of stakeholders (King IV, 2016). To this end, balancing the needs, interests and expectations of stakeholders is a dynamic and ongoing process. The quality of stakeholder relationships indicates how effectively an organisation is able to strike this balance in making its decisions. Moreover, the report indicates that an organisation is an integral part of society; it has corporate citizenship status and operates in a societal context (King IV, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, citizens' play an essential role in government processes at times – particularly at the Provincial Government level. This occurs when given an opportunity to become involved in decision-making processes. The essential role that citizens play herein refers to their involvement, participation, and decision-making in governance initiatives, which might imply their contribution to strategy and policy development. To a greater extent, one of the key roles performed by citizens is often to assess how the Provincial Government programmes address their needs, interests, and expectations to encourage public participation – from a governance perspective. Through governance, it is believed that citizens' intensify their role and contribute wherever there are perceived benefits. For this reason, it is thus imperative for sustainability programmes to be responsive to the expectations of citizens for continuous public participation.

As a context to this study, governance simply implies Provincial Government policies, strategies, and plans that attempt to encourage public participation (equity in decision-making and implementation) as an activity of government. On the other hand, sustainability programmes herein refer to economic, social, and environmental

programmes – also referred to as the triple context environment – that is intended for citizens' livelihood. Through governance initiatives and sustainability programmes, this study seeks to explore in the main how an inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of strategic communication management principles and practice in the North-West Province.

In doing so, the study recognised strategic communication management as a concerted effort to understand the nature and complexity of communicating sustainability programmes that have inclusive citizenry engagement as an objective, and that addresses the needs, interests, and expectations of citizens. In addition, it is of importance to consider that strategic communication is not a panacea – it is not a solution to all problems and should never be regarded as such. What is important about strategic communication is the context and methods of application – it requires a deliberate and well-thought through process to adopt and implement. Likewise, strategic communication is a goal-driven process with a set of objectives in mind.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, under the previous dispensation (pre-1994), basic decisions concerning development were made for the people, who became passive receivers of development with no opportunity for them to identify their needs, act on them and decide on their destiny (Tadesse *et al.*, 2006). The post-apartheid era (post-1994), however, brought about changes in the South African governance model. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996) outlines this new approach of an accountable, transparent government, responsive to the needs and development of the people. In line with the government's goals of democratising development and ensuring that communities actively participate in their own development, policies, strategies and mechanisms have also been put in place to support the principles of participatory communication at local government (i.e. municipal) level (DPLG, 2005:11).

At the point of approximately twenty four years after the formal introduction of electoral democracy in 1994, South Africa had therefore developed a system of tentative multi-dimensional participatory democracy, positioned within a base

framework of constitutional and electoral democracy, but extended through a relatively wide range of initiatives that introduced multiple levels of engagement between government and citizenry forms of engagement that impacted on most of the phases of political and policy decision-making. The system spanned electoral cycle activities that were supplemented with participatory actions that fed into the two participatory thrusts of interest articulation-policy making, and active engagement in a range of actions of governance and policy evaluation.

The participatory actions were both solicited-structured and spontaneous-unsolicited. In the spirit of democratic engagement and continuous contestation, all of these actions became part of the democratic-era repertoire of citizen engagement with the institutions and processes of South African government. The roots of participatory approaches in development can be traced to the early 1970s when scholars in the development studies community started questioning the top-down approaches predominantly used in the 1950s and 1960s (Agunga, 1997:138; Yoon, 1996).

Until that period, developed countries were prescribing development for their people, whilst providing economic or other assistance (Rahim, 1994:118), but as a result of concrete experiences of failed projects and policies, they started questioning their own prescriptions. Development had often not improved conditions for the people materially, socially or psychologically (Agunga, 1997:146; Arnst, 1996:10). In addition, the "driving force of democratisation" (Malan, 1998:60) contributed to the emergence of concepts such as participation, empowerment and emancipation in the development process. This led to the view that grassroots participation reinforces the chances for communities to adopt development activities appropriate for them.

In the same way as developers, communicators responded to the shift towards participation in development by echoing the new approaches in their work (Yoon, 1996). Participatory communication focuses on people's involvement in all stages of a communication development project, and stands in direct contrast with practices where the emphasis is on projects implemented with, and by outside help and in which the beneficiaries are merely passive receivers of the finished product (Thomas, 1994:54). This new approach pointed the way to a theory of the sharing of information and knowledge, trust, and commitment in development projects. By focusing on participatory involvement of the people, "another world" (Schoen,

1996:250) is opened in which communities can determine the course of their own lives, concentrating on their unique needs, developing solutions, and making changes of their own choice.

As a consequence, the growth history of South Africa is, however, overshadowed by the apartheid era which reflected an authoritarian style of governance. This approach prevented the majority of South Africans, particularly black people, from the basic right to make decisions politically, socially and economically (Tadesse *et al.*, 2006:20). People and communities were treated as passive recipients of development and had no say in their own growth. With the advent of democracy in 1994 and a new democratic government, a new approach to development was born, which was aligned to the principles of democratic governance. New policies, legislation, strategies and plans were initiated to support the improvement of the lives of the poor and the previously disadvantaged. The policies encouraged participation, community empowerment and democratic involvement of communities in the improvement process (Everett & Gwagwa, 2005:4).

The term 'participatory democracy' is rarely used by the South African government and the citizens alike to describe the processes that take places in the country, the strategic role played by communication in democracy initiatives is often not openly discussed either. In order to enhance these participatory and democratic policies towards development, the South African governance structure has positioned municipalities, also referred to as local government, to drive social development, economic growth and service delivery at a local level.

It is against the above background that this study seeks to measure the strategic role of communication in, amongst others, influencing participatory communication projects for social change. Four districts or regions that constitute the whole of the North-West Province are accessed to explore the role of strategic communication management in supporting governance and sustainability programmes to achieve inclusive citizenry engagement through participatory perspectives.

One of the fundamental questions in the government administration of the North-West Province is the level of engagement and participation of citizens in an inclusive governance model. By and large, the importance of participatory communication

cannot be realised in any unidirectional and linear approach – participatory communication in nature is two-way. Moreover, the participation of citizens through the strategic management of disseminating strategic messages for engagement has to be co-ordinated and directed with a commitment to formulating a two-way communication approach.

This worldview of two-way communication through participation in governance initiatives and sustainability programmes emphasises a dynamic, interactional, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups, and institutions, on the one hand, and the North-West Provincial Government on the other that enables people, both individually and collectively, to realise their full potential and be engaged in their own welfare, as further postulated by Singhal (2003).

From this perspective, governance initiatives and sustainability programmes should take the trust, ownership of programmes and confidence of citizens into account. In support of this, the King III and IV Reports posit that those charged with the responsibilities of stakeholder governance should strive to achieve the appropriate balance between their various stakeholder groupings, which in the context of this study, imply the best interests of the citizens of the North-West Province.

This can be achieved when the organisation (in this case, the Provincial Government) accounts for the legitimate interests and expectations of its citizens in its decision-making that represent their best interests (King III Report, 2009; King IV Report, 2016). In the main, governance initiatives and sustainability programmes should recognise that the process of communication with citizens must be in clear and understandable language, which further allows citizens to have ownership of programmes and affirm confidence, support and participation to government activities.

In support of the above argument, Morris (2003) suggests that the participatory model entails working with community members to determine their needs and to design programmes that address locally-identified priorities, rather than imposing an intervention from above. Morris argues further that activities informed by the participatory model frequently combine media with interpersonal communication.

As a consequence, when implementing sustainability programmes it can be considered that participatory radios, imbizos, and community-based centres form part of government activities which actively engage community members in the planning, implementation, and assessment of strategic programmes. Accordingly, a key distinguishing aspect of participatory approaches is a stronger focus on the process, rather than on a communication product, as elaborated by Morris (2003). From this perspective, governance initiatives and sustainability programmes must therefore be goal-orientated and conform to the expectations of citizens, while addressing their identified needs and interests through projects designed to encourage public participation and inclusivity.

For inclusivity to be realised, one of the fundamental tools of the strategic management of communication is the ability to utilise resources significantly in positioning the needs and interests of stakeholders (in this case citizens) at the forefront. In doing so, organisations are able to manage strategic relationships together with citizens' expectations for social change and cohesion. These can further be achieved when complete, timely, relevant, accurate, honest and accessible information is provided by the organisation to its stakeholders, whilst having regard to legal and strategic considerations (King III Report, 2009).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Achieving inclusive citizenry engagement through strategic communication management is pivotal for governance initiatives and the efficiency of sustainability programmes in the North-West Province. Major parts of governance initiatives (policies, legislation, strategies, and public participation in the administration of provincial governance) and sustainability programmes (triple-context programmes, like social welfare, economic and environmental programmes) do not conform to the needs, interests, and expectations of grassroots' citizens. The public apathy that could result from this can, amongst other challenges, be attributed to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of citizenry about how their needs, interests and expectations are being addressed in government.

From a participatory communication perspective, it can therefore be assumed that corporate governance mechanisms and sustainability programmes are often not

interpreted and practically translated to inform citizens about how their needs, interests and expectations are being addressed. As such, little positive change takes place in the attitudes and behaviours of citizens to improve their lives.

It is important to recognise that communities will participate in development programmes if there are perceived benefits for them. Such benefits should practically address the immediate needs and interests of citizens – this is where citizens expect social equity (added-value from the Provincial Government) and positive improvements in their lives. Hence, this study endeavours to understand how strategic communication management can support and enhance governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province to ensure inclusive citizenry engagement.

1.4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The practical goal of this study revolves around the notion of examining the extent to which strategic communication management is applied to *support* governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. In the main, strategic communication management programmes and efforts should be viewed as an instrument of discovering the imperatives of peoples' needs, interests, and expectations through inclusive people's governance, and its sustainability programmes. It is alongside this background, that this study seeks to measure the way in which the North-West Provincial Government may facilitate participation and citizenry engagement for empowerment through strategic communication management.

This study further recognises that in any developing society, the process of raising questions and engaging in dialogue sparks critical consciousness, which enables the shift from reflection to action. Habermas (1984; 1989) articulates the importance of communicative action through interpretive discourse for better action and results. He states that for any communicative effort to materialise positively, parties concerned in the communication process should interpret their interaction (reflect and act) to give meaning and attain some form of action. Such action should be the result of a deliberate and rational communication effort – strategic communication. The shift from reflection to action emphasises an exchange among individuals that values each person's perspective and voice, generating the emergence of communicators

who create a stronger collective voice for change at many levels of society (Habermas, 1984).

This study resonates from the notion that, linking strategic communication management to a participatory communication perspective would yield favourable results for governance and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province. This notion can further be advanced through the belief that, for any strategic communication message to be communicated successfully it should, therefore: be targeted at the right audience; be capable of gaining attention; be understandable; be relevant; and be acceptable. From this perspective, strategic communication management advocates that, for any effective communication to occur, messages should be designed to fit the cognitive capability of the target audience. All of these issues will be related to the context of the North-West Province of South Africa.

Therefore, the current study advances the above-mentioned notion of strategic communication management through a participatory perspective. In doing so, the study further recognises that strategic messages should be organised with a deliberate purpose to effect a greater degree of change. It also encourages participation from parties concerned in a communication process. Likewise, the use of strategic communication management for governance and sustainability in the North-West Province is investigated through a participatory communication perspective, in order to ensure an inclusive citizenry engagement.

For the purpose of this study and as a context, strategic communication management can be regarded as a vertical process – a strategic process, which is two-way and takes place between top management and employees. This strategic process largely depends on the horizontal or technical level of participatory communication that takes place between the organisation and its stakeholders. The technical level is where citizens engage with each other to reach consensus and to ultimately identify and prioritise their needs, interests and expectations. Such consolidated and prioritised needs, interests and expectations can then be addressed at a strategic level to obtain citizenry inclusivity in planning, while implementing sustainability programmes and influencing governance initiatives.

Interrogating the level of programmatic communication in the North-West Province positions the study to understand that, participatory communication (horizontal/technical process) would not succeed until the target audience (citizens) actually takes some action by engaging in empowering development initiatives that seek to uplift their lives for the better. This view is further supported through Habermas' (1984) communicative action paradigm, which argues that social actors achieve understanding through cooperative interpersonal interpretation of the situation at hand and seek to achieve consensus through rational engagements.

It is important to note that communicative action does not assume a shared goal by the social actors; but rather a more realistic situation in which actors pursue their own goals, with potentially divergent interests, and by coordinating their plans of action (Habermas, 1984). To achieve this process of communicative action, the North-West Provincial Government can collaborate with citizens to understand their needs and expectations.

What distinguishes communicative action from the other action types is that in the case of the former, the social actors' co-ordinate their actions by cooperative processes of interpretation. Any degree of change, whether in attitude or behaviour of citizens, implies that the purpose of communication has actually succeeded. As the study notes, strategic communication messages should persuade, inform, educate and entertain in all respective areas to ascertain action and improve communication results, which can be applied in the North-West Province with the aim of achieving citizenry inclusivity.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the need for an interpretive framework to understand how inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved through strategic communication management in the North-West Province, the following primary research question was posed.

Primary research question: How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of strategic communication management for governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province?

Secondary research questions:

1. How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory perspective?

2. How can strategic communication management for sustainability programmes support inclusive citizenry engagement?

3. How can strategic communication management for governance initiatives support inclusive citizenry engagement?

To achieve this, the study adopted a qualitative approach with various techniques and methods.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent debates in the field of strategic communication literature and progress have unfolded in two conflicting, yet motivating perspectives. In his recent article, "A framework for strategic communication research: A call for synthesis and consilience" (agreement between the approaches to a topic of different academic disciplines), Howard Nothhaft (2016:69) makes a few observations that questions the credibility and scope of strategic communication as a discipline attached to the social sciences. Nothhaft's perspective is that the field of strategic communication lacks reasonably verified scientific knowledge that goes substantially beyond common sense.

Inspired by the biologist Edward O. Wilson (1998), Nothhaft urges the field to work towards "non-relativistic conjectures about the world" that may constitute what he calls a "nucleus for research to accumulate around" (Nothhaft, 2016:69). Using the natural sciences as a yardstick for proper scientific inquiry, Nothhaft calls for collective efforts to reinvigorate the field of strategic communication by uncovering its inherent nature and, in a sense, make it more scientific.

Another perspective is forwarded through an article entitled: The Nature of Strategic Communication: A Rejoinder to Nothhaft. In this article, Christensen and Svensson (2017) argue that although they respect the effort put into Howard Nothhaft's article and commend him for daring to wrestle with such intricate matters, the authors

concede that Nothhaft's analysis is misguided and highly problematic. Moreover, the authors recognise and acknowledge several dimensions in Nothhaft's diagnosis and critique of the field. Strategic communication is not very well theoretically grounded and certainly displays traces of folk psychology, ideologisation, and vulgarised versions of social constructionism (Christensen & Svensson, 2017:180-183).

Christensen and Svensson (2017:180) furthermore suggest that Howard Nothhaft clearly puts his finger at a sore spot when he claims that the field spends a lot of efforts on the "banality" (ordinariness/predictability) of keeping up with rapid technological developments. Overall, therefore, Christensen and Svensson do however acknowledge that they are not opposed to Nothhaft's efforts, but they find that his proposed solution or "cure" to the ailments of the field, including his flirtation with Wilson, directs the field in the wrong direction. Consequently, Howard Nothhaft bemoans the absence of vigorous debate in the field (Christensen & Svensson, 2017). Hence, the authors agree and see his article and their rejoinder as an excellent opportunity to initiate a culture of discussion in strategic communication.

From these perspectives, it is evident that Howard Nothhaft's analysis lacks in-depth understanding of the field. His focus is merely on the unscientific nature of the field, not the fundamental development of literature and empirical discourse. Another oversight from Howard Nothhaft is the failure to acknowledge the origin and evolution of the strategic communication field as a multidisciplinary endeavour (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007:18). It is therefore disingenuous of Nothhaft to omit that strategic communication is not a 'soft skill' that can be practised and applied as a panacea to every situation. The scientific nature of strategic communication is therefore context-based, and should be considered as such.

It is also imperative to note that the strategic communication field is goal-driven and depends largely on the mandate and objectives of the initiators – additionally, strategic communication is not a stand-alone. The field greatly relies on programmes and various institutions to succeed. Christensen and Svensson (2017) posit that Nothhaft's article ostensibly addresses the weaknesses of strategic communication. Such critique is welcome, necessary, and timely. Yet, the exact focus of his critique remains obscure. On the one hand, he repeatedly resorts to a critique of the social sciences in general – as if these, including economics, political science, law,

sociology, etc., constitute one field. On the other hand, his argumentation is largely based on public relations, assuming that this field represents not only strategic communication, but also the social sciences as a whole. From that vantage point, he delivers a caricature of the social sciences, e.g., by suggesting that the field at large writes off genetic predispositions and by assuming that cultural determinism, in its extreme form, is the typical orientation of the social sciences.

For the purpose of the current study, it is subsequently important to also acknowledge that strategic communication is a developing academic field, with the potential to theoretically expand over the years. Being a rather young and nascent discipline, strategic communication management, however, still struggles with its own identity (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Vercic, & Sriramesh, 2007:28). Young disciplines tend to be open to explanatory models adapted from neighbouring disciplines while working on their distinctive theoretical paradigm. This perspective, however, does not directly or indirectly imply that the credibility and strands of the discipline should be insubstantially questioned without empirical foundations.

On the other hand, African scholars and academics have begun to make strands on the application and practice of strategic communication in various institutions. Strategic communication and the management of communication is not fairly new in the African context, however, very little evidence prevail on the strategic nature and development of the discipline in Africa. Consequently, literature on the practice of strategic communication in government spheres, agencies and institutions is still relatively under prioritised.

Nonetheless, efforts undertaken to revolutionise the discipline and to add an African perspective on the global landscape have intensified over the last two decades (Bosch, 2018; Okigbo & Onoja, 2017; De Beer, 2014; Rensburg, 2007; Steyn & Niemann, 2014; Verwey, 2015; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Niemann, 2005; Van Heerden, 2004). Against this backdrop, the current study labours on the growth and application of strategic communication management at the provincial sphere of the South African government, with the view to contribute to the revolution of the discipline in the African context.

To significantly capture the debates, perspectives, and critiques of the strategic communication discipline and the link to participatory communication perspectives to attain inclusive citizenry engagement, two separate chapters have intentionally been dedicated to both the literature and theoretical underpinnings of strategic communication management. In Chapter Three, the study critically reviews both contemporary and historical issues relating to the participatory communication perspective for inclusive citizenry engagement; the theoretical posture of the study is also discussed. Chapter Four therefore critically considers the prevailing literature on strategic communication management for governance and sustainability – both contemporary and historical aspects are reviewed. But first, the theoretical orientation of the study as an interdisciplinary endeavour is discussed.

1.6.1 Theoretical underpinnings and perspectives

For the purpose of the current study, an interdisciplinary approach is espoused for the theoretical orientation. It is important to consider strategic communication together with other disciplines, when developing a framework to describe how strategic communication management can support and enhance governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province to ensure inclusive citizenry engagement. The interdisciplinary approach adopted in this study is therefore presented as a meta-theoretical synthesis in Chapter Three. To this end, both the social theory and the legitimacy perspective are employed as grand-theoretical domains of the study.

Contextual to this study, legitimacy theory argues that organisations are continually seeking to ensure that they operate within the bounds and norms of their respective societies (Deegan, 2000). Legitimacy can be considered, therefore, as "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995:574).

These bounds and norms are not considered to be fixed, but rather, to change over time, thereby requiring the organisation to be responsive to the environment in which it operates. Similar to social contract theory, legitimacy theory is grounded on the notion that there is a social contract between the society and an organisation. An

organisation receives permission to operate from the society and is ultimately accountable to the society for how it operates and what it does, because society provides corporations with the authority to own and use natural resources and to hire employees (Deegan 2004; King III Report, 2009; King IV Report, 2016).

To this end, organisations attempt to establish congruence between "the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system of which they are part" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975:122). Consistent with this view, Richardson (1987:352) asserts that accounting or accountability is a legitimating institution and provides a "means by which social values are linked to economic actions".

Organisations seek legitimacy through either substantive management, which involves real, material change in organisational managerial practice, or symbolic management with a choice of ways that will make the organisation appear consistent with social values and expectations (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). The choice of approach depends on whether the organisation seeks to extend, maintain, or defend its legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995). Symbolic management is common when an organisation is extending legitimacy, but more when defending legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990).

Existing legitimacy of an organisation is threatened, questioned or challenged when the organisation's adverse effects on the environment are apparent (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). The intensity of legitimating depends on factors such as the need for speed of response, the availability of resources, management response flexibility, the constituents' challenge, organisation stigmatisation, the ripple effect to other constituents, time to plan, and extent to which legitimacy was taken for granted (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990).

For the purpose of the current study, legitimacy theory purposely connect well with strategic communication and the participatory communication perspective so as to understand the legitimacy of the North-West Provincial Government's communication goals in addressing citizenry needs, interests, and expectations. Citizens are viewed as an integral part of the government's environmental component to exercise legitimacy. Societal values and legitimacy are therefore

intrinsically dependent on how governance initiatives and sustainability programmes are practically translated to respond to the communication challenges of citizens. For legitimacy to practically materialise, the North-West Province has to consider social norms and bounds. As such, citizens remain an integral societal authority that refute or affirm government's legitimacy to operate – social theory.

It is in this context that the current study locates legitimacy theory and social theory as the guiding lens to better understand and comprehensively assess how strategic communication can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. This is done with the sole aim of positioning strategic communication as a tool to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement while adopting a participatory communication perspective. Both the social theory and legitimacy theory strategically connect fields such as communication management, development communication, and political science as a way to comprehensively understand various theoretical interdisciplinary perspectives embedded in this study.

1.7 INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

For the purpose of this study, inclusive citizenry engagement departs from the premise of stakeholder engagement and more specifically citizen engagement. An extension is attempted by the researcher to conceptualise inclusive citizenry engagement.

> *In the main, inclusive citizenry engagement is about the right of the people to define the public good, determine the policies by which they will seek the good, and to reform or replace institutions that do not serve that good. Inclusivity of citizens can also be summarised as a means of working together to make a difference in the civil life of communities and developing the combination of skills, knowledge, values, and motivation in order to make that difference. It means promoting a quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.*

Therefore, the role of communication that is practised and applied for a strategic purpose is important in advancing inclusive citizenry engagement. It is through the strategic role of communication that debates, discussions and dialogues can be realised as meaningful. Communication creates a platform where actors become

actively involved in determining important aspects of engaging with each other – and subsequently formulating rules of engagement. However, such communications need to be two-way for all parties to have equal opportunities of addressing each other and formulating strategies that will benefit all of them. In context, this should take place through a participative process which allows citizens to identify and prioritise their needs, interests and expectations – which, as a result, should be addressed through the strategic process.

The notion of inclusive citizenry engagement can further be advanced through self-regulation mechanisms, whereby citizens advance regulatory measures of interactions, engagements and mutual relationships through a particular social cognitive framework. The regulatory framework should allow citizens to govern their ability to become active and responsive stakeholders within a given society. This assertion of self-regulation is further supported through a theory of self-regulation. The theory posits that a self-regulating person controls and manages his or her reactions and behaviour to achieve goals despite changing conditions and priorities.

Behaviour and outcomes are aspects of self-regulation that can be observed, but there are always many implicit and unobservable influences such as the person's perceptions and emotional state (Carver, 2004). This concept of inclusive citizenry engagement is advanced throughout the study to capture the essence of comprehensively communicating sustainability programmes that encourage equal participation and engagement from the North-West Provincial Government's perspective of governance.

1.8   A   PARTICIPATORY   COMMUNICATION   PERSPECTIVE   TOWARDS INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

The notion of participatory communication stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities, and of democratisation and participation at all levels – international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'. Freire (1983:76) refers to this as the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word. This is not the privilege of some few men (and women), but the right of every person. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can he (or she) say it

for another in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words (Barranquero, 2011; Huesca, 2002; Paul 2011; Lie & Servaes, 2015).

In order to share information, knowledge, trust, and commitment in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process. This calls for a new attitude for overcoming stereotyped thinking and to promote more understanding of diversity and plurality, with full respect to the dignity and equality of people living in different conditions and acting in different ways.

It is evident that participation and communication are terms with broad and multifaceted connotations – trying to define them specifically result in a difficult task, even harder is providing a widely acceptable definition of participatory communication. This study seeks to provide distinctive and comprehensive definitions of the two terms.

For the scope of this study, participatory communication is regarded as an approach based on dialogue, which allows the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among various stakeholders and thereby facilitates their empowerment, especially for those who are most vulnerable and marginalised. Participatory communication is not just the exchange of information and experiences, it is also the exploration and generation of new knowledge aimed at addressing situations that need to be improved.

So pertinently, Lie and Servaes (2015) contend that participatory communication had and still has a strong presence in development communication (for an overview see Srampickal, 2006). Especially in the 1980s and 1990s, when participation became the buzz word in the development sector, participatory communication established itself as a sub-discipline of communication science.

1.8.1 The development context

At the annual meeting of the International Broadcast Institute at Cologne in 1973, a report of the Working Committee on Communication in Support of Development had the following definitions of the key concepts:

- Development: The improvement of the well-being of the individual and the betterment of the quality of his or her life.
- Communication: The transfer of information between individuals or groups of individuals by human or technical means.
- Development Support Communication: The systematic use of communication in the planning and implementation of development.

While these definitions appear to capture the central issues of these key concepts, they are not operational enough. They fail to provide the framework for explanation and/or demonstration to enable in-depth understanding and realistic and practical application. Accordingly, an attempt to provide a more comprehensive framework is made here.

a) Development

One of the best-known scholars of Development and Communication, Everette Rogers, defined development as being a participatory process of social change and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment' (Rogers 1976:345-358). Inayatullah (1967:101), on the other hand, identifies the different aspects of development and defines it as change toward patterns of society that allow better realisation of human values; that allow a society greater power over its environment and over its own political destiny; and that enable its individuals to gain increased control (see Lie & Servaes 2015; Kelly, 2012; Lyytimäki *et al.*, 2013; Servaes, 2013a, 2013b).

b) Communication

In the context of this study, communication is considered as being the exchange of ideas. It is not so much the mechanical transfer of facts and figures as the mathematical model of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) would appear to indicate. It is also not talking at people. It is an interactive process that works in a circular, dynamic and on-going way (Hiebert *et al.*, 1985). It is talking with people – a process with no permanent sender and no permanent receiver. In communication, the roles of sending and receiving change, depending on who is talking and who is listening. This implies freedom, equality and shared interest.

c) Development communication

Concisely, development communication is the application of the processes of communication to the development process. It is the use of the principles and practices of the exchange of ideas to development objectives. It is, therefore, an element of the management process in the overall planning and implementation of development programmes. In a very broad sense, development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country (economic growth, modernisation, and industrialisation) and the mass of its people (self-actualisation, fulfilment of human potential, greater social justice, etc.) through what Rosario Braid (1979:34) describes as the identification and utilisation of appropriate expertise in the development process that will assist in increasing participation of intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

1.8.2 The participative context

Authentic participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society. Participation "may not sit well with those who favour the status quo and thus they may be expected to resist such efforts of reallocation of more power to the people" (Lozare, 1994:242). Therefore, development and participation are inextricably linked. Participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantage of groups in power. Structural change involves the redistribution of power. In mass communication areas, many communication experts agree that structural change should occur first in order to establish participatory communication policies. Mowlana and Wilson (1987:143), for instance, state:

> *Communications policies are basically derivatives of the political, cultural and economic conditions and institutions under which they operate. They tend to legitimise the existing power relations in society, and therefore, they cannot be substantially changed unless there are fundamental structural changes in society that can alter these power relationships themselves.*

Since dialogue and face-to-face interaction is inherent in participation, the development communicator will find him/herself spending more time in the field. It will take some time to develop rapport and trust. Continued contact, meeting
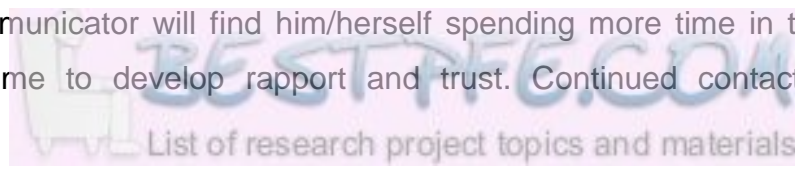
commitments, keeping promises, and following up between visits, are important. Development of social trust precedes task trust. Both parties will need patience. It is important to note that when we treat people the way we ourselves would like to be treated; we learn to work as a team, which brings about honesty, trust, commitment and motivation. This also brings about genuine participation – and genuine participation brings about appropriate policies and planning for developing a country within its cultural and environmental framework.

Although participation is essentially about, as Robert Chambers (1997) put it, "Whose reality counts?" the literature identifies three key dimensions of participation in development programmes (Uphoff, 1986). Firstly, it refers to the centrality of local knowledge in determining problems, identifying solutions, and assessing results. Communities, rather than experts or other external agents, should determine challenges and decide appropriate courses of action to tackle problems through dialogue and critical thinking.

Secondly, communities have a protagonist role in making decisions about the goals and the direction of programmes and actions. As such, if decisions are left to agencies and their cadres of professionals, and not to communities, programmes and actions can become disconnected from the actual motivations and expectations of communities. Thirdly, communities need to be involved in the implementation of activities. When actions are conducted by external actors, communities are displaced to a secondary role and thus remain distant from actions that are, in principle, designed to have an impact on their lives. Empowerment is the result of the process by which communities decide what to do, lead where to go, and are involved in actions (Waisbord, 2008:509).

Participation plays a weaker role in the first two components than in the third one. Available evidence suggests that development programmes are more likely to feature active communities involved in the implementation of activities, than assessing problems and solutions or making decisions about goals (Holland & Blackburn, 1998). Subsequently, participatory action research and its similar methodologies that foreground community knowledge on participation are usually situational; however, such actions are not the starting point for community

involvement. Programmes are barely subjected to the 'tyranny of participation,' as Cooke and Khotari (2001) have argued.

As a consequence, participation, understood as the prioritisation of local knowledge and local needs, is rarely a driving factor. Thus, communities are not taking the lead in making decisions about programmatic goals. Agencies and donors wield power in the definition of goals, budgets, management, and the overall direction of programmes.

In recent years, public participation has emerged as a mechanism for promoting good governance in developing nations. It is now being related to the rights of citizens in democratic governance and to best practices of governance. Public participation is also said to contribute to developing better citizens who are more aware of the preferences of others, more self-confident in their actions, and more civic minded in resolving problems for the common good (Schmitter & Karl, 1993).

The Manila Declaration on Peoples' Participation and Sustainable Development (1989) states that citizen participation is a tool to promote democracy; it empowers citizens and builds citizenship, balances the power of the elites and the poor, and facilitates local, regional, national, continental and global dialogue on issues of concern. Thus, governments, particularly those of poor countries, have made participatory governance one of their priorities. In public administration, public participation has been seen as an effective tool to ensure responsiveness of government policies and programmes to the needs of the citizens. In this context, participation is defined as the involvement of citizens, to a greater or lesser degree in the making, implementation, monitoring, review and termination of policies and decisions that affect their lives (Masango, 2002:53)

Naidoo (2008:33) writes that participatory governance is vital in providing opportunities for various stakeholders, aside from those in government, to have a say in decision-making processes. A sense of collective responsibility and ownership is ensured when policies are formulated with the consent of those who will be affected by these policies. It is also a means of enhancing democracy. In the main, participatory governance, in the context of African diversity, should mean inclusive governance. To overcome conflicts, governance should be inclusive of all national

socio-cultural and ethnic diversities. Furthermore, given malfunctioning economies and the limited capacity of the state to discharge development functions, the active partnership of non-state actors (private sector and civil society) in the economy is imperative.

Table 1.1: Participatory versus non-participatory communication strategies

PARTICIPATION	VS	NON-PARTICIPATION
Horizontal/lateral communications between participants		Vertical top-down communication from senders to receivers
Process of dialogue and democratic participation		Campaign to mobilise in a short-term without building capacity
Long-term process of sustainable change		Short-term planning and quick-fix solutions
Collective empowerment and decision-making		Individual behaviour change
With the community's involvement		For the community
Specific in content, language, and culture		Massive and broad-based
People's needs are the focus		Donors' musts are the focus
Owned by the community		Access determined by social, political and economic factors
Consciousness-raising		Persuasion for short-term

Source: Dagron (2001).

This implies empowering citizens, who should be seen as the means and ends of development. Participatory governance also requires a state supported by competent institutions, capable of providing the right direction to society. Table 1.1 illustrates the difference in levels of participatory communication versus non-participatory communication, which are diverse and immensely fragmented. Agencies such as the World Bank have also recognised Local Participation and Community Empowerment as one of the main entry points to good governance (CommGAP, 2007:3).

a) Participatory communication

The researcher is of the view that participatory communication is a complex process with various theoretical and practical underpinnings to effect social change and citizen engagement. Thus, it is imperative to firstly define participatory

communication as an engagement process that allows for a two-way communication method to involve all role players in the participatory context.

Participation is the core principle underlying participatory communication. In a traditional sense, the term participatory communication is used to describe "processes of two-way communication that encourage dialogue centred on problem-analysis; people communicating with one another to search for solutions for their problems" (Bessette, in Richardson, 1997).

Believing developmental communication to be out-dated, theorists began to look at alternative, more inclusive approaches to communication during the 1960s. Consequently, a form of communication evolved that became known as 'participatory communication', which centred on two-way, dialogical forms of communication. In this regard, 'what was said became secondary to how it was said and to the way it affected others' (Griffin 2008:25). Servaes (in Dervin & Voight, 1989:225) reinforces this point, stating:

> *The former hierarchical, bureaucratic, and sender-oriented communication model has been replaced by a more horizontal, participative and receiver-oriented approach based fundamentally on interactive, participatory, and two-way communication on all levels of society.*

Participatory communication for social change can also make development initiatives scalable by employing different communication techniques and devices that address varying spatial requirements for local, regional, national and international levels of action. Furthermore, Bessette (2006) argues that communication can create a favourable ecology for development programmes by re-linking and facilitating interactions between economically, politically and culturally disconnected groups and ideas between indigenous knowledge and science, elite national policymakers and rural communities, donor agencies and local NGOs, men and women, and didactic pedagogy and participation.

Participatory communication, focusing on the active involvement of people in all stages of development projects, is crucial for sustainable development. South Africa acknowledges the importance of following a participatory communication approach for development – policy and strategies, on both national as well as local

government level support this resolve. Development agencies, practitioners and governments acknowledge that strategic communication management is an important mechanism that could bring about effective social change to ensure sustainable development.

Communication is fundamentally a social action – the articulation of social relations between people (Servaes, 1999:13; 2013a) – and one can readily conclude that participation of the people in growth initiatives is not possible without communication. True participatory communication can only come about when developmental planners and the people involved work together throughout the decision-making process, when genuine dialogue takes place, and when people are empowered to control the action taken. This process of two-way communication means people's involvement in all stages of a development project in order to reach a common goal (Bessette, 2006:8).

Moreover, going beyond the notion that strategic communication essentially plays a supportive role assisting development efforts, some development communication practitioners have started to recognise communication as the objective in and of itself; seeing that communication empowers people (Melkote, 1991; Servaes, 2013b), communication also enables expression and dialogue. Communication furthermore raises awareness of socio-structural problems and fosters self-reflection among marginalised and disadvantaged populations. However, a greater and more effective integration of communication into development programmes is only possible if its strategic values are widely recognised.

In reality, development projects tend to relegate communication components to secondary importance and to earmark relatively small budgets (Deane, 2004; Waisbord & Larson, 2005). All too often, communication strategies are expressed in too generic a form in project designs, underutilising communication, giving only implicit and common sensual roles to it without associating it with specific mandates on contents, channels, forms, actors, timing and so forth, based on firm theoretical underpinnings.

1.9 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Strategic communication management literature has evolved rapidly in South Africa, which is evident from the conceptualisation of both Steyn and De Beer (2012). Such evidence can further be traced to the origin of the *University of Pretoria School of Thought* as articulated by De Beer, Steyn and Rensburg (2013); De Beer (2014); and Rensburg and De Beer (2011). Strategic communication management, therefore, can be simply understood as the systematic planning and realisation of information flow, communication, media development and image care on a long-term horizon. It conveys deliberate messages through the most suitable media to the designated audiences at the appropriate time to contribute to and achieve the desired long-term effect (Argenti *et al.*, 2005).

For this purpose, communication management can, therefore, be regarded as a process creation. It has to bring three factors into balance: the messages, the media channels and the audiences – these factors should be considered during the strategic communication planning process.

In their conceptual work, both Steyn and De Beer (2012) successfully achieved their objective of conceptually broadening strategic communication management in the context of governance, with specific reference to stakeholder inclusiveness. This was achieved through a conceptual analysis, which broadened the reflective paradigm (the meta-theoretical approach initially selected for corporate communication and its sub-domain, SCM), and added four new meta-theoretical approaches to SCM, inter alia, the stakeholder inclusive approach to governance. In the main, the two authors contributed extensively in building a unified body of knowledge that positioned corporate communication as a discipline and strategic communication management as a sub-domain of influence in South Africa.

Consequently, the perspective on communication has changed. It is more concerned with content, process and context, that is, with the exchange of 'meanings,' and with the importance of this process, namely, the social relational patterns and social institutions that are the result of and are determined by the process. Another perspective on communication favours multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, and de-institutionalisation, interchange of sender-receiver roles (and) horizontality of

communication links at all levels of society (McQuail, 1983:97). As a result, the focus moves from a 'communicator' to a more 'receiver-centric' orientation, with the resultant emphasis on meaning sought and ascribed rather than information transmitted. With this shift in focus, one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information one is disseminating, but one is rather disseminating information for which there is a need.

As a systematically planned and co-ordinated effort of communication, strategic communication occurs within a context. From this perspective, strategic communication can be positioned as a managerial function. Furthermore, this study recognises that previous research on strategic communication extends arguments on the epistemological and ontological foundations. Unlike the institutional theory in general, literature on strategic communication management emphasises the intentional behaviour of actors and intervening variables of the environment to understand strategic decisions. The institutional theory, however, argues that the environment contributes as a factor that influences intentional behaviour. Variables such as structure and peoples' attitudes are furthermore considered to be determinants of the internal environment of the organisation.

In context, strategic communication management situates communication strategies at the heart of organisational success. Moreover, this is due to principles and elements of corporate governance and sustainability being positioned as antecedents of effective communication and an inclusive stakeholder approach at a strategic level rather than a submissive one on a technical level. In spite of its relative under-prioritisation in the context of development, few dispute the power of communication in general and in particular the catalytic role in influencing governance relationships and processes (Lie & Servaes, 2015; Servaes, 2002).

In short, strategic communication impacts on participatory communication initiatives, which then becomes sustainable. Against this backdrop, sustainability involves the organisation's assessment and improvement of its economic, environmental and social impact to align it with stakeholder requirements using, amongst others, integrated reporting (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011:152). This is further witnessed through participatory communication as linked to strategic management - where

participatory communication also advocates for a stakeholder perspective in development initiatives upon which the needs and interests of stakeholders depend.

The focal point herein advocates for a more strategic approach to communication, wherein a strategic communication perspective sounds ideal for social change and citizen empowerment. Strategic communication implies decisive strategies of planning and organising, not only for social order but also to incorporate efficient governance and sustainability programmes, specifically from an accountability perspective.

In contrast, participatory communication assumes that individuals should be active in development programmes and processes; they could contribute ideas, take the initiative and articulate their needs and problems, while at the same time, asserting their autonomy (Servaes, 2002). Therefore, emphasis is placed on the process of planning and the utilisation of communication resources, channels, approaches and strategies in governance initiatives and sustainability programmes which are designed to bring about some progress, change or development, as well as the involvement of the developing community in the change efforts.

Genuine participatory and truly effective strategic communication should occur among all parties affected, ensuring all have similar opportunities to influence the outcome of the initiative. Optimal participatory communication would be part of the whole project process horizontally, from beginning to end. Since this approach promotes the active involvement of stakeholders in investigating options and shaping decisions regarding development objectives, participatory communication also facilitates empowerment through addressing the concerns of citizens. In this way, the effects go beyond the project boundaries, spilling into the wider social and political dimensions (Servaes, 2002). Thus, there is a need for a more strategic approach to communication that inter alia connects all dimensions of the participatory process.

1.10 SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES

For the purpose of this study, sustainability refers to transparent methods of accountability, which allow citizens and those in positions of power, to enter into a dialogic process of communication. This influences the current affairs and does not jeopardise future relations located within the strategic management of continuous

communication. Skoogh *et al.* (2010:2) point out that people hear the words 'sustainable' and 'sustainability' almost every day. But what does it mean exactly? Is it about people and culture, our environment, or jobs and money? Is it about cities or the country? Sustainability is about all of these things and more. Sustainability could be defined as an ability or capacity of something to be maintained or to sustain itself. It's about taking what one needs to live now, without jeopardising the potential for people in the future to meet their needs.

Sustainability of the organisation furthermore depends on balancing the demands from the environment with the ability to meet future needs based on economic, social and environmental dimensions. The communicative organisation assumes leadership by interpreting sustainability as a transformational opportunity to improve its competitive positioning by pursuing and constantly reporting on the achievement of its sustainability policies across the economic, social and environmental 'triple bottom-line' (Skoogh *et al.*, 2010:2).

For the purpose of the current study, the North-West Provincial Government programmes that seek to empower, engage, and ultimately respond to citizen's needs, interests, and meeting their expectations are identified as follows:

- o Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT);
- o Village Township and Small Dorpies (VTSD);
- o Reconciliation, Healing and Renewal (RHR);
- o Setsokotsane (comprehensive and integrated service delivery campaign);
- o Saamtrek and Saamwerk (call for unity of purpose above race divisions).

These programmes or concretes, as they are referred to by the North-West Province are derived as key activities to implement the National Development Plan (NDP) objectives at a provincial level. The North-West Provincial Government is of the view that the five identified concretes are a means-test of reaching the NDP 2030 targets and the execution strategy of the key deliverables. This study discusses the five concretes and their objectives in more detail in Chapter Two.

Additionally, it is important to consider that the five concretes are part of the Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal strategy of the 5th Provincial Government

(the 5th Provincial Government refers to the number in which a provincial administration has occupied office since the democratic elections in 1994).

1.10.1 Stakeholder engagement

The definition and understanding of stakeholder engagement is captured correctly and broadened to give clarity and consistency by the AA1000SES (Stakeholder Engagement Standards) in their 2011 document. The document clarifies that although stakeholder engagement is not new, it is now accepted as crucial to an organisation's sustainability and success. To date, however, it has been difficult to fully understand what good or poor quality engagement is.

AA1000SES (2011) goes further to clarify that stakeholders are not just members of communities or non-governmental organisations. They are those individuals, groups of individuals or organisations that affect and/or could be affected by an organisation's activities, products or services and associated performance with regard to the issues to be addressed by the engagement.

1.10.2 Citizen engagement

Citizen engagement is a process that allows government and non-state actors to collaborate on joint decision-making in relation to policy planning and negotiation, and in finding solutions to challenges (Naidoo, 2008). The United Nations (2008) (in Gaventa & Barrett, 2010:12) state that 'engagement is regarded as an important governance norm that can strengthen the decision-making arrangements of the state and produce outcomes that favour the poor and the disadvantaged'. It is evident from this definition that citizen engagement should be included in governance as a norm and an indicator for equal decision-making arrangements. This approach will afford citizens the opportunity to engage in governance processes and to be part of key decisions that directly or indirectly affect their welfare in a state and/or province.

Ekman and Amna (2012) suggest that citizen engagement or civic participation refers to the encouragement of the general public to become involved in the political process and the issues that affect them. It is the community coming together to be a collective source of change – political and non-political. Citizen engagement has many elements, but in its most basic sense it is about decision-making or
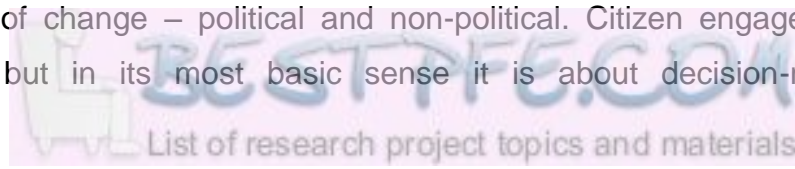
governance over who, how, and by whom a community's resources will be allocated (Ekman & Amna, 2012). The principle of civic engagement underscores the most basic principle of democratic governance, i.e. that sovereignty resides ultimately in the people (the citizens).

Baú (2016) writes that citizen engagement forms a component of participatory governance, and is crucial in reaching joint decision-making between government and civil society. In post-conflict contexts, this is crucial to introduce and also to amplify citizens' voices in the peace building process. Through participatory communication and a tailored use of the media and technology, new platforms and channels can be created for citizens to be agents in the Provincial Government sphere.

1.11 GOVERNANCE

Despite the multiplicity of meanings, it is possible to define governance according to two main groups of approaches: one that sees governance as concerned with the rules of conducting public affairs, and the other, which views governance as an activity of managing and controlling public affairs (Hyden & Court, 2002:14). Academics tend to adopt the former definition, whereas practitioners (mainly the international development institutions) promote the latter.

Governance is defined as "directed influence of social processes" (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997:2). Accordingly, governance covers all kinds of guidance mechanisms that are associated with the public policy process. These guidance mechanisms are not restricted to deliberate forms of guidance, nor is governance restricted to public actors. Similarly, Kooiman (1993) argues that governance is about purposeful action, which is the outcome of the interacting efforts of all involved parties. Another view is that governance is defined as the interplay between government and other societal actors in performing public duties (Heinrich & Lynn, 2000:2).

The concept of governance implies a configuration of separate but interrelated elements, statutes, policy mandates, organisational, financial, and programmatic structures, administrative rules and guidelines, and institutionalised rules and norms, which, in combination, establish the means and ends of governmental activity

(Heinrich & Lynn, 2000:4). The process of governance links the values and interests of citizens, legislative enactments, executive and organisational structures and roles, and judicial control in a manner that suggests interrelationships among them, and which have significant consequences for performance.

Steyn and Niemann (2014:176) furthermore posit that corporate governance, in the traditional (narrow) approach, focuses on the maximisation of shareholder wealth and can be seen as the formal system of accountability of a board of directors to shareholders (thus financially oriented). However, in the context of this current study and considering the nature of governmental institutions (for example the North-West Provincial Government), governance is viewed in its broadest sense – which relates to the formal and informal relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders (by stakeholders the study refers to the society and/or citizens of the province at large).

From this perspective, governance can be understood as the act of public administration. Public administration can be viewed as a system of structures and processes, operating within a particular society, with the objective of facilitating the formulation of appropriate governmental policy, and the efficient execution of the formulated policy, laws, norms and values directed to fulfil a particular objective (Fox *et al.*, 1991:2).

1.11.1 Government

To distinguish the term "governance" from "government", Rosenau (1999) suggests that a government is a formal body invested with the authority to make decisions in a given political system. In this case, the governance process, which includes all the actors involved in influencing the decision-making process (such as lobbies, parties, media, and citizens), is centred on the relevant "governing body". Whether the organisation is a geopolitical entity (nation-state), a corporate entity (business entity), a socio-political entity (chiefdom, tribe, family, etc.), or an informal one, its governance is the way the rules, norms and actions are produced, sustained, and regulated. The degree of formality depends on the internal rules of a given organisation.

This study interprets the definition of government as the governing body that has the authority to formulate rules, regulations and guidelines for effective governance processes. However, in some instances the governing body tends to formulate rules and regulations without the confidence of those governed. In this approach, the representation of grassroots citizens seem to be minimal (if any) in the formulation of governance programmes that address the desires of community members.

Participation and equal representation are mutually interconnected in any democratic mass mobilised society where citizens, as front troopers of change, influence the formulation of policies, decision-making and sustainable programmes (by sustainable programmes, the study refers to dialogic participatory programmes which are formulated for long-term and short-term purposes).

1.11.2 Corporate governance

Hilb (2006:9) defined corporate governance as a system by which businesses are strategically directed, integratively managed and holistically controlled in an entrepreneurial and ethical way and in a manner appropriate to each particular context. Consequently, accountability and participation are attached to the discourse of corporate governance. Corporate governance emphasises this aspect of enlarging accountability and participation in a governmental context. The government's legitimacy through governance can only be derived from a position of responsibility to and inclusion of its stakeholders – that is, citizens, in the decision-making process thereby forcing the state to engage in partnership governance.

Additionally, the King III Report (2009) asserts that the inclusive-stakeholder approach is the ability to recognise that an organisation has many stakeholders that can affect the company in the achievement of its strategy and long-term sustained growth. Stakeholders can be considered to be any group who can affect, or can be affected by, the company or its reputation. Some of the important stakeholders include shareholders, creditors, lenders, suppliers, customers, regulators, employees, the media, analysts, consumers, auditors and potential investors. This list is not exhaustive.

The King III Report goes further to ascertain that organisations from time to time need to identify important stakeholders (by groupings not by individuals) relevant to

the organisation's long-term sustainability. Individual stakeholders, which could materially affect the operations of the organisation, should be considered and identified as part of the risk management process. These could include not only stakeholders, who could cause detriment to the organisation in a material manner, but also stakeholders who could enhance the wellbeing and sustainability of the organisation and also stakeholders who could affect the reputation of the organisation. For instance, a local community may not itself affect the operations of the organisation, but the way in which the organisation impacts on the community may well affect its reputation (King III, 2009).

King IV (like its predecessor) advocates for the stakeholder-inclusive approach in which the legitimate and reasonable needs, interests and expectations of all stakeholders are considered. The report further indicates that some organisations have appointed corporate stakeholder relationship officer(s) whose sole task is to communicate with stakeholders and inform management of their legitimate and reasonable needs, interests and expectations. The officer(s) has the responsibility also to inform stakeholders what the organisation expects of them. Understanding stakeholders' expectations greatly assists the organisation to develop better strategies (King IV, 2016).

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology constitutes a systematic way and a set of methods used for collecting and analysing research data (Morse, 2002:96). Methodology includes the following concepts as they relate to a particular discipline or field of study: a collection of theories, concepts or ideas; a comparative study of different approaches; and critique of the individual methods (Creswell, 2003:37). So pertinently, Mmutle and Shonhe (2017:14) assert that people's perceptions at most, often span from opinions held of a particular subject of interest – their experiences, behaviour, and often observations become key aspects of a qualitative inquiry.

Baškarada (2014) has observed that the qualitative research paradigm has increasingly served as a unique option for knowledge sharing and academic debate over the years. Consequently, a qualitative methodology and design was employed to understand how inclusive citizenry engagement can be obtained through the

strategic management of communication for governance and sustainability programmes from a participatory perspective. The approach was adopted with various techniques and methods to synchronise each other. Based on the research problem, it can be deducted that the qualitative approach provided more comprehensive answers to the research questions. Importantly, a detailed account of how this process was applied is provided in Chapter Five of this study.

1.12.1 Research design

A research design is the plan according to which the researcher will use techniques and methods to obtain a sample from which information can be collected. In this study, the researcher explored the best method suitable to obtain answers to the questions raised. Research design is the overall methodical plan or framework on which a study is founded, executed and particular types of knowledge abstracted (Griffee, 2012:44; Pandey and Pandey, 2015:18); the main research design paradigm in this context, being qualitative methods. In essence, the research design is the blueprint of the research, dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study; what data are relevant; what data to collect; and how to analyse the results (Yin, 2011, 1994:95).

From this perspective, research design is much more than a work plan, because the main purpose is to help avoid a situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research questions. In the main, the research design describes a flexible set of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical material.

For the purpose of this study, an exploratory design was proposed. The rationale of an exploratory design was to examine real-life situations based on participants' experience, knowledge, and the research context in relation to the questions posed. This phenomenon enabled the researcher to engage with participants selected for the purpose of the study in order to discover their true understanding of the meaning of a set of identified questions. In the current study, this was therefore achieved through observations, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews in order to gain greater insight into the research problem. In other words, qualitative research studies a phenomenon as it happens within a particular setting and

confines knowledge to the context it is studied in, unlike quantitative studies where the leaning is towards numbers and generalisation of findings to broader populations.

a) Population and sampling of the study

Asiamah *et al*. (2017) write that, in researchers' quest to contribute to academic debate and knowledge, they gather data or information from participants. These participants belong to the research population, which is the group of individuals that have one or more characteristics of interest. The identification of a precise population is imperative for this study – all citizens of the North-West Province inclusively form the population of this study. A population is a cohort of people or subjects where a sample class is selected based on the nature and direction of a research study. Consequently, a population becomes important when obtaining a concise sample by employing various sampling techniques beneficial to the goal of the research study.

Griffee (2012:53) described population to be persons or things but more likely to be persons who possess traits or features a study investigates. On the other hand, Pandey and Pandey (2015:40) defined population as 'the entire mass of observations, which is the parent group from which a sample is to be formed.' Pandey and Pandey further noted that identification and description of population precedes sampling. For the purpose of this study, the population was demarcated into two-sets, namely: the Provincial Government officials (Group A) and ordinary citizens of the North-West Province (Group B).

i) Sampling procedure

Sampling, on the other hand, refers to the 'process of selecting a sample from the population' (Pandey & Pandey, 2015:43) while sample is a limited portion extracted from the population for the purpose of data collection (Griffee, 2012:54). Sampling and sample selection are done to save time, and energy, and to make the study more manageable. The reason for purposive sampling is that at some levels there is a need for deeper insight through a qualitative collection of data by semi-structured interviews from a portion of the population – government officials (Group A).

For Provincial Government officials, these participants were purposively selected on the basis that they can provide relevant information that is key to the study. On the other hand, a non-probability approach means that every unit (Group B) in the target population did not have an equal and therefore probable chance of being selected as part of the sample, implying that the sample did not necessarily have the same parameters (or characteristics) as the target population. To this end, convenient non-probability sampling was done on a spontaneous basis to take advantage of available participants, without the statistical complexity of a probability sample – this approach was ideal for diverse ordinary citizens of the North-West Province.

ii) Sampling size

Given the qualitative nature of this research study, the non-probability sampling method is preferred for ordinary citizens as participants, as it is based on convenience and their availability. This sampling method is important for this study because participants are from four districts of the Province and diverse in nature and structure. Qualitative sampling is done for conceptual and theoretical reasons - not to represent a larger universe. The complex nature of this study suggests that the sample size be determined at different levels. Purposive and non-probability convenience sampling were adopted in this study.

a) Provincial Government officials were categorised under Group A – semi-structured face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions were administered. Moreover, participants under this group included the following officials: Premier of the North-West Province; Director-General and three Deputy Director-Generals; and Eleven Heads of Departments of the North-West Province.

b) Ordinary citizens were categorised under Group B – focus group discussions were adopted. The demarcation of ordinary citizens per district was as follows: 20 participants from the Ngaka Modiri Molema district; 20 participants from the Bojanala Platinum district; 20 participants from Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district; and 20 participants from Dr. Kenneth Kaunda district.

1.12.2 Data collection

Elmusharaf (2012) contend that data collection techniques permit to systematically collect information about objects of study (people, objects, phenomena) and about the settings in which they occur. Furthermore, Elmusharaf asserts that if data are collected haphazardly, it will be difficult to answer research questions in a conclusive way. From this perspective, data collection is an important process of engaging key participants to obtain data or information based on the research problem and the overarching goal of the research study. This process is complex and requires the adoption of relevant and result-based instruments to obtain the relevant information as required by the research goal.

This study adopted multiple methods of data collection, which involved the use of semi-structured interviews (with open-ended questions) along with participant observations and focus group discussions (open questions) – these methods of data collection suggest that the topic was examined from different perspectives, which helps build confidence in the findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:123; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, the choice of data collection instruments largely depended on the research questions to be answered and the nature of the research problem statement. In this regard, research instruments for the collection of data in this study included: interview schedule, participants observations, and a focus group guide. These instruments were used for the purpose of gathering or extracting relevant data from Provincial Government officials and ordinary citizens. To a greater extent, participant observation was an important process that this research study engaged, because some relevant insights emerged from the sample, particularly in their natural environment. Importantly, a detailed account of how this process was applied is provided in Chapter five of this study.

1.12.3 Data analysis

It is of interest in this study to note that, while Provincial Government officials might significantly contribute their thoughts, ideas and experiences through a qualitative approach, the opinions of general citizens were also considered imperative in addressing the research questions and achieving the aim of this study. The

demarcation and proposed sample, as stated in this Chapter, further indicate that citizens play a crucial role in addressing the problem at hand and answering the research questions. Likewise, the study recognises that qualitative methods are applied to get rich and informative data from all participants. In this view, Daymon and Holloway (2011:126) mention that, for qualitative studies, it is important that data collection and analysis be an iterative process – that is, an on-going action of repetitive interaction and checking to align data and analysis (see Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

To achieve the intended goal of this research, both the traditional analysis method (manual process) and the computer software (*NVivo 11 plus software*) were adopted, and thus synchronized together to provide a complementary approach to data management, interpretation and presentation. Transcribing of raw data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation; coding topics, classifying topics, developing categories and seeking patterns were considered – thematic analysis has thus been adopted.

In support of this resolve, Percy *et al*. (2015) argue that thematic analysis is a process that is used to conduct an analysis of qualitative data. While it does not represent a complete research design, it does offer a process of data analysis that is flexible and compatible with many approaches to qualitative research. To this end, a comprehensive commentary of the analysis process is provided in Chapter six of this study.

1.13 ETHICAL ISSUES CONCERNING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Ethics is the foundation of the committed service of humankind and should not be considered a deterrent (Pera & Van Tonder, 2005:32; Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2013). Every citizen has the right to be protected against any harm, whether to his name, person, identity or property. The researcher ensured that every effort was made to safeguard that no harm is caused to any of the participants exposed to the study. In this study, the researcher firstly obtained ethical clearance approval from the University of Pretoria.

Secondly, consent letters were issued to each and every prospective participant, and only those who signed, participated. The consent letter is on a voluntary basis, which

was explained to participants upfront. The researcher further explained the purpose and nature of the study to participants and why the study is conducted.

In this study, the following issues regarding participation were emphasised; participants were informed of the purpose of the research, that participation was voluntary, that they were free to withdraw if ever they felt uncomfortable; and that all information would be treated as confidential. This process is called informed consent and is mandatory for ethical reasons (Kvale, 2006:12).

1.14 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It is the rationale of this study to contribute in two-fold to the body of knowledge of strategic communication management, as well as to that of participatory communication: firstly, through the advancement of academic discourse and scientific knowledge; and secondly, through the industrialisation of practical knowledge in the advancement of broadening practitioners' perspectives of strategic communication efforts in governance and government activities.

1.14.1 Contribution to academic and scientific knowledge

Strategic communication management is not a panacea; it is not the solution to every challenge. Nevertheless, it is virtually always part of the clarification, and the communication planning process. When conducted in a comprehensive fashion, it invites stakeholders in and dedicates as much time to listening as to speaking, which will invariably help foundations and the organisations. Strategic communication management efforts do not just materialise. It occurs because goals are established; success metrics are determined; target audiences are recognised; messages are advanced; and applicable communication networks are efficiently used to communicate a consistent message.

It is for the afore-mentioned reasons that this study introduces the concept of *inclusive citizenry engagement*, which is drawn from literature on citizen engagement and emancipation, stakeholder engagement, and the inclusive stakeholder approach. In this way, the study ushers in a paradigm that seeks to interrogate and integrate the role of citizens in programmatic solution-based

governance initiatives and sustainability programmes, specifically in the context of the North-West Province.

For the purpose of this study, inclusive citizenry engagement is the new mantra. Various governments are talking about the importance of citizens' inclusivity, whether in reference to the need for transparency, improving services, empowering citizens, and ensuring consolidated programmes are successfully integrated, or whether launching a new cloud solution. It is hoped that this current study will provide a clear and precise definition of inclusive citizenry engagement and its elements, so as to contribute to the body of knowledge of strategic communication management and participatory communication.

Inclusive citizenry engagement is viewed as a consolidated effort that addresses and integrates citizens around a shared common purpose. Such purpose seeks to create favourable and sustainable channels and stages of engagement to improve the livelihoods of citizens through the use of strategic communication management programmes.

1.14.2 Revolutionising strategic communication management in practice and/or corporate worldview

This study asserts that it is important to enable strategic communication management to act as an intermediary to governance initiatives and the championing of sustainability programmes. By doing so, strategic communication has the potential to leverage the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement. In this study, the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement is approached from a participatory communication perspective. To reinforce the benefits of adopting strategic communication management for this purpose, it is important to establish the linkage between strategic communication as a competitive tool, and participatory communication as a development initiative and cooperative tool for inclusive citizenry engagement to be realised.

In doing so, the study posits that lack of participation and inadequate participatory communication efforts are possible reasons why so many governance initiatives often do not achieve their objectives to produce significant improvements for citizens. The causes of many such failures are attributed to the limited understanding of local

context and the insufficient involvement of local stakeholders. For this reason, the inclusive governance approach is also considered in this study.

In addition, misunderstandings and differences in perceptions about key problems often lead to limited political buy-in and faulty programme design. This study highlights that by actively engaging stakeholders from the start and by seeking a broader consensus around strategic initiatives, strategic communication management, specifically, from a participatory communication perspective, has begun to be considered a critical tool to avoid historical mistakes.

A participatory communication perspective on strategic communication can contribute to better results. People's participation is also considered a right in its own. In the context of the North-West Province, participatory communication would focus on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in the media, in language, in work procedures, and in the relationships of power in educational settings. Advocacy/participatory studies often begin with an important issue or stance about the problems in society, such as the need for empowerment.

The current study further believes that strategic communication management is an emancipator; in that, it helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination. The aim of advocacy/participatory studies is to create a political debate and discussion so that change will occur – such change should benefit societies as a whole.

In her PhD thesis, De Beer (2014:7) asserts that the increasing need for business transformation to position organisations for the new economy represents a shift in the relationship of the corporation to individuals and to society as a whole. From this perspective, it can also be observed that social institutions such as government structures need to recognise the growing trend of communication to manage relationships with constituencies at large. Furthermore, Gouillart and Kelly (De Beer, 2014:7) argue that the communication revolution not only forms the basis of the new business model, which necessitates the ability to manage the flow of information, but it is also the facilitator of a fundamental social and business influence – a trend towards connectivity.

The importance of this study is to strive for the development and implementation of a strategic communication framework to support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes for social change in the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement in the North-West Province. This is approached from a participatory communication perspective. Earlier on, it was mentioned that major parts of governance initiatives and sustainability programmes do not often conform to the needs and expectations of grassroots citizens. As a result, social change has no durable effect in various societies due to the limitation of public participation in decision-making, policy formulation, and perhaps, lack of strategic communication efforts.

Therefore, this study seeks to, amongst others; elevate participatory communication not only as a developmental concept but also as a unique paradigm that can facilitate citizen empowerment and engagement in a strategic context. This is done, so as to measure the way in which SCM supports governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in terms of its implementation and efforts. Likewise, to understand how citizens have been included in the process – specifically from a participatory perspective, by the Provincial Government, in involving citizens through collaborative projects and initiatives.

The researcher believes that strategic communication can play a crucial role in supporting government programmes that have a positive influence on citizens – programmes that effect a degree of change, encourage a sense of ownership and empowerment. Through decentralisation of power and modes of communication delivery, the researcher is of the firm view that participatory communication and strategic communication management can have a long-term effect on engaged citizens.

Against this backdrop, a strategic communication framework will not only assist the North-West Provincial Government in championing inclusive citizenry engagement and empowerment, but will also contribute to the knowledge base of communicators – in order to align governance efforts through communication and sustainability. The study could also assist in improving communication relationships between the government and citizens.

Seeing that the role of strategic communication and the degree of change it can bring about is often misconstrued, it is imperative for this study to shift the mind-set of actors and citizens. Equally, it becomes imperative for the researcher to explore and evaluate the benefits of strategic communication management in addressing the needs, interests, and expectations of citizens, so as to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement, particularly for social cohesion and integrated coherence.

1.15 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One presents an introduction and background to the study. Both the introduction and background provides a thorough conceptualisation of the study's aim and purpose.

Chapter Two provides a context of the North-West Province and gives a detailed account of various programmes adopted by the 5th Provincial Administration.

Chapter Three addresses the theoretical and conceptual framework embedded in the study; a meta-theoretical framework is formulated to understand how strategic communication can drive and obtain inclusive citizenry engagement through a participatory communication perspective. Various sustainability (developmental) programmes of the North-West Province are evaluated in this Chapter.

In **Chapter Four,** the contemporary and historical accounts of the prevailing literature on strategic communication management for governance initiatives and sustainability programmes are documented. This is done with the aim to establish the linkage between SCM and governance – in the context of the North-West Province.

Building on the above, **Chapter Five** addresses the research methodology in detail. The study has adopted a qualitative approach. A clear motivation for the approach is documented, and justifications are levelled to understand the methods and techniques employed in relation to a qualitative perspective.

Chapter Six reports on the procedure of data management, interpretation and analysis. A qualitative analysis with its methods and techniques is justified in this Chapter, and the presentation of the research results is considered.

Chapter Seven reports on the conclusion and recommendations. A discussion account on the design, development and presentation of a strategic communication framework is also documented in this Chapter.

1.16 CONCLUSION

This Chapter provided an overview and orientation to the study, with the precision of documenting the importance and justifications for conducting the study. In the overview, strategic communication management for governance and sustainability was introduced and conceptualised. The background of the study also provided much contextualisation of SCM in the context of government. A participatory communication perspective was also contextualised to understand how SCM can support this initiative to ultimately obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. Research aspects such as the problem statement, research questions, brief literature, and the strategy on how to carry out the study were discussed in this Chapter. The importance and the aim of the study were explained and conceptualised to provide a better understanding of the study's purpose and rationale.

Concepts were also clarified in this Chapter as part of the literature context because the focal point is that strategic communication techniques and methods do not work in isolation of other strategic integrative concepts to communication management. Thus, context and content are key factors of understanding how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement.

CHAPTER TWO
CONTEXTUALISATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE AND ITS PROGRAMMES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Chapter is to contextualise and describe the background of the study's setting – the North-West Province. In doing so, evidence of the prevailing literature on the formation and composition of the Province is provided. Additionally, techniques and methods of operationalisation for essential governance in the North-West Province are also discussed. Five key concretes as part of governance initiatives and sustainability programmes are documented – most importantly, the purpose is to explore the role of strategic communication management in these programmes (*how can strategic communication management be used to support the programmes*). As a context, South Africa is home to nine provinces – a variant to these nine provinces is the demarcation and geographical location of each.

The North-West Province is one of the nine provinces of South Africa, with its own spheres of government, namely: the Provincial Government, district (regional) government, and the local government – local government is host to eighteen different municipalities where ordinary citizens are located. The Provincial Government with its headquarters in Mahikeng principal city is the governing hub of the Province. As the leadership and governing structure of the Province, the Provincial Government is mandated by the national government to formulate policies and regulations that seek to address the needs and interests, and to meet the expectations of the provincial citizens through service delivery, public consultations and participation, and citizenry engagement – while furthering social and economic stability in the environment through government's legitimisation.

To achieve the mandate as set out and aligned with the national indicators for peoples' governance and sustainability, the North-West Provincial Government derives its strategic planning from the National Development Plan (herein referred to as the NDP). The NDP provides a strategic framework for government – a new platform for growth and development (North-West Provincial Government, 2015). It

further highlights the need to reflect critically on the intergovernmental planning system, in order to achieve integration and cohesion to advance the imperatives of the NDP across all spheres of government.

Crucially, the NDP must inform all strategic planning frameworks across government. This necessitates and calls for the formulation of strategic plans and IDPs that are fully aligned to the national vision 2030 and the National Development Plan (NDP) (North-West Provincial Government, 2015). It is within this context that the North-West Planning Commission has formulated a Provincial Development Plan (PDP) and local government guidelines aligned to the National Development Plan. This was created in order to enhance effectiveness and efficiency – an implementation strategy has also been developed.

The strategic purpose of the Provincial Development Plan (PDP) is to clearly articulate the challenges facing the Province and to state how to overcome such challenges (North-West Provincial Government, 2015). Based on the key chapters identified from the National Development Plan (NDP) by the North-West Province, it is a popular belief that leadership is critical to mobilise society and build a common platform to advance the Provincial Development Plan (PDP) for growth, development and prosperity. In the main, the predominant rural character of the North-West Province makes it a distinct province in South Africa, with a particular focus on mining, agriculture, and tourism as economic boosters (North-West Provincial Government, 2015).

2.2 BACKGROUND AND FORMATION OF THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

The North-West Province is one of the nine provinces of South Africa, with Mahikeng town as the capital city of the Province. The Province is demarcated into four regions/districts, namely: Ngaka Modiri Molema, Dr. Ruth Mompati, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, and Bojanala Platinum district. Within the four districts of the Province, diversified people are the occupants of various villages, towns, and townships. Much of the residents in the Province are largely dependent on private employment, business, NGOs and the government for survival. A certain percentage of the population is outsourcing employment and other forms of human survival outside the Province. To a larger extent, residents in every district fall under a specific

municipality and local authorities, as mandated by the Provincial Government. The boundaries of every municipality are flexible and allow for movement and migration from one district to the other.

The North-West Province has four districts as indicated and 18 local municipalities, as listed below:

Table 2.1: 18 Municipalities in four Districts of the North-West Province.

Bojanala Platinum District	Ngaka Modiri Molema District
- Moretele - Madibeng - Rustenburg - Kgetlengrivier - Moses Kotane	- Mahikeng - Ditsobotla - Ramotshere - Ratlou - Tswaing
Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District	Dr Kenneth Kaunda District
- Naledi - Mamusa - Greater Taung - Kagisano Molopo - Lekwa-Teemane	- J.B Marks (Ventersdorp - Tlokwe 405) - Matlosana - Marquise hills

The North-West Provincial Government comprises of a Premier, an executive council of ten members (MECs), and a legislature. The provincial assembly and premier are elected for a five-year term, or until the next national election. Political parties are awarded assembly seats based on the percentage of votes each party receives in the Province during the national elections. The assembly elects a Premier, who then appoints members of the executive council with the mandate of assisting eleven various Heads of Departments. Demographics and economic indicators of the North-West Province include the following:

- The mainstay of the economy of the North-West Province is mining, which generates more than half of the Province's gross domestic product and provides jobs for a quarter of its workforce. The chief minerals are gold, mined at Orkney and Klerksdorp; uranium, mined at Klerksdorp; platinum, mined at Rustenburg and Brits; and diamonds, mined at Lichtenburg, Christiana, and Bloemhof

- The northern and western parts of the Province have many sheep farms and cattle and game ranches. The eastern and southern parts are crop-growing regions that produce maize (corn), sunflowers, tobacco, cotton, and citrus fruits. The entertainment and casino complex at Sun City and Lost City also contributes to the provincial economy (North-West Provincial Government, 2015)

- The majority of the Province's residents are the Tswana people who speak Setswana. Smaller groups include Afrikaans, Sotho, and Xhosa speaking people. English is spoken primarily as a second language. Most of the population belong to Christian denominations. (Figures according to Census 2012 released in July 2014)

- According to the 2007 community survey 90.8% of the Province's population was Black (mostly Tswana-speaking), 7.2% as White (mostly Afrikaans speaking), 1.6% as Coloured and 0.4% as Asian. The 2007 community survey showed the Province had a population of just over 3 million. The Province's white population is very unevenly distributed. In the southern and eastern municipalities, the white percentage is in double figures such as Tlokwe and Matlosana areas where the white percentages are 27% and 12% respectively, (North-West Provincial Government, 2015)

- The Province has the lowest number of people aged 35 years and older (5.9%) who have received higher education. Since 1994 the number of people receiving higher education has increased. After the disbanding of the Bantustans, many people migrated to the economic centres of Cape Town and Gauteng (North-West Provincial Government, 2015).

The Province had two universities: the University of North-West, which was formerly called the University of Bophuthatswana (founded in 1979), in Mmabatho; and Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (founded in 1869; became a constituent college of the University of South Africa in 1921 and an independent university in 1951). These two universities have now merged and the new institution is called the North-West University, which has campuses in Mahikeng, Potchefstroom, and Vanderbijlpark. During the year 2003, as part of the Year of Further Education and Training project, three mega institutions, Taletso, ORBIT and

Vuselela, were established to provide technical and vocational training to the youth. These institutions have been incorporated into many of the former education and technical colleges and manpower centres, (North-West Provincial Government, 2013).

While the North-West Province is referred to as the Platinum Province, some of its municipalities did not escape being included in the list of municipalities that require government assistance through Project Consolidate, and the area of focus for support was community participation. The Department of Local Government, together with the North-West Province, worked together to put in place a system and programme to promote effective community participation in governance, for replication in other municipalities (North-West Provincial Government, 2015). From this perspective, it is evident that community participation in government activities and participation in general poses a challenge for the provincial government. It is unclear why participation was listed as the area that needs support through Project Consolidate as an intervention of the National Government.

Figure 2.1: North-West Province Map

Source: info@practicegroup.co.za.

2.2.1 Mahikeng as the capital of the North-West Province

Mahikeng, formerly and still commonly known as Mafikeng, and historically Mafeking in English, is the capital city of the North-West Province of South Africa and the headquarters of the provincial government. The name Mahikeng is understood to imply 'the place among rocks' and is a predominantly rural region comprising hundreds of small villages that are home to more than 300 000 residents. It is best known internationally for the Siege of Mafeking, the most famous engagement of the Second Boer War. It is after this historic Boer war that Mahikeng was recognised and formalised as a capital city (North-West Provincial Government, 2015).

The capital city is also a host to Ngaka Modiri Molema district municipality and subsequently, the Mahikeng local municipality. Industrialisation and economic growth continues to be a challenge for the capital city, as much of the developments seem to be from other cities such as Rustenburg, Potchefstroom, and Klerksdorp. However, the 5th Provincial Government have committed various programmes and projects to shape the Province and equally the capital city (North-West Provincial Government, 2015).

2.3 PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AS A STRATEGIC DOCUMENT

The North-West Provincial Government, through its planning commission, has developed a Provincial Development Plan (PDP) in line with the core values of the National Development Plan. The Provincial Development Plan is a blueprint of governance initiatives and sustainability (developmental) programmes in the Province. Through the PDP, it is argued by the Provincial Government that the primary focus is to craft a better tomorrow for the people and the Province. In line with the provincial theme '*OUR PROVINCE, OUR HERITAGE, MAKE IT WORK- DIRANG BOKAMOSO*' – let's get down to work and ensure that the legacy of underdevelopment, poverty and inequality is fully addressed in the North-West (North-West PDP, 2013).

It can be observed that the North-West Provincial Development Plan is predominantly based on the National Development Plan (NDP) in an attempt to align with the objectives and priorities it identifies, as well as with the vision for 2030 of a united South Africa. Additional influences that shaped the North-West Provincial

Development Plan (PDP), in its application of the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) on a provincial level, are as follows:

- The North-West provincial development perspective – the trends, needs and challenges in terms of the current spatial, demographic and economic situation

- The institutional/policy environment – national and provincial policies, strategies, plans and frameworks as well as the municipal development priorities as captured in Integrated Development Plans (IDP's), Local Economic Development Strategies (LED's) and Spatial Development Frameworks (SDF's) of each demarcation

- The strategic development approach and principles for development strategies – case studies and best practice examples (predominantly the United Nations, World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

In line with the influences above, the chosen development priorities with which the North-West intends to align with the National Development Plan (NDP) are the following:

o Economy and employment

o Economic infrastructure

o An integrated and inclusive rural economy

o Human settlement and spatial transformation

o Improving education, training and innovation

o Building a capable and developmental state

o Fighting corruption

o Transforming society and uniting the Province.

The development priorities constitute the first five-year inaugural plan of economic transformation in the North-West Province. The 2014-2019 planning cycle is regarded as the first in a series of five-year planning cycles that advances the goals of the Provincial Development Plan (North-West PDP, 2013). The fundamental

premise is how the identified key priorities of the PDP link to stakeholders' social welfare, environmental dynamics and most significantly, the economic/financial dimension – in the main, priorities should enable citizens' collaboration through beneficial programmes that capacitate and sustain their living standard measures. Consequently, the PDP principles and aspiration should locate, collate and converge the needs, interests, and expectations of ordinary citizens to the benefit of the Province at large, through strategic platforms aimed at empowerment and the eradication of imbalanced representation of the people for the people – the government.

The implementation of the PDP therefore relies on the realisation of the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal strategy (North-West Provincial Government, 2015):

- Rebranding – seeks to, amongst others, move the Province from the current sluggish economic growth to a sustainable high growth path to create conducive conditions for addressing the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. This strategy seeks to correct the misconceptions about the Province by making it the best performing province on the map of South Africa. Other rebranding opportunities entails improving good corporate governance in government institutions; and enhancing performance monitoring, and evaluation and intervention systems, to obtain value for money – including eradication of service delivery backlogs across the Province.

- Repositioning – consolidates and compliments the gains made during the rebranding process. This takes place through the successful implementation of the five concretes, which entail anchoring economic growth around agriculture, culture, tourism sectors and its tributaries; prioritising and refocusing state resources to grow villages, Townships' and Small Dorpies' economies; and developing new and strengthening existing partnerships to optimise development efforts. The Provincial Government argues that having repositioned the Province to the status of being one of the best in the country, focus will now shift to revamp the look and feel of the North-West Province – also known in *Setswana* as Bokone Bophirima.

- Renewal – to build on the achievements of the previous administrations, this strategy aspires to improve on the weak areas, such as engagements with communities in order to address the pressure points which manifest through service delivery protests.

Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal (RRR) is thus an overarching provincial policy thrust, which, within its implementation, is anchored by the five concretes. The five concretes therefore serves as governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in which the Provincial Government seeks to accelerate socio-economic growth, industrialisation, stakeholder management, and citizenry empowerment (North-West Provincial Government, 2015).

2.3.1 Economy and employment as a key priority

Popular economic belief includes that people participate in every process that gradually benefits them and serves as a resort of pleasure. At most, citizenry participation occurs where there are perceived reimbursements. According to the PDP document, the provincial economy needs to become more productive, more competitive and more diversified. A crucial factor to the economy and employment, as envisaged through the North-West PDP, is that skills development and training in practices in high demand from industry is an important element of allowing employment oriented economic growth (North-West PDP, 2013). Continued learning, research and development and technological innovation, are factors to increase levels of production and competitiveness, and are regarded as being equally important.

Creating an enabling environment in terms of physical and institutional factors is critical to attract and retain investment in the Province and to allow for efficiency in the economy. In order to achieve employment and economic growth, it is necessary to prioritise certain economic sectors that lead the overall economy in building on its competitive advantages and diversifying its structure. The two economic sectors in the North-West with a comparative advantage (in relation to the rest of South-Africa) include the agriculture and the mining sectors. The majority of citizens rely on the agricultural and mining sectors as means of economic development and production.

On the other hand, a certain percentage of citizens' labour in the tourism sector for surplus labour and economic advancement.

Although both economic growth and employment are strengthened through the three sectors of production as mentioned above, the Provincial Governments' role and duty is to advocate for more inclusive and reciprocal benefits on behalf of its citizens. Many of the citizens rely on government assistance in benefiting from the economy with regards to physical and infrastructure development. A synthesis of all sectors ought to be considered in a governments' co-ordinated effort for awareness and in improving the standard living conditions of citizens, which should be advanced in a two-way symmetrical relationship.

2.3.2 Environmental sustainability and social patterns

The prime focus of the PDP is to address the apartheid geography and to create the conditions for more humane and environmentally sustainable living and working environments for the people of the North-West Province. It is important to address the entrenched spatial patterns that exacerbate social inequality and economic inefficiency, cognisant of the unique needs and potentials of different rural and urban areas in line with emerging development corridors. Significantly, the PDP is aimed at ensuring that the delivery of housing contributes to the restructuring of towns and cities and strengthens the livelihood prospects of households.

Active citizenship in spatial development should be supported through properly funded interventions that encompass citizen-led neighbourhood vision and planning processes, and the introduction of social compacts. Similar to the economic growth and benefits, environmental sustainability is imperative in addressing the needs and expectations of citizens through social change and welfare mechanisms – strategic programmes, as well as both governance and sustainability, are of significance in improving dialogue among key stakeholders such the North-West Provincial Government and its citizens.

The North-West PDP indicates that settlement planning should ensure the creation of spaces that are liveable, equitable, sustainable, resilient and efficient, and that support economic opportunities and social cohesion (NWDC, 2012). Governance and administrative capability should be developed to undertake settlement planning

in collaboration with citizens – empowering citizens through decision-making enables efficiency in the strategic communication effort, and as such, participation is crucial in addressing the spatial patterns of non-participation.

The North-West Province covers 8.6% of the national land area and is home to 7% of South Africa's people with a population figure of 3.6 million. The platinum-rich North-West employs 10.8 % of the national share, contributing approximately 5.7% to the nation's production. The buying power in the area is not to be ignored with 5.4% of South Africa's spending power being located in the North-West Province (IHS Global Insight's Index Regional Explorer, 2013).

Being largely a rural province, the North-West is not densely populated (34 people per km²), especially when compared to the national population density of 43 people per km². A significant exception in the Province is the platinum-rich Bojanala Platinum District, where the population density is almost double that of the national population at 85 people per km² (NWDC, 2012, 2014).

The economic structure of the North-West Province is significantly different to the national structure, based on data recorded between 2007 and 2012. The most pronounced changes were an increase in the share of the mining sector and a decline in the agricultural, manufacturing, trade and transport sectors. The North-West Province is ideally located and positioned for agriculture and mining, and its economy shows a high concentration of Mining and Government Services sectors compared to the national picture. The composition of the North-West Economy is as follows: 44% in the Primary Sector, 7% in the Secondary Sector (with manufacturing contributing 3% and electricity 1%) and 49% in the Tertiary Sector (NWDC, 2012).

The graph below compares the North-West Province to South Africa in terms of the provincial share of key economic sectors. The North-West Province's economy is heavily reliant on the mining sector. As part of the vision to diversify the provincial economy, the North-West Premier announced the strategic economic focus called ACT – Agriculture, Culture and Tourism – as part of ACTION – Agriculture, Culture and Tourism with Investment through Organised Networking – to diversify and grow the economy of the North-West Province (NW-SOPA, 2014).

Figure 2.2: Sector's share of regional total
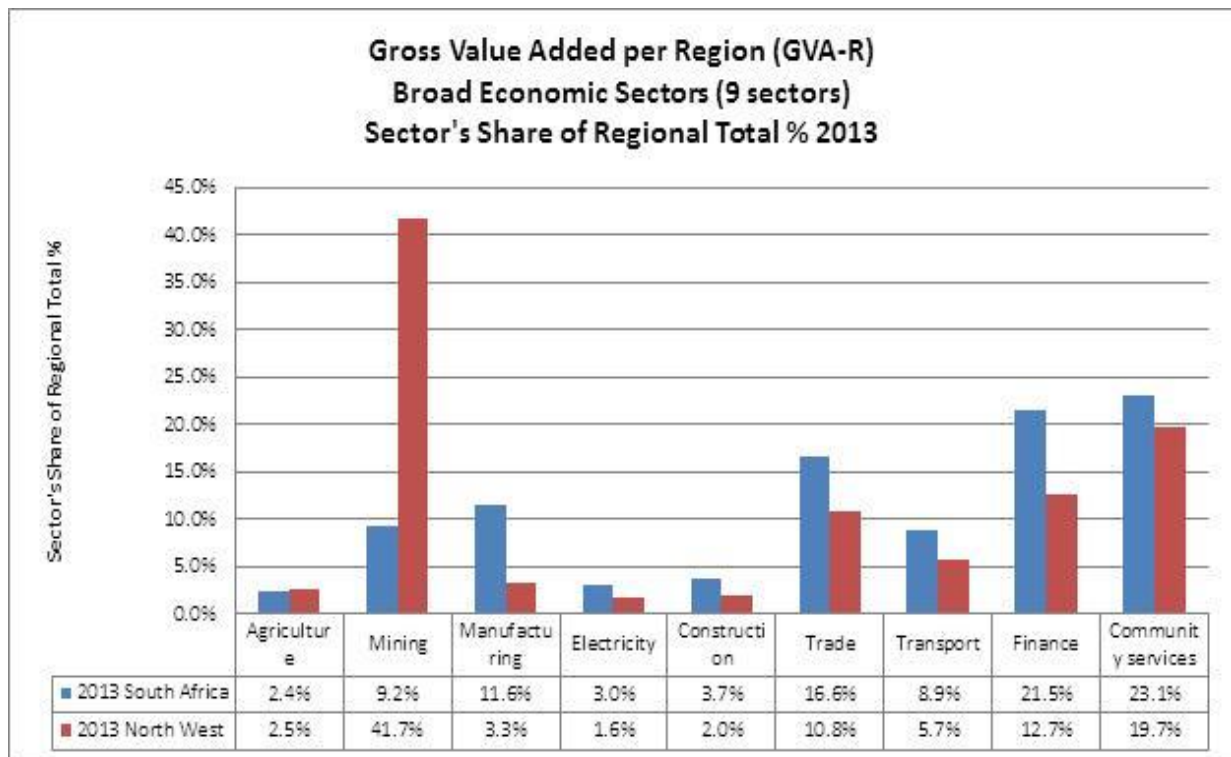
Source: IHS Global Insight Regional Explorer (2013).

2.4 FIVE CONCRETES OF THE PROVINCE (PROGRAMMES)

The North-West Province through the adoption of key priorities in the NDP and the provincial strategic plan has identified five concretes, anchored in line with the Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal approach (RRR). The importance of the five concretes is to provide co-operative governance and serve as sustainability programmes to the people of 'Bokone Bophirima Province' (as famously called). The five concretes are listed below:

a) Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT);
b) Village Township and Small Dorpies (VTSD);
c) Reconciliation, Healing and Renewal (RHR);
d) Setsokotsane (comprehensive and integrated service delivery campaign);
e) Saamtrek and Saamwerk (call for unity of purpose above race divisions).

The five concretes are the major programmes championed through various provincial departments and the Office of the Premier at the helm. The five concretes are echoed through the following economic and industry profile:

- **MINING**: 50% of world's platinum. Also gold, diamonds, chrome, vanadium, granite, slate, limestone, dimension stone, nickel, silica, manganese, phosphate, fluorspar, zinc and andulasite.

- **AGRICULTURE**: North-West is striving to become the food basket of Southern Africa. More than 20% of RSA maize crop. Also livestock (cattle and poultry), sunflower seeds and oils, nuts, citrus, tobacco (all GMO free).

- **MANUFACTURING**: Automobile/non-metallic minerals, fabricated metals, food processing, soya protein, etc.

- **TOURISM**: Cultural, Natural and Historical Heritage.

- **SERVICES**: Business and financial services contribute 13% to provincial GDP and account for 12% of employment. Significant opportunities for Business Process Outsourcing and Offshoring exist within the sector.

- **GREEN ECONOMY**: High potential renewable energy opportunities exist within Municipal Waste conversion, Biomass (converting alien invasive plants into energy) and Solar Technologies including off-grid energy for rural areas.

2.4.1 Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT)

During his State of the Province Address in June 2014, Honourable Premier Mahumapelo announced that the 5th Provincial Administration has identified certain priorities that intend to revitalise and propel the economy of the North-West Province to new heights. The Premier announced that the Province has identified Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT) for this purpose. The ACT concrete has been identified as the anchor of economic growth, especially in the rural areas where poverty, unemployment and inequality are at its highest. All the other sectors of the economy, such as mining, manufacturing and retail serve as tributaries (see, NW-SOPA, 2014).

✚ Objectives of the Agricultural pillar

The 5th Provincial Administration intends to utilise the comparative advantage of the rural nature of the Province by exploiting the significant opportunities for growth and agricultural development that would empower and graduate the small farmers into export and regional markets.

The other objective is to use agriculture as the mechanism of change to capacitate and support the people in the farming areas such that they are party to decision-making that leads to improving their rural livelihoods.

- **Challenges in the Agricultural sector**

The sector has a number of challenges, some which include unforeseen natural disasters like drought and veld fires, which impact negatively on the overall output production. One of the remaining challenges in the sector is the low productivity from the small scale farmers who often do not have formal markets as well as access to credit facilities. A number of programmes and projects have been tailor made in an attempt to address the economic and developmental challenges facing the sector.

- **Projects designed for the Agricultural pillar**

Since the 2015/2016 fiscal year, the Bokone-Bophirima has identified the following projects which should contribute to farmers' support and rural development:

- o Crop Massification Programme
- o Expansion and resuscitation of irrigation schemes: Taung Irrigation Scheme (expansion), resuscitate the irrigation scheme of Disaneng, Molatedi, and Tsholofelo
- o Development of livestock breeding material
- o Animal feed manufacturing plant in Taung
- o Establishing a feedlot in Mahikeng
- o Meat processing plant including abattoir and packaging facilities in Mahikeng
- o Rehabilitation of Springbokpan, Vryhof and Kraaipan grain silos
- o Establishment of Grain milling
- o Taung Skull World Heritage Site

o The establishment of the Mahikeng Buy Back centre to recycle waste.

⬦ Culture

The North-West Province is known to be one of the best cultural destinations in the country. Through rebranding, repositioning and renewal of the Province cultural opportunities will be fully exploited to bring back cultural dignity and improve the image of Bokone-Bophirima. The North-West Province is the only province in South Africa which has Arts Development and Training institutions in the form of Mmabana centres. These Mmabana centres are situated in three of the four districts of the Province.

- **Objectives of the Arts pillar**

The objective is to position Bokone-Bophirima as South Africa's cultural heritage destination where the environment is conducive to build a sustainable arts economy that generates value and creates jobs for the local participants.

- Exploiting Arts opportunities in the Province

In promoting arts and culture, the 5th Provincial Administration endeavoured to facilitate:

o Maximising the use of existing institutions and infrastructure such as Mmabana, Broadcasting and Recording Studios
o Establishment of youth development centres and the strengthening of existing ones in every ward for the purpose of performing arts, craft and visual arts
o Establishment of the Bokone-Bophirima Arts Agency.

⬦ Tourism

The Tourism pillar has the potential to enhance and boost economic development in Bokone-Bophirima. To this effect, the Province embarks on the implementation of strategies that talk to Rural and Social Tourism to develop and grow domestic tourism.

- **Objectives of the Tourism pillar**

The objective of promoting tourism is to increase the net benefits to rural people and increase their participation in managing the tourism product. If tourism can be developed in rural areas, particularly in ways that involve a high level of local participation in decision-making and enterprises, then poverty alleviation impacts are likely to be improved. Rural communities are earmarked to boost the economy of the Province through partnerships and collaborative measures that seek to elevate rural tourism products.

- **Policy proposals for the Tourism pillar**

In prioritising the Tourism Sector Strategy, the Province proposes to pursue the following as its core policies to unlock potential:

- o Ability to compete in the global tourist market
- o Development of new tourism enterprises
- o Growth and expansion of existing enterprises
- o Job creation and provision of efficient government services.

In the main, the concretes are pivotal in anchoring the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal of the North-West Province and the identification of key priorities of the National Development Plan through the Provincial Development Plan. Much attention is placed on the implementation strategies and objectives of these concretes.

2.4.2 Village Township and Small Dorpies (VTSD)

The NDP places a greater emphasis on the need to have an integrated and inclusive rural economy which promotes involvement of communities in their own development, leading to rising living standards, reduced poverty and employment creation. Within this context, communities need the resources and capabilities to become the engines that invigorate rural economic growth – such growth should be supported by structured government interventions. The VTSD concrete aims to address the skewed economic landscape in the Province by ensuring that the

previously marginalised villages, townships and small dorpies are developed and economically vibrant (NW-SOPA, 2015).

Objectives of the VTSD

The VTSD is one of the concretes with which the 5th Provincial Administration seeks to anchor the policy vision of Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal of Bokone Bophirima. In response to the NDP and particularly the skewed development patterns across the Province, the administration has introduced new policy initiatives to fast-track service delivery to the people.

The policy initiatives strive towards growing the economies of Villages, Townships and Small Dorpies and to transform the lives of the people of Bokone Bophirima.

Programmes of the VTSD

The VTSD policy is said to be implemented through two programmes. The first programme, following the 2015 State of the Province Address (SOPA) pronouncements by the Premier, argues that the Provincial Government has made a commitment to bias procurement of public goods and services to the VTSD areas as part of the strategy to contribute to the realisation of the NDP goals and objectives. On the second programme, as part of growing and developing the VTSD, a commitment has been made to ensure that in the 2016-2017 fiscal year all the VTSD areas have development plans that will guide the governments' action-oriented interventions going forward (NW-SOPA, 2015).

Contextually, the VTSD plans are said to focus on supporting the existing co-operatives and SMME's in the villages; to focus on skills development that promotes Youth Entrepreneurship; to focus on agro-processing, and so forth.

2.4.3 Reconciliation, Healing and Renewal (RHR)

The RHR concrete seeks to bring together the people of the Bokone-Bophirima (Black and White) and to engage and deal with issues of moral and social cohesion, past experiences and pains emanating from the past era of oppression, conflict and racial hatred. Further, through RHR the Province will address communicable and non-communicable diseases.

↓ Objectives of the RHR

The objective of RHR is to reconcile, heal and renew the people of the entire Province working towards peace, service delivery and economic prosperity. The RHR programme's main purpose is to integrate the people of the North-West Province through actively involving participation of the religious sector together with relevant government bodies towards strengthening oversight and public participation.

RHR is aimed at pulling together all sectors of society in building a reconciled, united and peaceful province. Subsequently, to bring citizens together especially for them to reconcile, heal past wounds and join hands in the socio-economic development of the Province.

2.4.4 Setsokotsane

Setsokotsane is an approach for Radical Socio-Economic Transformation which places bias and focus on the previously marginalised Villages, Townships, and Small Dorpies through acceleration of service delivery. During the 2016 State of the Province Address, the Premier of the North-West announced that the Setsokotsane is an institutionalised approach to create a permanent platform for interaction with communities with the objective of facilitating the resolution of community challenges (NW-SOPA, 2016).

↓ Objectives of Setsokotsane

The Setsokotsane approach seeks to achieve the following:

- o To inform the people about government projects
- o To educate people on government programmes and projects
- o Access the performance of provincial and local government
- o Address the backlog of service delivery
- o Obtain feedback from the public
- o Present government plans to communities
- o Strengthen co-operative governance
- o Promote and infuse activism across government

To achieve these objectives, the 5th Provincial Administration of the North-West Province is dedicated to developing awareness campaigns and educational programmes targeting learners, educators, civil society, as well as church groups, to expand knowledge of the Setsokotsane programme. The Setsokotsane programme is said to be promoted as an activist campaign which identifies needs in the communities and responds accordingly.

2.4.5 Saamtrek-Saamwerk philosophy

The Saamtrek-Saamwerk philosophy stems from Section 41 (1) of the South African Constitution, which lays out the principles of co-operative governance and intergovernmental relations. The Saamtrek-Saamwerk is an essential ingredient in ensuring that the agenda of the 5th Provincial Administration is attained by promoting multi-sectoral partnerships and encouraging the spirit of co-operation in improving the lives of the people of Bokone-Bophirima.

⬇ Objectives of the Saamtrek-Saamwerk

In essence, the main objective of this philosophy is to encourage the spirit of co-operation in improving the lives of the people of Bokone-Bophirima (working with government, business, municipalities, NGOs, SOEs and communities):

- o To leverage the private sector and civil society resources such as human, capital and physical resources to optimise government development efforts
- o To promote a co-ordinated approach and integrated planning and implementation of development initiatives
- o To install a sense of pride and ownership among the people by ensuring that they participate in the betterment of their own lives.

2.5 POSSIBLE GAP ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE CONCRETES

The Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal approach, as anchored in the five concretes, is a concerted effort by the North-West Provincial Government to mainstream socio-economic growth, accelerate service delivery, and empower communities, amongst others. However, little is said about inclusivity and citizenry participation in these concretes – as a result, there seems to appear a

communication gap in the management of how these concretes are communicated to citizens. Of importance, the North-West Province is said to have a rural character and outlook. The rural character of the Province also signifies a digital divide, particularly in remote and secluded villages in all four districts of the Province. The digital divide might serve as a barrier to the communication of the five concretes. As a result, those in remote areas might benefit less from the programmes owing to public apathy and lack of participation.

Dissemination of information and knowledge of how citizens can benefit from the Provincial Government's programmes is unclear. Those who are in cities and literate enough to understand the purpose and intention of the five concretes might benefit more. On the other hand, those in remote villages remain uninformed of the practical translation and understanding of the benefit that these programmes could serve because the communication process is unclear. A major issue with those in remote areas of the Province is how information is disseminated and what forms of communication mediums are utilised by the Provincial Government for inclusivity and public participation in these five concretes.

Previous research has shown how communication mechanisms and a targeted use of the media play an important role in the achievement of good governance (see, e.g., Servaes, 2009, 2013a), also in different political systems. These mechanisms can engage citizens in influencing attitude, behaviour and even policy, contributing to an improved system.

The World Bank, particularly through its CommGAP programme (2007, 2008 and 2009) has analysed the important role that communication plays in strengthening good governance and has released a series of reports that emphasise how elements such as free media and access to information allow for the creation of an informed public opinion. This is achieved mainly by creating a link between citizens, the media and the government, and by facilitating the establishment of a vibrant civil society.

Hanley *et al.*, (2008) clarify that good governance entails an inclusive public sphere which offers a space for dialogue between different people, institutions and decision-makers. The distinction with the concept of good government is its element of participation. Here, communication clearly plays an important role. It is through its

use that communities can recognise and articulate their needs; citizens can become aware of their rights and give rise to a public dialogue; information about government performance can be circulated; and accountability can be instated (Coffey International Development, 2007).

2.6 COMMUNICATION IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

It is widely known that communication in government is not merely above sending information across and expecting better results with the facilitation of citizenry participation. In the main, communication in the Provincial Government requires a co-ordinated framework to reach the intended goal. At times, much of the desired goals of communication seem to fail because of the nature of the messages, its content, and the characteristics of the targeted audience – as a result of such failures, communication has no durable effect in citizenry behavioural change. Government communication at times often seems abstract for ordinary citizens to comprehend and act upon, which makes it difficult for citizenry participation to occur.

One of the challenges of uncoordinated and effortless communication with citizens can be observed through various domains of societies where citizens are unresponsive to communication efforts pursued by government. In South Africa, a directorate of communication exist as the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) with the main purpose of communicating government messages, programmes, and strategies. The GCIS is headed by a Chief Executive Officer. It is structured into three key core programmes as part of the strategic plan – the core drivers are illustrated in the table below:

Table 2.2: GCIS core drivers – 2013/2014

PROGRAMME	PURPOSE
Administration	Provides an efficient and effective support service to GCIS. Corporate Services is responsible for the following sub-programmes: Office of the CEO, Human Resources, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Information Management and Technology, Strategic Planning, and Programme Management and Internal Audit.
Communication and Content Management	Provide strategic leadership in government communication. The programme is responsible for the following sub-programmes: Policy and Research, Media Engagement, Communication Service Agency, Content and Writing, and the IMC.

Government and Stakeholder Engagement	Builds partnerships with strategic stakeholders within the three spheres of government and with external strategic stakeholders within the broader society in pursuit of GCIS' vision. The programme is responsible for two sub-programmes: Provincial and Local Liaison and the MDDA.

Source: Adapted from GCIS (2014).

There are Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) offices in each of the nine provinces of South Africa and roughly 80 localities countrywide. The majority of the GCIS local offices are located in Thusong Service Centres. Provincial Liaison (nine provincial directorates) is responsible for cascading the National Communication Strategy to provincial and local stakeholders and partners and for the implementation of development communication campaigns and programmes aligned to the Government Communication Programme. The offices work closely with provincial governments, in particular the Premier's Offices, to ensure that the message of government is disseminated to the public in a seamless manner (GCIS, 2013; 2014).

The functions of the provincial offices are:

- Promoting an effective government communication system at provincial and local level by developing better alliances in the communication environment;
- developing a clear understanding of the public's information needs and government's communication needs;
- developing and implementing communication campaigns in response to the needs identified;
- managing the corporate and operational function of the GCIS's provincial offices;
- providing leadership in government communication through strengthening and integrating the Government Communication System with provincial structures;
- co-ordinating the distribution of government information through a network of local, community-based distribution points; and
- marketing of Thusong Service Centres in provinces (adapted from GCIS, 2013; 2014).

For the North-West Provincial Government to succeed in its endeavours, citizen communication and involvement must to be viewed as a strategic phenomenon for understanding and addressing the needs and interests, and meeting the expectations of citizens. Nothing matters most to citizens, especially when they are not consulted or involved on the direction and programmes the Provincial Government is embarking on. To better explore the significance of the role of citizens in government programmes and the enacted role of public participation in communication efforts, Mudgal (2015) begun to explore the connection between participatory communication for development and what is termed 'citizen communication', which refers to 'citizens' involvement in matters of policy, legislation and development choices' (Mudgal, 2015:114).

The author also emphasises the distinction between these two types of communication, as 'citizen communication' is recognised as a matter of right where communication is used to speak out (right to communicate), rectify public grievances and expose corruption (right to be heard). While participatory communication gives poor people a voice in their choices, citizen communication gives them the right to an institutional space (Mudgal, 2015). Mudgal maintains that all deliberative processes at the micro-level that deepen public participation arise from citizens' ability to come together, interact, exchange information and take decisions in a democratic fashion. Subsequently, agencies such as the World Bank have recognised local participation and community empowerment as one of the entry points to good governance (CommGAP, 2007:3).

Through this approach, citizens are regarded as important occupants of legitimacy and active actors of communication accomplishments. To go further, Clements (2014:15) also adds that 'legitimacy is grounded when the system of governance and authority flows from and is connected to local realities'. This movement starts from the bottom-up and it cannot be forced upon people; people have the power to influence governance and sustainability programmes of government. A process in which elites fail to gain legitimacy from their citizens will not rest on stable ground. Therefore, strategic communication interventions need to be redesigned with this in mind: 'every effort should be made to incorporate familial, kin, community and sub-national actors - as well as national elites' (Clements, 2014).

To emphasise the challenges and disconnections between citizens and governments at times, Nabatchi (2012) discusses the role of communication in citizen engagement by differentiating three communication modes in communal participation:

- One-way communication goes from the state to the citizen, typically through websites, pamphlets, media briefings and so forth. Citizens have no opportunities for feedback.

- Two-way communication involves traditional public hearings – a citizen enquiry can be regarded as a response within this model.

- Deliberative communication takes place through reasoned discussion among a group of participants and is based on problem-solving. This type of communication provides everyone with an adequate opportunity to speak, requires attentive listening, and expects participants to treat each other with respect (Nabatchi, 2012). It also amplifies the voices of those who are seldom heard and allows those involved to engage in an open debate rather than a defensive affirmation (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

The latter offers a useful framework to begin to look at the use of communication for citizen engagement in governance. The promotion of inclusive sustainability programmes, as a flexible and yet targeted approach is needed to provide citizens with an active say. Thus, strategic communication management can be identified as a key driver for inclusive citizenry engagement and effective public participation processes.

2.7 STAKEHOLDERS IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

Citizenship and patriotism are enchantments of the people's constitution for South Africa, where the focus lies within an inclusive and prosperous country – the preamble of the constitution and the freedom charter provides an exposition that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion and one's conviction. Accordingly, the Constitution signifies the importance of citizenship and social consciousness as the foundation for citizenry inclusivity. Perhaps, one of the fundamental arguments is the extent of engagement prescribed in the South African Constitution and ethos of governance, which further provides

stimuli for citizenry ownership and relationship management within different provinces (see, SA Constitution, 1996).

With the demarcation of South Africa into various provinces, due attention was given to citizens. Every province was charged with the responsibility of managing and understanding key priorities of its citizens, as the number one stakeholder group. Citizens have in the past experienced a linear one-sided approach to participation and engagement. This can further be witnessed through negated reforms of disproportionality and skewed representation in policy formulation, decision-making and public participation in government reforms.

As a consequence, the government of the day has, in certain ways, been unsuccessful in providing a unifying approach to citizenry engagement and participation. Kalathil *et al.*, (2008:54) affirm the above notion by acknowledging the importance of engaging with a more participatory approach to communication for initiatives that specifically involve post-crisis situations. The authors furthermore state that when a participatory approach underlies even rapidly executed communication activities, it is more likely to find receptive audiences and successful programmes.

From this perspective, the North-West Provincial Government can mainstream citizenry participation and engagement through the strategic dominant coalition - as a collaborative provision of services and programmes aimed at addressing the needs of citizens. Citizens are viewed as key stakeholders, and need to be actively involved in ensuring that their expectations and interests are recognised through participation and focused engagements. In the main, stakeholders need to seize the moment and control their destination. Subsequently, managing expectations of citizens is crucial in a democratic state.

Therefore, stakeholders in the North-West Province include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Citizens in all four districts of the Province;
- business and the private sector;
- provincial government itself;

- non-governmental organisations and other public institutions; and
- media houses.

The general observation is that citizens must be regarded as the central tenets or key stakeholders in the North-West Province. Thus, all the activities and programmes of the Provincial Government should be designed to address and manage citizenry expectations, interests, and their needs to a larger extent. The five concretes (programmes) as pronounced by the 5th Administration (or the Provincial Government) should mainstream the objective of inclusivity, citizenry engagement, and of importance, public participation, both horizontally (housing citizenry voices) and vertically (for a strategic role).

From this perspective, citizens in remote areas of the Province might be receiving less attention. Every communication effort and action become minimal due to circumstances such as literacy levels, optimal mediums of communication used, comprehension of language used, and measurable (explicit) programmes. The rural nature and character of the North-West Province allows for communication efforts to be effective in cities and towns rather than secluded areas. As a result, there is continuous movement of people and urbanisation of cities.

The majority of the people in the North-West Province migrate to towns and cities where information and opportunities can be attained easily; however, the reality is that those remaining in rural villages are disadvantaged in terms of information dissemination and action. Only directed and co-ordinated communication efforts can address these spiral imbalances of communication and information in rural villages and townships. Social proponents and communicators in the North-West Province should strive to create strategic platforms and broaden the understanding of citizens through inclusive communication programmes and activities. Such effort will alienate imbalances and create opportunities for the consumption of information for communicative action.

2.8 UNDERSTANDING CITIZENS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Bhargava (2015) in the Governance Brief-23, writes that the growing movement for governments to engage with citizens and civil society (e.g., Open Government) is being propelled by emerging evidence that citizen engagement improves

government programmes and development outcomes; reduces poverty; and encourages peace by promoting social inclusion. Subsequently, Bhargava denotes that engaging citizens and civil society can complement government efforts to promote good governance.

Importantly, this is driving a growing movement for governments to a call for greater citizen participation in the design and implementation of public policies and programmes through targeted communication platforms. Additionally, the author argues that instant communication and social inclusion enable governments to engage more extensively with citizens. Increasing citizens' access to information provides the foundation for such engagement (Bhargava, 2015).

To understand how communication can assist in engaging citizens and ultimately civil society as a whole, Bhargava (2015) provides a vision of six ways in which citizens can be engaged:

- Access to information – An informed citizenry is essential for citizen engagement and participation. It is necessary to provide citizens with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions. This is usually done by (a) establishing and implementing disclosure policies and eventually right to information legislation; (b) providing timely disclosure and dissemination of information in areas such as budget, economic and social data, procurement and the awarding of contracts, assets of officials, audits, development projects and programmes; (c) improving quality and accessibility of information; and (d) raising awareness through campaigns and the media.

- Consultations – Increasingly, governments and donors are seeking citizens' views in the design and implementation of policies and programmes. A good practice is to make consultation a two-way process that would enable those consulted to receive feedback on how their views were taken into account or why their views were not accepted. It is also important to make consultations inclusive by ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable groups are included,

geographical coverage is comprehensive, and minority languages are used.

- Collaborative decision-making – The citizens and/or civil society organisations are invited to be involved in decision-making by the government authorities and implementing agencies. Examples include water user bodies, regulatory bodies for utilities, community demand-driven projects, participatory budgeting, and planning and delivery of health services. The key expected results are more responsive decision-making, improved sustainability and legitimacy, and increased access and utilisation of programmes.

- Citizen and beneficiary feedback – This is akin to customer satisfaction surveys used by the private sector in services delivery. Applications in the development field are found in the use of citizen report cards, short message service-based citizen feedback collection, community scorecards, focus group discussions, etc. The main expected results include improvements in the dimensions of services such as inclusiveness, quality, access, delivery time, transaction costs, targeting, reduction in bribes paid, improved financial and operational performance of the services, etc.

- Citizen-led monitoring – While there is commonality of tools between this form of engagement and the feedback collection, the focus is different. The main goal here is to increase accountability through independent monitoring, while the main focus of beneficiary collection is on improved responsiveness and beneficiary satisfaction. Some tools in addition to citizen and community scorecards are social audits, public expenditure tracking surveys, participatory auditing, etc. The main results are reduction in corruption, increased transparency and accountability, and openness and fair communication in government.

- Grievance redress mechanisms – These are becoming more commonplace among development projects driven by the fact that safeguard policies require implementing agencies to have them in

place. To be effective, they need to be monitored for usage, resolution rates, and satisfaction levels among the complainants. Provision of multiple channels is important to making them accessible.

Logically, the six ways to engage citizens either in government programmes or development projects describe how communication, and various tools and mechanisms, can support citizenry engagement. To a larger extent, methods and techniques of communication should include a two-way symmetrical process if practised to integrate the targeted stakeholders deliberately.

Contextually, Argenti (2007) believes that communication plays an important role in any situation, context or circumstance, including an organisation. In fact, it is said to be the life wire of the organisation. Nothing in the universe, human or otherwise, do not communicate – though the means of communication may be very different. To juxtapose communication and engagement in the context of the North-West Province, it can be observed that political dialogue with citizens is a measure for governance and governmental reforms.

Accordingly, the researcher believes that those in positions of power have the means to control the nature of communication, and to determine the level of citizenry participation in government programmes. As a result of such control over communication processes, inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved or not. Communication has to strive for durable effect in addressing the expectations of citizens – this can be realised through responsive, open and transparent mechanisms of communication with the unique aim of inclusivity.

Communication should be used to foster citizenry participation in governance and to promote sustainability programmes. Rensburg and De Beer (2011) situate that the oversight function of those responsible for communication should therefore include the consideration of the legitimate interests of all stakeholders, such as the community (citizens), in their strategic decision-making. Although it is widely accepted that communication and participation remain the normative approach concerning citizens and their government, in practice there are various factors restraining the employment of communication initiatives based on this approach.

One of the points of evaluation frequently wedged against communication methods and citizenry participation is that it is time consuming and difficult to implement on an applied and/or practical level. More often, citizens are excluded from government programmes because of the budget constraints' claims levelled by officials.

Inclusive and instant communication involves a shift in focus from a linear information dissemination paradigm to a transactional, two-way dialogic mode of communication – in which communities are fully involved in identifying needs and taking ownership of activities and information. Another observation is that the historical imbalances in the North-West Province has further led to communication inequalities, where communication suffices at a non-strategic level and only reaches those in semi-urban towns and not those in remote villages.

Strategic communication efforts can assist in unresponsive developmental programmes, which might be the result of channels and elements of communication which are fragmented. It can further assist in strategic information dissemination – information should be properly constructed to make meaning and should enable one to act.

For this reason, the study endeavoured to understand how strategic communication efforts can support governance and sustainability programmes from a participatory perspective, in order to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. Additionally, it is important to understand and identify the legitimate needs and interests of citizens, as some of their expectations might be too high and often not fulfilled. Time and again, budgets cannot meet high expectations and the importance of communicating about these expectations with citizens is often not recognised.

More often than not, the dominant challenge might be that communication is not symmetrically planned and sustained to bring about a degree of change in attitude and behaviour of citizens and the broader civil society. To this effect, the results may lead to disarray, inconsistency and apathy. The creation of favourable communication domains that address basic issues such as citizens' interests, needs and involvement in policy formulation, decision-making and empowerment platforms are often seen as expensive and time consuming to facilitate. Consequently, such

lack of communication efforts lead to a disjoined, un-functional and disorganised governance system, particularly in governing and managing citizens' expectations.

Citizenry participation should not only exist on a conceptual and ideological level in government policies – it must also be realised as effective and working towards the benefit of all parties concerned. Accordingly, conceptual and ideological participation without citizenry involvement may lead to untargeted communication. From this perspective, communication is seen as a unidirectional, one-way persuasion process that does not involve reciprocity.

Government must ensure that communication aids public participation through citizenry involvement. This phenomenon allows for both communication and participation to be managed effectively, efficiently, and in response to the critical needs of all members of society. It is legitimate and acceptable; transparent and accountable; promotes equity and equality; operates by the rule of law, which means legal frameworks are fairly and impartially enforced; responsive to the needs of the people; and efficient and effectively addressing the expectations of citizens.

All of these can be realised when communication is practised as a strategic process which aids participation to ensure inclusive citizenry engagement in Provincial Government activities – as indicated in Figure 2.3. Here, citizens exercise influence over public decisions through communication opportunities created by government. This strategic process of communication should focus on the creation of an enabling regulatory framework and economic environment in which citizens can participate in their own governance, generate legitimate demands (mutually inclusive goals), and monitor government policies and actions.

Figure 2.3: Communication aiding citizenry involvement in government initiatives
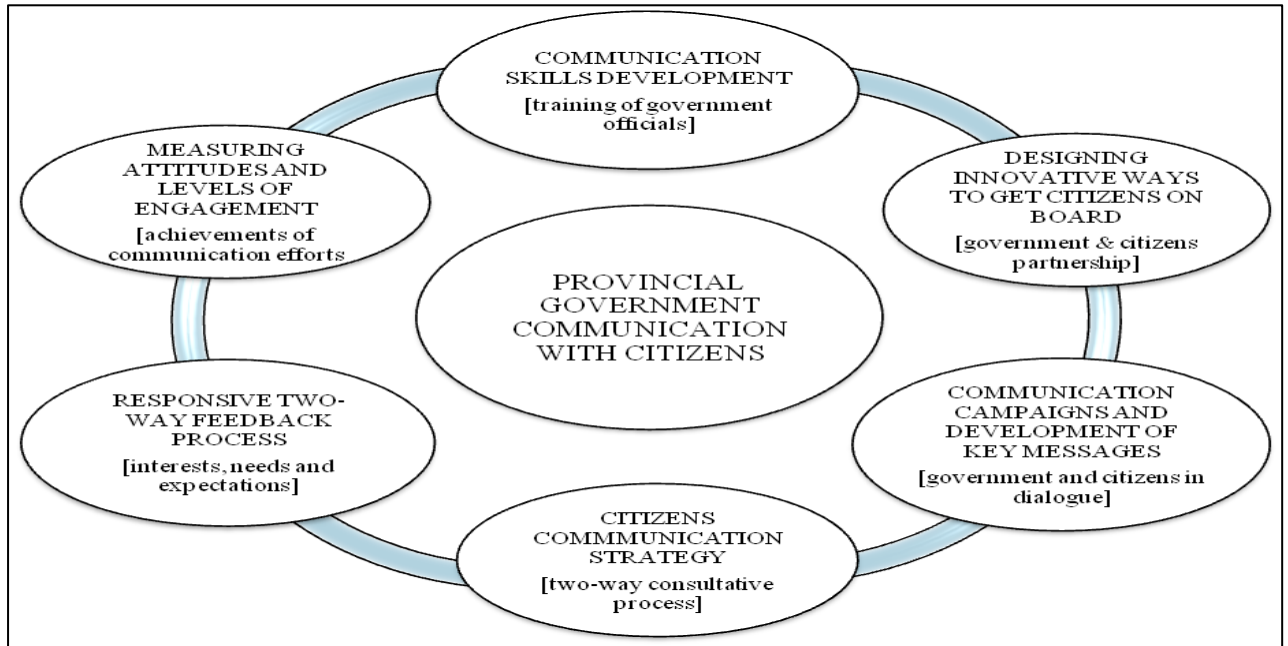
Source: Own conceptualisation.

2.9 CONCLUSION

As set-out in the Introduction, this Chapter was devoted to describing the context and background of the North-West Province. In doing so, discussions on the nature and complexity of the rural character of the Province were discussed. The Chapter described the five concretes, or Provincial Government programmes, as adopted by the 5th Administration. The vision and intention of the National Development Plan (NDP) informed the formulation of the Provincial Development Plan (PDP) as the corner stone for governmental governance and sustainability programmes, which culminate in the five concretes.

Subsequently, the PDP gave rise to the adoption of the Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal strategy of the North-West Province – the RRR strategy anchors the Provincial Governments' plan in collaborating with ordinary citizens about the developments and opportunities available in the Province. Furthermore, the Chapter also considered how the five concretes are communicated to citizens for their involvement and instant action. Consequently, various gaps in the dissemination and practicalisation of the five concretes as key socio-economic transformation programmes in the Province were identified.

The dominant challenge with managing the five concretes in practice is that communication mechanisms are often not used to aid the involvement and inclusive participation of ordinary citizens – particularly those in remote areas. The five concretes seem abstract for those in rural areas; the assumption is that the majority of those citizens are not literate enough to understand the information provided on websites and other channels. Interestingly, communication efforts often do not speak the language of the layman and do not conform to aid citizenry engagement and participation.

Additionally, the Chapter also discussed key stakeholders in the North-West Province through highlighting how citizens should be engaged and the significance of communication that plays a strategic role in government decision-making. In the main, the GCIS and Provincial Government communication were also explored to understand how citizens are included in the dominant-coalition of decision-making through public consultations and relevant platforms of dialogues. To this end, the role of GCIS in the Province(s) is not clear. The literature indicates that the supposed role of GCIS as a government communication agency is not intensified, particularly at the Provincial level. Equally, how the identified concretes, as both social and economic programmes, are communicated, remains largely unclear.

Lastly, a consideration of how communication can aid citizenry engagement is adapted from Bhargava (2015). The author recognises that there should be six-ways in which citizens are engaged. Such engagements can address communication flaws in government reforms and development projects. Accordingly, the Chapter concludes with suggesting a conceptualisation of how deliberate communication efforts can also address, at most, citizenry interests and needs, and most importantly manage their expectations.

CHAPTER THREE
PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE FOR INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

An interdisciplinary approach is endeavoured in this Chapter, which in essence includes communication management, a brief perspective on development communication, and political science perspective. In understanding how strategic communication can support governance and sustainability through a participatory communication perspective, the interdisciplinary approach leads the study to a synthesis of a meta-theoretical perspective in this Chapter.

Social and legitimacy theories are both undertaken and explored as grand theories, which have strands in management discourse and the study of political life. Through the adoption of a meta-theoretical framework, the researcher is able to conceptualise and understand the complexities and nature of the interdisciplinary approach, while juxtaposing various theoretical domains. The framework provides the researcher with guidance and consolidation of a particular worldview through a basic belief of systems – a dialogic approach is the worldview of this study.

The rest of the Chapter attempts to explore the role of participatory communication as a perspective for inclusive citizenry engagement. In the main, governance initiatives in context to the study signify how public participation can exemplify inclusive citizenry engagement, while pursuing the triple-context dimension as part of sustainability programmes. The amiable factor is to understand how the North-West Provincial Government recognises the critical importance of the issue of governance, and to understand the achievement of inclusive citizenry engagement through participatory communication.

It is equally appropriate to note that participatory communication is advanced from the premise of development communication, with the application of various participatory approaches in this Chapter. Sustainability programmes, as detailed in the previous Chapter, are reflected on, to understand the participatory nature of

these programmes. To a greater extent, the programmes/concretes serve as the main activities of the North-West Province as adopted by the 5th Provincial Administration. Notably, the Provincial Government has identified those programmes in order to, among others, improve the living conditions of citizens, change the economic landscape of the Province, and encourage public participation through government reforms.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PERSPECTIVES

This Chapter introduces a synthesis of the meta-theoretical perspectives of the study, with the consideration of an interdisciplinary approach. As a context, the scientific grand-domain embedded in this study remains communication science and political science. Most importantly, social theory is adopted as a social oriented approach to how the Provincial Government interact with its societal components to advance inclusive participation. Subsequently, legitimacy theory, as a systems-based perspective is also applied as a meta-theoretical approach to the study – the two approaches are complementary to the context of the current study.

Figure 3.1: A synthesis of the meta-theoretical approaches

A SYNTHESIS OF META-THEORETICAL APPROACHES			
Meta-theoretical approach/ Grand theory	SOCIAL THEORY LEGITIMACY THEORY		
Worldviews	Dialogic approach		
Grand Domain	Communication science		Political science
Sub domains	Communication management	Development communication	
Paradigm	Reflective paradigm		
Main theories	• Strategic communication theory • Stakeholder theory • Reflective paradigm	• Participatory approach • Institutional theory	• Political economic theory • Social contract theory • Political participation
Concepts and constructs	• Strategic communication management • Inclusive stakeholder approach	• Participatory communication • Sustainability	• Socio-political discourse and governance • Corporate Governance • Responsiveness • Stakeholder engagement

Source: Own conceptualisation.

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To achieve the purpose of this study, a dialogic approach serves as a worldview and succours the study to gain a better perspective of variant approaches to communication management, development communication, and political science. Contextual to the study, realities are constructed in communication – different forms of communication create different kinds of realities.

3.2.1 Society and citizenship in context – social theory (grand theory)

The ever increasing challenges confronting the global society demand intuitive measures and impactful resolves from actors. In this regard, scholars have increasingly turned to social theory to study the practice and the consequences that strategic communication has in society. Important questions have been raised concerning issues such as trust and legitimacy, power and behaviour. Using social theory, including sociological and culturally oriented approaches, practitioners and scholars focus on how organisations relate themselves to the public arena or society at large. This body of work often moves beyond the applied lip-service to strategic issues, to more equitable discussions on ethical and political consequences drawn from empirical data.

It must be said, however, that the approaches are widely disparate concerning most aspects. Some scholars have condemned the practice of certain forms of corporate strategic communication, in particular those using critical theory (e.g., L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996, 2006) and post-colonial theory (e.g., Dutta-Bergman, 2005; McKie & Munshi, 2007; Munshi & Kurian, 2005). But the literature has also grown to include work that draws on other forms of social theory, like postmodernism (e.g., Holtzhausen, 2012; McKie & Munshi, 2007; Radford, 2012), feminism (e.g., Aldoory, 1998; Grunig & Hon, 2001; O'Neil, 2003; Toth, 2001), constructivism (e.g., Merten, 2004), communitarianism (e.g., Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; Leeper, 2001; Starck & Kruckeberg, 2001), cultural theory (e.g., Banks, 1995; Leichty, 2003; Ristino, 2008, Hatch & Schultz, 2002), structuration theory (e.g., Durham, 2005), social constructionism (Tsetsura, 2010), systems theory (Holmstrom, 2010), complexity theory (Gilpin & Murphy, 2010), intersectionality theory (Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010), agenda-setting and agenda building theory (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006; Schultz, Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, Utz & van

Atteveldt, 2012) and framing (see Lim & Jones, 2010 for an overview in the field of public relations).

It is the contention of the researcher that social theory underpins the contribution of strategic communication through multiple approaches. Such approaches include, but are not limited to, the following: modernity, postmodernity, hypermodernity of organisations, and the second modernity. The second modernity is a social construction of society diagnosis through communicative action. In the development context, communication strives not only to inform and educate, but also to motivate people and to secure public participation in the growth and change process. A widespread understanding of development plans is an essential stage in the process of obtaining public co-operation for national development.

i) Social concept and strategic communication

Ihlen and Verhoeven (2009, 2012) in their manuscript points out that social theory provides strategic communication with a basic understanding of the societal role of the practice, and its ethical and political consequences. First of all, building on social theory means recognising both negative and positive influences of the practice. A whole range of different perspectives is on offer describing how society works – communication has increasingly been placed at the centre of such analyses. The work of Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012) position that drawing on such perspectives, legitimacy and reflection are singled out as key concepts for strategic communication, where issues of power and language are highlighted. Finally, social theory invites a whole range of empirical methods to study strategic communication; most of them recognising insights from the communicative turn.

Social theory calls for analysis of how society works and questions the value and meaning of what we see around us. Social theory furthermore presents us with different diagnoses for social ills and social change. Society has seen several changes in its meta-narratives, which have been described by Max Weber, as change from a society where individuals act based on tradition, to a society dominated by goal-oriented rationality (Waeraas, 2009). Such a view, however, is contrasted by analyses that characterise society as postmodern and argue that emotional and value oriented orders co-exist with rational ones. Pluralism, poly-

contextuality, and situated knowledge are defining characteristics of this situation (Lyotard, 1979). Even if truths were not always taken for granted in the pre-modern society, values and norms were concrete and fundamental and closed to reflection (Zijderveld, 2000).

In modern society, an increasingly common view is the one forwarded by John Dewey in 1916 that society is not only maintained by communication, but it is actually constituted by it (Kuckelhaus, 1998). Strategic communication and public relations are therefore closely connected to modernity, especially in the economic context of commercial and administrative organisations.

Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012) cherished a view that if communication constitutes the modern society, strategic communication and public relations are important constituents of modernity. Versions of a social constructivist perspective seem to dominate the way social theorists describe the process by which modern and late modern society has come into being. In context, such a view necessarily also privilege a focus on language, communication and relations, as when we interpret and de- and re-construct meaning. Thus, constructing social reality is a shared process of meaning construction (Bentele & Ruhl, 1993; Nistelrooij, 2000).

In the recent decade some theorists have tried to bridge the theoretical and conceptual distinction between modernism and postmodernism by introducing so-called second modernity (Beck, Bonss & Lau, 2003) or hypermodernity (Lipovetsky, 2005). Second modernity, also called reflexive modernity, is a cosmopolitan theoretical perspective and a proposed research programme that can overcome the relativism connected to postmodernism. Such a perspective suits strategic communication and public relations very well because the practical field of communication management is often accused of being relativistic and also contributing to the postmodern relativism in society at large.

In second modernity, Beck, Bonss and Lau (2003) recognise that the modern society of the twentieth century has changed fundamentally, calling this a modernisation of modernity. That is the second or reflexive modernity, not signifying an "increase of mastery and consciousness, but a heightened awareness that mastery is impossible" (Latour, 2003). The modern society becomes reflexive through "disenchanting and

dissolving" (Beck *et al.*, 2003:3) its premises in the areas of, for example, the nation state, the welfare state, the legal system, the economy and governance.

In second modernity boundaries between social spheres, between nature and society, scientific and unscientific statements are not institutionally guaranteed as in modernity, nor dissolved as in post-modernity. In second modernity boundaries become multiple and at the same time fundamental. This process raises the necessity of institutionalising new fictive or negotiable boundaries self-consciously, and solving conflicts around responsibility and decision-making in society.

The second modernists try to find ways to take into account the unexpected side effects of policies and actions and search the closure of debates through *ad hoc* means of decision-making (Beck *et al.*, 2003). It is not hard to picture an important role for strategic communication here in all sides of the debates. At the same time subjectivity becomes a central notion in second modernity. The necessity of the subjective drawing of boundaries in all aspects of social life (institutional, cultural and technical) and the recognition of those subjective boundaries as positive fictions, help to solve social problems.

This is different from the "bricolage mentality in postmodernism and the acceptance of a pluralised, de-foundationalising" (Beck *et al.*, 2003:27). A perspective of second modernity can help to solve communication problems and conflicts between organisations, because it recognises the private interests and the fundamental subjective character of many strategic communication messages, as opposed to modern miscommunication because of the assumed fixed boundaries between organisations. To this end, individualisation is another important aspect of second modernity. In this view, individualisation is a result of the acceptance of the multiple bases on which an individual can be defined. Therewith, the self-definition of individuals has become individualised (Beck *et al.*, 2003).

The development in the direction of more individualisation is also found in theories about hypermodernity with the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky (2005) as its main representative. Hypermodernity is also a very suitable theoretical perspective for strategic communication because it not only recognises the fundamental individualisation and reflexivity of society, but also acknowledges the fundamental

consumerist character of today's global society. As strategic communication is often functioning within an economic environment, the recognition of consumerism as a major force in society helps in theorising about it.

A point of departure is that both social theory and strategic communication compliments each other. When social theorists present a societal diagnosis, by implication they will also often propose a remedy. The proposed solution might come in the form of acceptation or a call for communicative action (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Communicative action is a form of societal dialogue and consensus building and is seen as opposing strategic action that only works for the realisation of private interests and which could involve using other humans strategically. As pointed out above, some also see strategic communication as an important civic instrument (Heath, 2011; Taylor, 2010). Others argue that we should draw lessons from how actors construct our non-modern condition from scratch (Verhoeven, 2009).

3.2.2 Legitimacy theory (grand theory)

This Chapter makes a clear reference to the employment of an interdisciplinary approach, where the focus lies within the parameters of linking the disciplines of communication management, development communication, and political science. Accordingly, the general foundation of this study is approached from the perspective of legitimacy theory – this is done with particular concentration on the systems-based perspective derived from the study of politics and communication management approaches. In the main, the study seeks to understand, inter-alia, the strategic relationship patterns that lie with the environment, economic and social proportions (triple-context dimension) of the North-West Provincial Governments' governance initiatives and the general public. In doing so, a systemic approach to the legitimacy theory is interrogated to subtly demarcate the dynamic socio-economic and social relations of the Province alongside the environment and its immediate habitants (citizens).

Legitimacy theory in general has sustained the rich literature from various scholarly contributions and artistic work throughout the years in various fields. Contextual to this study, legitimacy theory argues that organisations are continually seeking to ensure that they operate within the bounds and norms of their respective societies

(Deegan, 2000). To this end, legitimacy can be considered as "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995:574). These bounds and norms are not considered to be fixed, but rather, change over time, thereby requiring the organisation to be responsive to the environment in which they operate. Similar to social contract theory, legitimacy theory is based upon the notion that there is a social contract between the society and an organisation.

It is without a doubt that an organisation receives permission to operate from the society and is ultimately accountable to the society for how it operates and what it does, because society provides the authority to own and use natural resources and to hire employees (Deegan 2004). The North-West Provincial Government, as the people's government, equally is an entity that is accountable to citizens. Accountability in this regard is based on how responsive government programmes and activities can encourage public participation through governance initiatives and the championing of developmental (sustainability) programmes.

To this end, organisations attempt to establish congruence between "the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system of which they are part" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975:122). Consistent with this view, Richardson (1987:352) asserts that accounting is a legitimating institution and provides a "means by which social values are linked to economic actions". As a context, adherence to social values and societal expectations should definitively reflect on the gains of inclusive and participative relationships in public institutions, as well. This approach enables citizens to champion and exercise social accountability as a legitimate means to demand commitment from Provincial Government on a number of service designs.

Moreover, organisations seek legitimacy through either substantive management, which involves real, material change in organisational managerial practice, or symbolic management with a choice of ways that will make the organisation appear consistent with social values and expectations (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). The choice of approach depends on whether the organisation seeks to extend, maintain, or defend its legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995). Symbolic

management is common when an organisation is extending legitimacy, but more when defending legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Existing legitimacy of an organisation is threatened, questioned or challenged when the organisation's adverse effects on the environment are apparent (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

An important lesson for social institution is to recognise that the intensity of legitimating depends on factors such as the need for speed of response, the availability of resources, management response flexibility, the constituents challenge, organisation stigmatisation, the ripple effect to other constituents, time to plan, and extent to which legitimacy was taken for granted (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990).

3.2.3 Worldview: Dialogic approach

The dialogic perspective is a form of communication that can construct positive realities that enable participants to effectively manage and learn from their differences and diversity. Herzig and Chasin (2006:139-140) conceptualise the dialogic approach as being the opposite of argumentative debate – whereas in argumentation participants compete and try to win, in dialogue they collaborate and mutually try to understand each other. It is for this reason, that the current study, adopted a dialogic approach as the guiding lens of how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective in the North-West Province.

To achieve this resolve, the study attempted to assess how both strategic communication management efforts and a participatory perspective can assist the North-West Province in obtaining inclusive citizenry engagement. As a result, the dialogic approach requires a mutual, symmetrical relationship in which the participants are turned toward each other in the tension of holding their own grounds while being open to the other. According to Kaplan (1969), this requires mutual implication and communion because dialogue focuses on discovering shared concerns between the participants, while surfacing differences when they are not obvious, which can result in original insights and perspectives.

To a greater extent, one way to distinguish between the various views on dialogue is to differentiate between descriptive approaches and prescriptive ones. Descriptive

approaches regard dialogue as inherent to all human interaction – the reducibly social, relational, or interactional character of all human meaning-making (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). On the other hand, prescriptive approaches conceptualise dialogue as a certain quality of communication – dialogic communication – a non-confrontational method set apart from other forms of communication, such as debate, discussion, negotiations, or deliberation (Pearce & Pearce, 2000).

Stewart and Zediker (2000) parallel this with Aristotle's notion of praxis, pointing out that prescription calls forth participants' moral judgments about communication. Thus, prescriptive approaches require participants to make conscious choices about how to communicate with others. For the purpose of the current study, both descriptive and prescriptive approaches to dialogue are adopted, because dialogue is forever inherent in all human interactions. However, the choice to engage in dialogue often depends on consciousness.

More often than not, circumstances dictate when, how and why human interaction should take precedence. The prescriptive approach to dialogue is often ideal as it addresses how human interaction is dictated by consciousness. Consciously, all forms of human interaction are based on a choice of how, what, and when to communicate. This type of human interaction is either based on circumstances or prevailing conditions. As a context, dialogue can be considered as a mutual two-way balanced process of communication between the concerned parties. Parties involved consciously share communion understanding for the creation of debates and discussions through dialogic communication. From this perspective, it is quite clear that dialogic communication is the result of inclusively co-ordinated debates, negotiations and impactful discussions – these efforts are positive indicators to the attainment of an inclusive society of highly engaged citizens.

3.2.4 Grand domain: Communication science

The current study departs from the premise of communication science or management as an academic discipline that cuts across a number of other disciplines. It is without a doubt that communication science is an academic discipline that deals with processes of human communication, the discipline includes sub-domains such as: strategic communication, participatory communication, crisis

communication, risk communication, development journalism and international communication, and online media and internet studies among others.

(a) Discipline: Communication management

The premise for strategic communication management in the context of this study lies in the scientific field of corporate communication. Steyn and De Beer (2012:50) extend an argument that corporate communication plays a strategic role in governing stakeholder relationships, which includes corporate governance, sustainability initiatives, enterprise strategy development, reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and communication management as its core principles.

The authors, Steyn and De Beer (2012), further postulate that corporate communication – through communication management in its strategic role, assists the organisation to earn the necessary approval – its license to operate – from those affected by and affecting its operations (obtaining legitimacy and earning trust from stakeholders and society). From this premise, the practice of communication management at a strategic level assists the organisation to be a responsible communal citizen and to integrate governance principles and stakeholder approaches into its conventional approach (via corporate communication's contribution to enterprise strategy formulation), integrating moral attitudes and requirements with behaviour.

Communication management at a strategic level advocates for a triple-context, where the emphasis is not only placed on financial reporting patterns of organisational performance – but also on the sustainable and legitimised norms of programmatic planning and execution, also as articulated by Steyn and De Beer (2012). The triple context dimension advocates for integrated reporting of sustainable programmes and projects that seek to benefit citizens as key stakeholders of the North-West Province. Moreover, citizens partake in initiatives that benefit them economically and socially, and adhere to the needs of their immediate environment, ultimately meeting their expectations.

Gamble and Gamble (2005:7) opine that 'communication is the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning'. In order for deliberate communication to be effective, it should be managed. Kaye (1994:12) defines communication management as 'the

process of coordinating the interpretations or meanings construed by interacting people'. Therefore, the process involves both 'understanding and negotiating the meanings of two or more individuals' (ibid.). Managing communication is particularly important within organisations. Consequently, Grunig and Hunt (1984:6) describe communication management as:

> *The overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of the organisation to meet its goals.*

Most models of communication management focus on the different approaches adopted by practitioners of the science. In one of the earlier models, Thayer (1968:56) offered two contrasting concepts. The first of these, 'synchronic' communication, describes how practitioners attempt to synchronise the behaviour of the public with that of the organisation, thereby allowing the organisation to carry on its activities in an uninterrupted manner. 'Diachronic' communication, on the other hand, describes attempts to agree a situation that is acceptable to both the organisation and its publics. Using Thayer's work as a basis, James Grunig developed four seminal models of communication management involving two distinct variables: direction and purpose. Grunig (1992:289) explains these variables as follows:

> *Direction describes the extent to which the model is one-way or two-way. One-way communication disseminates information; it is a monologue. Two-way communication exchanges information; it is a dialogue. Purpose describes whether the model is asymmetrical or symmetrical. Asymmetrical communication is imbalanced; it leaves the organisation as is and tries to change the public. Symmetrical communication is balanced; it adjusts the relationship between the organisation and public.*

Additionally, Culbertson and Chen (1996:4) provide succinct descriptions of Grunig's four models of communication management. The authors categorised the first two models as 'one-way' processes of communication. Organisations practising 'one-way' communication management do not engage in research or any attempt to understand their publics, nor do they engage in any dialogue or attempt to receive audience/publics' feedback.

Consequently, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002:64) consider 'one-way' models 'unethical'. They term the first of the 'one-way' models 'press-agentry' or 'publicity' models, wherein emphasis is placed on achieving publicity for the organisation - minimal attention is afforded to ensuring accuracy or truth in communicated messages. The second 'one-way' model, is termed a 'public information' model, and involves the dissemination of positive information about the organisation by 'journalists in residence', through 'controlled media' (Grunig, 1992:18). Once again, no research or evaluation is conducted.

However, unlike the 'press-agentry' model, the 'public information' model involves some attempts to disseminate information that is both accurate and truthful. Grunig's final two models involve 'two-way' communication processes. In the 'two-way asymmetric' model, practitioners conduct extensive research of their key publics. This is done in order to optimise persuasive strategies, with a view to changing public attitudes and behaviour in a way that best suits the organisation (Grunig, 1992:289). This model and the two 'one-way' models mentioned above are associated with 'rhetorical' approaches to communication. The fourth model, 'two-way symmetric', which is associated with 'relational communication', involves the organisation entering transactions with publics as equal partners.

Table 3.1: Grunig's Models of PR

CHARACTERISTIC	PRESS AGENTRY/ PUBLICITY	PUBLIC INFORMATION	TWO-WAY ASYMMETRIC	TWO-WAY SYMMETRIC
PURPOSE	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
NATURE OF COMMUNICATION	One-way, truth inessential	One-way, truth important	Two-way, imbalanced effects	Two-way, balanced effects
PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW	Asymmetrical	Pluralistic/asymmetrical	Asymmetrical	Symmetrical
MONO/DIALOGIC	Monologic	Monologic	Unbalanced Monologic	Dialogic
HABERMASIAN EQUIVALENT	Strategic action	Strategic action	Strategic action	Communicative action
GAME THEORY OUTCOME	Zero sum	Zero sum	Zero sum	Positive sum

Source: as adapted from Grunig (1992:18).

In pursuit of the two-way process, Grunig *et al.*, (2002:11) emphasise that 'organisations get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want'. A number of other theorists advanced the 'two-way symmetrical' model as an

optimum approach to managing communication, including, amongst many others, Deetz, cited in Griffin, (2003:288), Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000:3), Salwen and Stacks (1996:465), and Heath (2001:523). However, not all scholars are in agreement with the views of these theorists, and many consider the 'two-way symmetrical' model as 'unrealistic and overly idealistic' (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:154), 'naïve and utopian' (Maloney, 1997:140), 'an attempt to make an inherently evil practice look good' (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:105), and a mere 'tacit or latent strategic act rather than a communicative one in the Habermassian sense' (Nohrstedt, 2000:144).

In recognising merits in the 'two-way' symmetrical model, Murphy (1991:118) suggests that organisations should pursue communication management using a 'mixed-motives' approach. She emphasises the importance of organisations attempting to satisfy their own needs and interests, while simultaneously trying to help publics to satisfy their best interests. Consequently, Murphy (1991:118) proposes a fifth category of communication management models, the 'mixed-motives' model. This is based on a combination of Grunig's 'two-way asymmetrical' and the 'two-way symmetrical' models where the ideal position for both the organisation and the audience/publics is within the 'win-win' zone. The relationship between the 'mixed-motive model and both of the 'two-way' models is explained by Murphy with an illustration.

Figure 3.2: Mixed-motives model
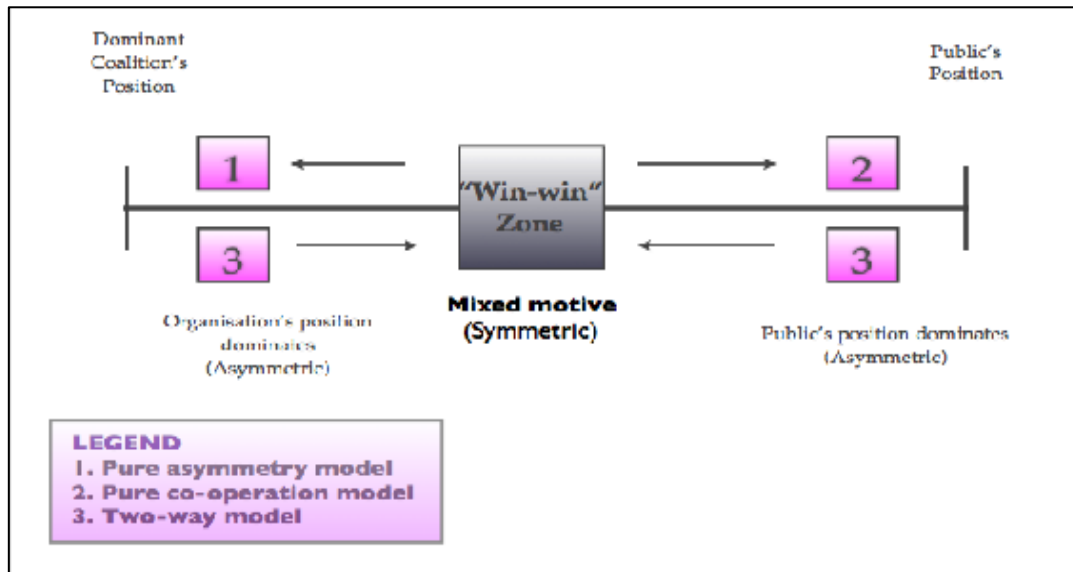
Source: Murphy (1991:118).

Therefore, the current study departs with a conception that communication management is defined as being concerned with "maximising, optimising, or satisfying the process of meaning creation, using informational, persuasive, relational, and discursive interventions to solve managerial problems by co-producing societal (public) legitimation" as supported by van Ruler and Vercic (2005:266).

This definition of communication management is optimal for the realisation of strategic communication as a focused, deliberate, and intentional strategy of communication at a strategic level – communication management remains a process creation. This denotes that communication management is strategic and a process of a co-ordinated effort to achieve objectives and resolve situations. The rationale is that communication management is of fundamental significance and must therefore take the shape of a concrete relationship with the publics' that every organisation address.

(b) Discipline: Development communication

Participation has become development orthodoxy. Holding out the promise of inclusion, of creating spaces for the less vocal and powerful to exercise their voices

and to begin to gain more choices, participatory approaches appear to offer a lot to those struggling to bring about more equitable development (Gaventa, 2002). With the shift in the participation discourse beyond beneficiary participation to wider questions of citizenship, rights and governance – addressing challenges of equity and inclusion is gaining even greater importance (see also Malikhao, 2012; Servaes, 2015; Lie & Servaes, 2015).

Michener (1998) suggests that participation, and its companion concepts of 'sustainability and empowerment,' are at the centre of contemporary development discourse. No longer limited to more progressive organisations such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), it has an important place in the rhetoric of the development giants' and the governments of developing countries. Participation has increased in popularity since the 1970s, when it grew out of the concern for meeting basic needs and reaching the poorest of the poor. Today, the concept has taken on the characteristics of a panacea – academic studies and policy statements lauding the benefits of participation have made it one of the most widely used concepts in development (Young, 1980; Pretty, 1995).

i)   Participatory communication framework and models

The participatory approach is viewed as a conceptual and practice oriented response to what was viewed by scholars in Latin America as a classic diffusion model that was premised on an inappropriate 'ideological framework' that contradicted the concrete reality prevailing in South America at that time (Beltran, 1975). Existing development projects were seen as perpetuating the political economic interest of the few elites. This concern was also expressed at the First Latin American Seminar on Participatory Communication in 1978.

It was at this Seminar, that was held at the centre for Advanced Studies and Research for Latin America, that scholars began to argue that by using mass media in development projects promoted the interests of the elite at the expense of the marginalised majority of the population, thereby replicating and legitimising the dominant social and material relations of economic production (O'Sullivan & Kaplun, 1978).

The participatory model, on the other hand, incorporates the concepts in the framework of multiplicity. It stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities and of democratisation and participation at all levels - international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'. Freire (1983:76) refers to this as the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word: "This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words".

In order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development. Therefore, the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems argues that "this calls for a new attitude for overcoming stereotyped thinking and to promote more understanding of diversity and plurality, with full respect for the dignity and equality of peoples living in different conditions and acting in different ways" (MacBride, 1980:254). This model stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation.

Therefore, these newer approaches argue that the point of departure must be the community. It is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed, and interactions with other communities are elicited. The most developed form of participation is self-management. This principle also implies the right to participation in the planning and production of media content. However, not everyone wants to or must be involved in its practical implementation. More important is that participation is made possible in decision-making regarding the subjects treated in the messages and regarding the selection procedures.

One of the fundamental hindrances to the decision to adopt the participation strategy is that it threatens existing hierarchies. Nevertheless, participation does not imply that there is no longer a role for development specialists, planners, and institutional leaders. It only means that the viewpoint of the local public groups is considered before the resources for development projects are allocated and distributed, and that suggestions for changes in the policy are taken into consideration.

The models of participatory communication are closely related to both the access and the human rights approaches to development. Stemming from the theories of the Brazilian pedagogic Paulo Freire and the many experiments with alternative communications that appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s – this model explicitly affirms that people's participation in communication is vital to the success of any given project. It is based on a conscious effort to involve people in their own development. The success of this model is self-evident. There have been numerous attempts at documenting participatory communication projects in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The use of popular theatre in development, community radio, and recently, IT-based projects, is witness to the success of this project (Lie & Servaes 2015; Servaes, 2014).

However, the very success of 'participatory' approaches needs to be seen against the gradual institutionalisation of the NGO movement in large parts of the world and against the many attempts by governments to co-opt and dilute the notion of participatory change (from its original meaning rooted in the idea of people-led, inclusive, autonomous change to that of people-led change within the frameworks and perceptions of development and change of NGOs and governments as alluded to by Servaes (2003, 2015)). What is significant about the latter approach is the absence of a political agenda explicitly linked to the transformation of structures and practices responsible for poverty.

In other words, this model privileges access within imposed models of development. For instance, rural radio stations in Cameroon do provide space for local people in their programming and content – but these stations are not owned by any given community, nor do they encourage the mobilisation of people in support of large-scale change. Servaes (2003, 2013a) posit that, similarly, the many IT-based projects in parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, supported by inter-governmental agencies, are strong on access but weak on situating these interventions within the long-term, integrated development of communities. There is a sense in which 'access' does not affect the feudal constancy of socio-economic contexts around the world (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012; Servaes, 2014).

The summary below reflects an elucidation by scholars on the types of developmental projects based on 'participatory communication projects':

- o Participatory media are internally organised along democratic lines (as worker co-operatives or collectives);

- o participatory media are recognised by their opposition to cultural industries dominated by multinational corporations;

- o participatory media may be traced to the liberation of linguistic and ethnic groups following a major social transformation;

- o the strong existence of participatory media may be explained in terms of class struggles within the society.

- o participatory media may be identified as 'molecular' rather that 'molar' (a collectivity of individual autonomous units rather than one that is homogenised and one-dimensional); and

- o participatory media (like the montage of Eisenstein and the theatre of Brecht) by design requires a creative and varied reception from its audience (Berrigan *et al.*, in Servaes, 2003).

It can be seen that the strength of the participatory model is premised more on the need for political legitimacy through public participation and organising of democratised structures from within the community. Similarly, this strength is not different from the communication praxis model, as practice can only be effective by application of a developmental model that recognises the human rights of individuals and communities in a humanistic way.

ii) Dependency paradigm and participatory paradigm

In the previous model of the dependency paradigm, the scholars in Latin America were interpreting development communication from within a global framework that analysed development projects as 'integral elements of a system that facilitated the continuation of asymmetrical relations (Huesca, 2002:185; Barranquero, 2011). However, the participatory model informed a shift from the dominant schools on development communication to a level of analysis from within the 'historical and global theories of domination and inequity' (O'Sullivan & Kaplun, 1978). While the dependency model was more rooted in a political economy approach, the participatory paradigm was more concerned with the prevailing cultural dynamics of development facing specific realities (see, for instance, Rogers, 2008; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Servaes, 1999; Waisbord, 2001).

Thus, the focus on development was no longer on economic growth only and began to also consider other social dimensions as guided by the consensus on the Millennium Development Goals that emphasised sustainability of development projects and the need for people's participation so there could be a sense of ownership of the objectives and the desired results. The new international perspective on development placed an emphasis on the sustainability of development and began to recognise participation as a key element in 'sustainable development strategies' (World Bank, 1994).

The definition of development communication by the World Division on Developmental Communication provides a management tool that gauges the risks and opportunities of development based on socio-political realities. Thus, development communication is seen as 'an interdisciplinary field based on empirical research that helps the sharing of knowledge to achieve positive change in development initiatives. It is not only about effective dissemination of information, but also about using empirical research and two-way communication among stakeholders' (World Bank, 1994).

As scholars and practitioners of development further engaged in an unfolding debate about the theory and implementation of development projects, including the method of communication for it; another definition of development emerged at the First World Congress of Communication for Development at Rome in October 2006. The definition that became known as the Rome Consensus, where approximately 900 delegates had attended, conceived development as 'a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communications' (Rogers, 2008).

It is apparent from the Rome Consensus that as much as the participatory paradigm attempted to move away from the political economy perspective, in many respects it is still intrinsic in the second definition by virtue of development being acknowledged as a social process. However, development communication is seen as a tool for participation in development projects. Furthermore, the transfer of skills and the transmission of knowledge are critical in sustaining the development process.

Critically, what can be discerned from the Rome Consensus is that the dialogic approach ensures legitimacy and trust of the development projects. This ensures that meaningful and observable social change can be realised among the intended beneficiaries within communities participating in development projects.

(c) Discipline: Political science

In South Africa, political science is regarded as the study of political life, which, in context, implies the democratic representation of the people by the people through governance. Governance plays a crucial role in democracy – one of the tenants of governance in South Africa is the realisation of public participation in government initiatives. Plaut and Holden (2012) assert that South Africa is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, wherein those elected by citizens have the political power to influence governance processes. Representative democracy is the will of the citizens to accord power to representatives – such power is accorded on the basis of public deliberations and citizenry participation in governance.

Governance dictates that, as Walsh (2003b:26) concludes, the benefits of participating in public dialogue are far from obvious. Although the format of the programmes has the potential to increase internal and external efficacy, enlarge social identities and lead perceptions of community to be more inclusive, the data are not decisive in these respects. There are signs that exposure to the programmes has a positive effect on perceptions of responsiveness of local government, but possibly a negative effect on individuals' sense of ability to affect policy, due in part to increasing perceptions that race relations is a complex issue. Analysis of feelings of closeness to various social groups suggests that participating may have a positive effect in this respect, but not universally. For some citizens, there are signs of heightened intergroup conflict.

Therefore, citizen participation can be understood as political practices through which citizens intended to influence some dimension of what is public (OIDP, 2007). In support of this notion, Verba and Nie, (1972:2) suggest that political participation refers to activities of citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the choice of the people they govern and/or actions taken. Meanwhile, Brady (1999:737)

indicates that political participation is about ordinary citizens' actions aimed at influencing some political outcomes.

The political landscape of South Africa after the 1994 apartheid regime has drastically changed the political participation outlook. It is evident that the democratic dispensation has positioned public participation at the fore of governance mechanisms. Political participation can be observed in all the nine provinces, and of importance is the autonomy of each province in governing citizens. The North-West Province has also assumed its status to exist equally and as part of the nine provinces of South Africa. Although each of the nine provinces exists autonomously, there exists a system of accountability and responsiveness as governed by the National Government of South Africa. The National Government acts as a facilitator of peoples' interests and needs through its lower spheres – lower spheres are therefore mandated to deliver basic services to the citizens in their respective provinces.

i) Paradigm: Reflective paradigm

The reflective paradigm is considered to conceptualise a process of strategic communication management. The reflection of society on its expectations signifies the strategic management of communication with citizens through an inherent system in the North-West Province. Thus, the reflective theory argues that society allows organisations to exist; therefore the organisation's values and culture should reflect those of the society in which it operates. To ensure that this happens, corporate communication/public relations should constantly remind top management of the changing views of the community and make sure that the organisation's goals are in line with community goals.

The reflective paradigm is a theoretical model developed to understand the conditions of existence for late modern organisations and the function of public relations. It defines, analytically, phenomena such as the triple bottom-line (people, planet, profit), multi-stakeholder dialogue, symmetrical communication and ethical accounts. It is based on the ability of reflection (Luhmann, 2000, as cited in Holmstrom 2002:1; Rensburg & De Beer, 2011), and on two analytical assumptions: (1) social systems are capable of reflection; and (2) there is an evolution towards the
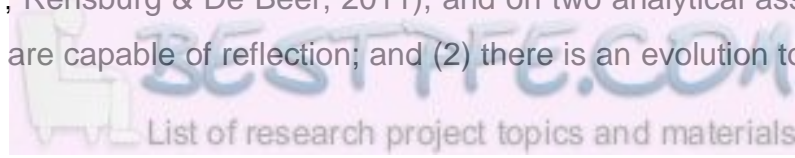
co-ordination of society which activates learning processes towards reflection as a general feature of social processes (Holmstrom, 2002:3).

As a communicative network, an organisation is kept together by a specific logic - a social system of meaning (Holmstrom, 2002:3, as cited in Rensburg & De Beer, 2011). To take this argument further, it becomes important for the North-West Province to consider citizens as a reflective mirror and the Provincial Government as a reflective window.

In doing so, the Provincial Government would realise the significance of deliberately attending to the needs, interests and expectations of citizens – the mirror reflection should be viewed as a social process feature so that the government can realise and see its operations from the citizens' perspective and as such encourage mutual understanding and shared benefits. The window reflection, on the other hand, must strategically induce citizens into knowing and understanding the day-to-day operation of government. Citizens should be able to view the Provincial Government as an open, transparent, and accountable institution of people's governance.

The organisation's perception of its function and role in society is based on this particular perspective (Holmstrom, 2002:3). In the reflective paradigm, a basic dynamic for a business enterprise is economic. However, reflection opens up the possibility for a broader perspective involving the horizon of a public sphere. It is in this broader perspective that reflection is identified: an expression of poly-context referential self-regulation – a multi-stakeholder dialogue, ethical programmes, and a broader value orientation, "triple bottom-line" and symmetrical communication (Holmstrom, 2002:8-9, as cited in Rensburg & De Beer, 2011).

3.2.5 Theoretical approaches to communication management

Theories and models are a way of looking at reality and the global dispensation of our entire lives. Theory further teaches us that organisations operate in an imperfect world where anything can happen at any time – therefore, organisations, institutions and governments need to have contingencies in place to deal with challenges that may arise (surplus profit in the bank e.g. for rainy days, crisis communication strategies in place for organisational scandals/corruption cases).

It is worth noting that there are numerous theories supporting strategic communication from the premise of corporate communication, strategic management and other disciplines, which in totality has built the strategic communication theory and body of knowledge through empirical and scientific methods of inquiry. Such empirical and scientific inquiries have afforded us the lens to view the world in a particular context.

Earlier on Vuori (2012) notes that in defining strategic communication we can underline its focus on communicating how companies transfer information among different organisational endeavours and how an organisation functions as a social actor in order to reach its goals. The theoretical clarification and approaches to communication management in its strategic nature of pursuing intentional and deliberate communication are therefore related to the context of the North-West Province in this current study.

(a) Strategic communication theory

As indicated earlier, the theory of strategic communication is supported and enhanced from various paradigms. Thus, it is imperative to highlight that it has become more and more important for social actors and organisations to be intentional and mindful in their communication in order to be heard (Habermas, 1989; Hallahan *et al*., 2007). This is particularly valid, as strategic organisational communication has become increasingly virtual and international in today's world. According to Hallahan *et al*., (2007:27) strategic communication should be a "focal interest of communication scholarships". Studying strategic communication as a social science reflects on real changes in the society and on its organisational principles.

Many organisations have recognised that various communication disciplines (e.g. management communication, marketing communication, public relations, social marketing communication, and technical communication) share common goals, objectivities and strategies in achieving similar purposes. Organisations are seeking integration, enhanced effectiveness through synergy, efficiencies and reduced redundancies (Hallahan, 2004 in Hallahan *et al*., 2007). Therefore, strategic

communication provides organisational leaders and members with purposeful communication activities to advance the organisation's mission.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, the North-West Province is not immune to adopting strategic communication efforts and its activities. Adopting strategic communication would therefore assist the North-West Province to reflect on real changes in the society and to pursue a citizen-oriented organisational mission and principles as a social entity of government. Strategic communication in essence would guide the Provincial Government to purposefully communicate planned and deliberate messages to the citizens. Such communication initiatives practised at a strategic level might aid leaders and communities in developing citizenry-tailored programmes through shared understanding.

As a guiding framework, the theory of strategic communication can also assist the Provincial Government in mitigating service delivery backlogs and continuous community protests – more often than not, community protests and unrests are as a result of untailored communication methods. Consequently, strategic communication management can be factored in as a strategic governance tool to engage citizens and to assist in meeting their demands and expectations.

Simply put, strategic communication theory enables an organisation to act and to operate ethically, which is done with the view of considering ethical leadership as part of governance and productivity. An organisation that practises strategic communication is able to manage communication effectively and to understand the role of its stakeholders, as well as the environment. The theory further highlights the importance of a corporate strategy as a point of coherence and co-ordinated effort of sustainable governance.

(b) Stakeholder theory

Botha *et al.*, (2007:63) highlighted that stakeholder theory is about organisations and their environments. An important part of interrelated organisational systems is the management of relationships between the organisation and the various stakeholders in its environment. The traditional definition of a stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman 1984). The general idea of the stakeholder concept is a

redefinition of the organisation. In general, the concept is about what the organisation should be and how it should be conceptualised.

Friedman (2006) states that the organisation itself should be thought of as a grouping of stakeholders and the purpose of the organisation should be to manage their interests, needs and viewpoints. Stakeholder management is thought to be fulfilled by the managers of an organisation. Managers should, on the one hand, manage the organisation for the benefit of its stakeholders in order to ensure their rights and their participation in decision-making and on the other hand management must act as the stockholder's agent, to ensure the survival of the firm to safeguard the long-term stakes of each group.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, it is evident that any stakeholder grouping is of importance to the success and survival of organisations, including government institutions. In the context of the North-West Province, citizens from all walks of life should be regarded as the authority that grants the provincial government the license to operate. It is for this reason that the North-West Province should safeguard the long-term and short-term interests of its citizens. Citizens must be viewed not only as mere citizens of the Province, but should be regarded as part of the Provincial Government's mission and objectives.

Accordingly, every Provincial Government planning, communication process, and activities should be citizen-oriented. Citizen-oriented programmes would receive unconditional support from all citizens and might be a long-term solution to community unrests and development challenges. It remains unclear as to how citizens' voices are incorporated into the government strategies and planning for maximum productive and communication impact.

Normative stakeholder theory contains theories of how managers or stakeholders should act and should view the purpose of the organisation, based on ethical principles (Friedman, 2006). Another approach to the stakeholder concept is the so called descriptive stakeholder theory. This theory is concerned with how managers and stakeholders actually behave and how they view their actions and roles. The instrumental stakeholder theory deals with how managers act if they want to work for their own interests. In some literature, own interest is conceived as the interests of

the organisation, which is usually to maximise profit or to maximise shareholder value. This means that, if managers treat stakeholders in line with the stakeholder concept, the organisation will be more successful in the long run (Donaldson & Preston, 1995)

3.2.6 Theoretical approaches to development communication

To comprehensively understand the nature of development communication and its integrated perspectives to social change and citizenry engagement, the study set out to articulate various related theories to the development communication field. Theories remain a way of reflecting and looking into the realities of life through the utilisation of various approaches and methods, under the umbrella of development communication. It is further important to record, as mentioned in the overview, that the participatory communication paradigm in the context of this study, is advanced from the premise of development communication.

(a) Participatory approach

Participatory approaches can be argued from various worldviews. Of importance to this study is that citizen participation in government activities is a focal point of participatory approaches. It is widely argued that increased community participation in government decision-making produces many important benefits. Irvin and Stansbury (2012) write that dissent is rare: It is difficult to envision anything but positive outcomes from citizens joining the policy process, collaborating with others, and reaching consensus to bring about positive social and environmental change. Notably, in the same participatory context, power and power imbalances exist between citizens joining the policy process and aiming at collaborating with others. The narrative of power inequalities dictates that citizen participation in government activities would be minimal and at times, act as an elusive complex factor for continuous disengagement and unequal empowerment which is often restrictive to other key participants. The major concern with power relations in the context of citizen participation is that some authorities use power to exert dominance on others and often the marginalised are disempowered. Power in terms of strategies, tactics and the art of manipulation is also used to disregard opposing views and often to

deal with resistance. However, advocates of citizen participation should ensure equality and fairness in all citizen based participatory endeavours.

Citizen participation in public affairs seems to hold an important position across the global political spectrum – which South Africa is not immune to, particularly the North-West Province (Day, 1997:1). The enthusiasm for incorporating a role for citizens into democratic decision-making is not limited to South African governance structures, as many other countries have extensive initiatives in place that involve citizens in the governing process (for example, Nylen, 2002; Trenam, 2000; Buchy and Race, 2001; OECD, 2001). Agunga (1997) argues that rather than merely transmitting information, communication should be looked at as a process aimed at creating and stimulating an understanding that forms the basis of development.

In recent times, Servaes *et al.* (1996) have stressed how a participatory approach to communication incorporates the concepts that highlight the importance of cultural identity, as well as democratisation and participation at all levels. Dagron and Rodriguez (2006) have, in turn, emphasised how people and communities are at the centre of development and participatory communication and how they allow their local knowledge and perspectives to come to the surface and thus influence the development process. A central tenet to the enthusiasm accorded to citizen participation, is the belief that citizen involvement in governance will produce more public-preference decision-making on the part of administrators and a better appreciation of one's larger community on the part of the public (Stivers, 1990; Oldfield, 1990; Box, 1998). Indeed, the debate about citizen participation is no longer 'representative government vs. citizen participation', but what type of citizen participation process is best (e.g., Konisky & Beierle, 2001).

The arguments in favour of enhancing citizen participation frequently focus on the benefits of the process itself. Nelson and Wright (1995), for example, emphasise the participation process as a transformative tool for social change. In addition, citizen involvement is intended to produce better decisions and thus more efficiency benefits to the rest of society (Beierle 1999, Thomas 1995). As shown in Figure 3.3, there are two tiers of benefits to consider (process and outcomes) and two beneficiaries (government and citizens) in evaluating the effectiveness of the citizen participation process in the North-West Province.

Figure 3.3: Two-tiers of benefits - process and outcomes
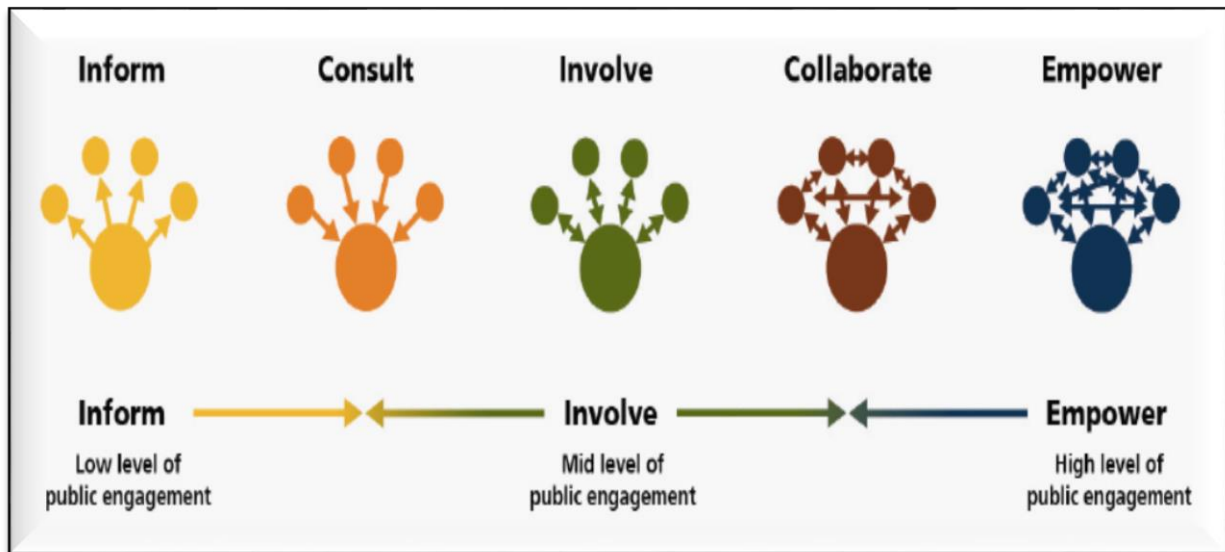
Source: Konisky & Beierle (2001).

An in-depth citizen participation process can aid in transcending the barriers to effective policy creation of the North-West Provincial Government. Informed and involved citizens become citizen experts, understanding technically difficult situations and seeing holistic community-wide solutions. Pateman (1970), Sabatier (1988), and Blackburn and Bruce (1995) are examples of literature stressing the educational benefits of citizen participation. The Provincial Government should be able to explain their reasons for pursuing policies that at first glance by the public would not be popular.

(b) Institutional theory

Institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience (Scott, 1995, 2001, 2004) as well as rules – the predetermined patterns of conduct that are generally accepted by individuals in a society. Environmental institutions include internal structures and rules such as the organisation's environmental policy and management, as well as formal external rules such as environmental legislations and regulations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1990; Suchman, 1995). Therefore, institutional theory offers a possible lens for studying corporate environmental reporting behaviour. Institutional theory furthermore involves an examination of how some of the organisation's social structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines,

become established as authoritative guidelines for organisational behaviour (Scott, 2004).

Corporate environmental reporting may develop as a myth incorporated in the organisation structure on the notion that by so doing, the organisation will gain legitimacy, resources, stability and enhance its survival prospects (Braam *et al.*, 2016; Kamala *et al.*, 2015; Pramanik *et al.*, 2008; Wangombe, 2013; De Villiers & Alexander, 2014).

As in the context of the North-West Province, institutional theory dictates that both the Provincial Government and ordinary citizens should be mindful of the environmental social order. Such social order organises rules, norms, and regulations to the benefit of parties concerned in order to gain legitimacy and stability, and to continuously enhance survival prospects. This initiative should be the focal area of the Provincial Government in creating an institutional platform to engage citizens and to ultimately enjoy citizenry confidence in organisational activities. Rules and norms are patterns created to better position organisational activities in the best interest of stakeholders. In the main, citizens should be considered as the initiators and actors of government programmes, but on the other hand, the government must regard organisational reporting as the starting point to engage citizens meaningfully.

3.2.7 Theoretical approaches to political science discourse

To place SCM for governance and sustainability in a theoretical context, several broad, overlapping groups of theories concerning information flows between organisations and society have been used (Gray *et al.*, 1996). Social and political theories that focus on the role of information and disclosure in the relationships between organisations, the state, individuals and groups are considered most appropriate in explaining organisational activities (Deegan, 2000; Deegan, 2002; Gray *et al.*, 1996).

(a) Political economy theory

Political economy theory emphasises the fundamental interrelationship between political and economic forces in society (Miller, 1994:16) and recognises the effects

of accounting reports on the distribution of income, power and wealth (Cooper & Sherer, 1984). This perspective also accepts that society, politics, and economics are inseparable so that issues, such as economic issues, cannot be considered in isolation from social and environmental issues (Blomquist & Deegan, 2000:7).

From the afore-mentioned perspective, it becomes ideal to consider political economy theory as the foundation to comprehensively understand the economic benefits that citizens can gain in government reforms. It is equally prudent to consider that citizens often participate in government activities if there are prescribed and identified economic benefits. Most often, economic benefits are detached from social and environmental issues in society. Political economy theory would assist the North-West Province in understanding that citizens at times are incentive-oriented; their participation is often based on benefits that address their needs and interests, and that meet their expectations.

Such benefits have the potential to render social and environmental issues less important, because perceived economic benefits do fulfil a particular need in citizens. On the contrary, political economy theory is equally used to create divisions and restrain a particular class of citizens – incentives or economic benefits are often used to create patronage. Those in position of authority at times utilise resources at their disposal to induce citizens and to gain political mileage. This theory should be used to benefit every citizen and to explicitly offer hope and empowerment, and to ultimately encourage inclusive citizenry participation in governance initiatives and developmental programmes.

   (b) Social contract theory

Social contract thinking has its historical precedence in Hobbes (1946), Rousseau (1968), and Locke (1986). Donaldson (1982) views the organisation and society relationship from a philosophical perspective. He argues that an implicit social contract exists between organisations and society and that this contract implies some indirect obligations of the organisation towards society. Social contract thinking is explicitly recognised as a form of post-conventional moral reasoning (Rest *et al.*, 1999).

The social contract theory is further extended by Donaldson and Dunfee (1999) who in turn propose an integrative social contract theory as a way for managers to take decisions in an ethical manner. According to the societal approach, firms are responsible to society as a whole, of which they are an integral part. The main idea behind this view is that organisations operate by public consent in order to serve the needs of society constructively and to the satisfaction of society (Van Marrewijk, 2003). The societal approach appears to be a strategic response to changing circumstances and new corporate challenges that did not previously occur, such as corporate social responsibility.

In the context of the current study, social contract theory argues that citizens should be recognised as an important societal feature. It is without a doubt that the Provincial Government's operations should be in the best interests of citizens. As an important societal component, citizens and government enter into a social contract that should explicitly incorporate the legitimate demands and concerns of all parties involved. Social contract theory in this context can be recognised as a relationship management process – the process should take cognisance of societal expectations and create opportunities to exercise a reciprocal contract between the Provincial Government and citizens at large.

Accordingly, the Provincial Government has a legal and moral obligation to serve the needs, interests and ultimately meet societal expectations. The public consent accorded to the Provincial Government to exist should in turn benefit the public positively, and therefore the government should be preoccupied with the creation of programmes and platforms that are of public interest. As part of the social contract, the Provincial Government has to adequately create opportunities that inclusively engage citizens and offer an opportunity for self-development and economic growth; to encourage public participation; and for mutual decision-making as equal partners.

(c) Political participation

Within the literature on politics, the first theory of participation was articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century. For Rousseau (1968, as cited in Mansuri & Rao, 2013:21), participation was a way for an individual to learn how to become a citizen, and for community members to acquire a sense of belonging.

Following John Stuart Mills (1859, as cited in Mansuri & Rao, 2013:22), who also regarded participation as an education function, Henry Maine (1876, as cited in Mansuri & Rao, 2013:22) argued in the second half of the 19th century that the notion of participation in civic life gained particular importance. Maine (1876, as cited in Mansuri & Rao, 2013:22) advocated that when individuals participate in decision-making, they begin to identify themselves with their role of citizens and are more inclined to think in terms of the public good than their private interests. This process also provides them with the skills for collective action and with a sense of agency.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, citizenry needs, interests, and expectations should be regarded as the epitome of political participation. In this context, political participation becomes a step towards citizenry engagement through collaborative governance initiatives and the ability to integrate citizens' confidence in key decision-making processes. In this regard, political participation should not only be recognised as the exercise of political power over societies, nor should it be viewed as the electoral process to gain political mileage, but it should be conceptualised as an inclusive process with the sole aim of engaging citizens in determining their legitimate needs, understanding their interests and mitigating their expectations. This should be a dialogic communication process with the potential to attain inclusive citizenry engagement.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

In South Africa and other parts of the world, development communication is enshrined through various perspectives – such perspectives have enabled people to understand and carry out development communication projects and programmes in pursuit of a better tomorrow. The history of development has included failures and disappointments, many of which have been ascribed to two major intertwined factors: lack of participation and failure to use effective communication (Agunga 1997; Anyaegbunam, Mefalopulos & Moetsabi 1998; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998; Mefalopulos, 2003). The same point is emphasised by Servaes (2003:20), who states that the successes and failures of most development projects are often determined by two crucial factors: communication and people's involvement.

Likewise, Servaes (2003) articulate that no matter what kind of project, whether agriculture, infrastructure, water, governance and health – it is always valuable, and often essential, to establish dialogue among relevant stakeholders. Dialogue is the necessary ingredient in building trust, sharing knowledge and ensuring mutual understanding. Moreover, even a project that apparently enjoys a wide consensus, such as the construction of a bridge, can have hidden obstacles and opposition that the development communication specialist can help uncover, address, and mitigate, as postulated by Servaes.

Without communication there will be no development. Communication is extremely pivotal to human development. Poor communication or a lack of it has a negative impact on development. In stressing the critical role of communication in the twenty first century, Makunyane (2007), and Diaz-Bordenave (1979) outline some of its functions as offering opportunity for informed choices, increasing information access to people and encouraging dialogue among leaders and followers.

The point of departure is that information and communication are development resources to enable sustainability and people's involvement. The researcher of this study notes that development communication has strands in various disciplines. Of importance to the context of this study is that communication is often the facilitator of development programmes and projects. It is also evident that without proper communication techniques and functions most development projects would seemingly not benefit the target audience or materialise at all.

For this purpose, it is therefore valuable to provide two perspectives of development communication, namely: communication for development; communication about development; in order to understand the participatory communication perspective in a development context. The participatory communication approach embeds the will of citizens and governments to seek inclusivity in programmes and projects. Advocates of the participatory approach often argue that no development can exist without communication, and particularly, communication practised at a strategic level.

3.3.1 Communication for development in government

The history of Communication for Development and Social Change or whatever other name is preferred is well documented (see, for instance, Lie & Servaes, 2015; Manyozo, 2012; McAnany, 2012; Servaes & Lie, 2013; Wilkins, Tufte, & Obregon, 2014; Servaes, 2015, 2014, 2013a, 2013b). Anyaegbunam, *et al.*, (1998) confirm that communication for development is widely praised. However, despite its formal recognition within international development institutions, governments and other organisations, communication for development is far from being fully understood and systematically applied.

The capacity to communicate effectively with constituents is a fundamental function of modern governance, which the North-West Provincial Government has to consider. The success and sustainability of efforts to strengthen government systems and processes depend, in large part, on legitimate public authority (Centre for the Future State, 2010). The legitimacy of public authority can be earned through good governance, defined by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) as a demonstrated ability to 'get things done' in ways that are responsive to citizens' needs, while being open to public criticism and scrutiny. This approach would afford the North-West Provincial Government an opportunity to be more responsive and accountable to its citizens – as such, this might also be a service delivery mitigating factor in the long-term.

Legitimacy is also earned by leaders who possess the ability to communicate a clear vision for the country, as well as the policy choices and trade-offs they have made on the public's behalf. Integral to the goal of legitimacy is the capacity to carry out two-way communication with citizens in a meaningful and ongoing manner (Centre for the Future State, 2010). Wilkins and Mody (2001:385) distinguish between communicating for development and communicating about development. Communicating for development is described as a process of strategic intervention toward social change initiated by institutions and communities.

On the other hand, communicating about development refers to the development discourse by development institutions and social movement organisations, as well as the discourse initiated by academics on development theories and development

communication theories (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2004; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

Agunga (1998:37) further highlights that sustainable development is a major challenge in which communication practices are central. In development, appropriate communication channels; techniques to increase people's participation; and the flow of information from one group of people to another are issues that can impact on the sustainability of projects and programmes aimed at effecting social change and citizenry engagement. Consequently, it is common practice that communication is seen as an integral part of development projects in communities. It is against this backdrop that Agunga (1998); and Melkote (1991) opined that without communication, development is not possible. It is only through communication that the important dialogue between the benefactors and beneficiaries can be established.

As a result, government communication capacity is not just about efficient and effective information dissemination. The ability to "push out" information is necessary, albeit deeply insufficient (DfID, 2006:22). The willingness and ability to speak to citizens must be coupled with a willingness and ability to listen to them; to incorporate their needs and preferences into the policy process; and to engage local patterns of influence and trusted sources of information.

These information intermediaries include opinion leaders and various forms of media at the national and local levels. In today's national contexts, including local jurisdictions with sizable populations such as the North-West Province, skilful use of multiple modes of mediated communication is a necessary condition for local stakeholders who cultivate a sense of ownership of and engagement in the political process. The legitimacy of public authority, therefore, requires effective government communication capacity (DfID 2006:22).

Table 3.2 illustrates key characteristics of good governance through government communication capacity – three-fold characteristics are used to determine governments' potential to govern. Government communication capacity's potential contributions to legitimate public authority can be strengthened by establishing links with good governance outcomes. Success or failure in the creation and exercise of

public authority, with the aid of government communication efforts, can be gauged by examining whether using this authority contributes to attaining broader public sector objectives. Such key characteristics are as follows:

1. State capability - the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done
2. Responsiveness - whether public bodies and institutions respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights
3. Accountability - the ability of citizens, civil society, and the private sector to scrutinise public institutions and governments and to hold them to account (DfID 2006:22).

It therefore seems reasonable to assert that each of the characteristics listed above implies substantial communication support of government activities. Table 3.2 also makes such links explicit. Relationships are drawn among the following: DfID's good governance characteristics, subcomponents of those characteristics closely related to government communication capacity, desired outcomes of effective government communication, and some suggested communication mechanisms and tools for communicative action.

Effective states have built up capacities in the various communication mechanisms and tools listed in the fourth column. Their governments deploy a combination of appropriate technologies and impressive skills in supporting their own public service delivery systems. They have invested in human resources and infrastructure necessary to consult, inform, and persuade citizens – processes that, in turn, enable constituents to engage in meaningful and informed participation whenever they choose to do so. In short, these governments are able to engage in effective two-way communication with various constituencies, which must be the case in the North-West Province.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of Good Governance Regimes

CHARACTERISTICS	SUBCOMPONENTS RELEVANT TO GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION CAPACITY	DESIRED OUTCOMES OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION	SUGGESTED COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS AND TOOLS
STATE CAPABILITY - THE EXTENT TO WHICH LEADERS AND GOVERNMENTS ARE ABLE TO GET THINGS DONE.	Making sure government departments and services meet people's needs.	Building broad support and legitimacy for government priorities, policies, programmes, and projects.	Systems for providing reliable and up-to-date information on available public services; public campaigns regarding priority programmes and projects; tools for persuasion and for leading public opinion.
RESPONSIVENESS - WHETHER PUBLIC BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF CITIZENS AND UPHOLD THEIR RIGHTS.	Providing ways for people to say what they think and need.	Developing the ability to understand and deliver public goods and services founded on evidence-based knowledge of citizens' needs and preferences.	Mechanisms that range from consultation to participatory decision-making; tools for measuring and analysing public opinion; continuous media monitoring.
ACCOUNTABILITY - THE ABILITY OF CITIZENS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SCRUTINISE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENTS AND TO HOLD THEM TO ACCOUNT.	Offering citizens opportunities to check the laws and decisions made by governments, parliaments, and assemblies; encouraging a free media and freedom of faith and association.	Explaining government stewardship through information provision and by setting up mechanisms for citizens to hold elected leaders and public service providers accountable.	Public access to government data and statistics on performance (such as the results of monitoring and evaluation projects and programmes); public dialogues and debates on performance; popularisation of technical information targeted at audiences with varying levels of technical capacity; media coverage and analysis drawn by engaging journalists on an ongoing basis.

Source: Adapted from DfID (2006).

Thomas (2009:3) describes the complexity of the government's communication function (as reference to the Canadian government, which in nature is not much different from the South African system of government) in the following way:

> *The crucial importance of communication, and the highly varied and dynamic nature of communications functions at different levels in the public sector, means, ideally, that this area should be approached in a strategic, anticipatory, planned, and co-ordinated manner.*

From this perspective, Thomas specifically emphasises that the practice of and importance of communication should be derived from four interlinked terms, namely, a strategic, anticipatory, planned, and co-ordinated manner. It is clear from Thomas's assertion that the use of 'strategic' implies actionable communication with a particular goal, while the use of 'anticipatory' simply implies that communication should be viewed as a proactive rather than a reactive process. On the other hand, other unique terms used interchangeably in Thomas's assertion are 'planned and co-ordinated manner'.

For communication to contribute, meaningfully, there is a need for maximum planning coupled with directed objectives. The execution therefore of communication programmes need to be co-ordinated and aligned to the overall organisational strategy for maximum impact – this perspective should be adopted in the North-West Province as part of governance strategy and developmental programmes. This process in nature simply connects to strategic communication with an inclusive organisational approach.

Thomas (2009) further posits that, planning for, structuring, conducting, and coordinating communications in a wide range of specialised and complicated policy environments, across numerous departments and agencies, in an era of evolving digital technologies, at a time when there is growing insistence on greater transparency, proactive disclosure, and accountability, and when the public trust and confidence in governments is low, all combine to give rise to a challenging new era in public sector communications. In communication for development approaches, people are at the centre of any given development initiative and view planners, development workers, local authorities, farmers and rural people as 'communication

equals', equally committed to mutual understanding and concerted action. Communication for development is therefore used for:

a) People's participation and community mobilisation;

b) decision-making and action;

c) confidence building;

d) for raising awareness;

e) sharing knowledge and changing attitudes;

f) behaviour and lifestyles;

g) for improving learning and training and rapidly spreading information;

h) to assist with programme planning and formulation; and

i) to foster the support of decision-makers (CDR Report, 2005).

Figure 3.4: Communication for development in governance context
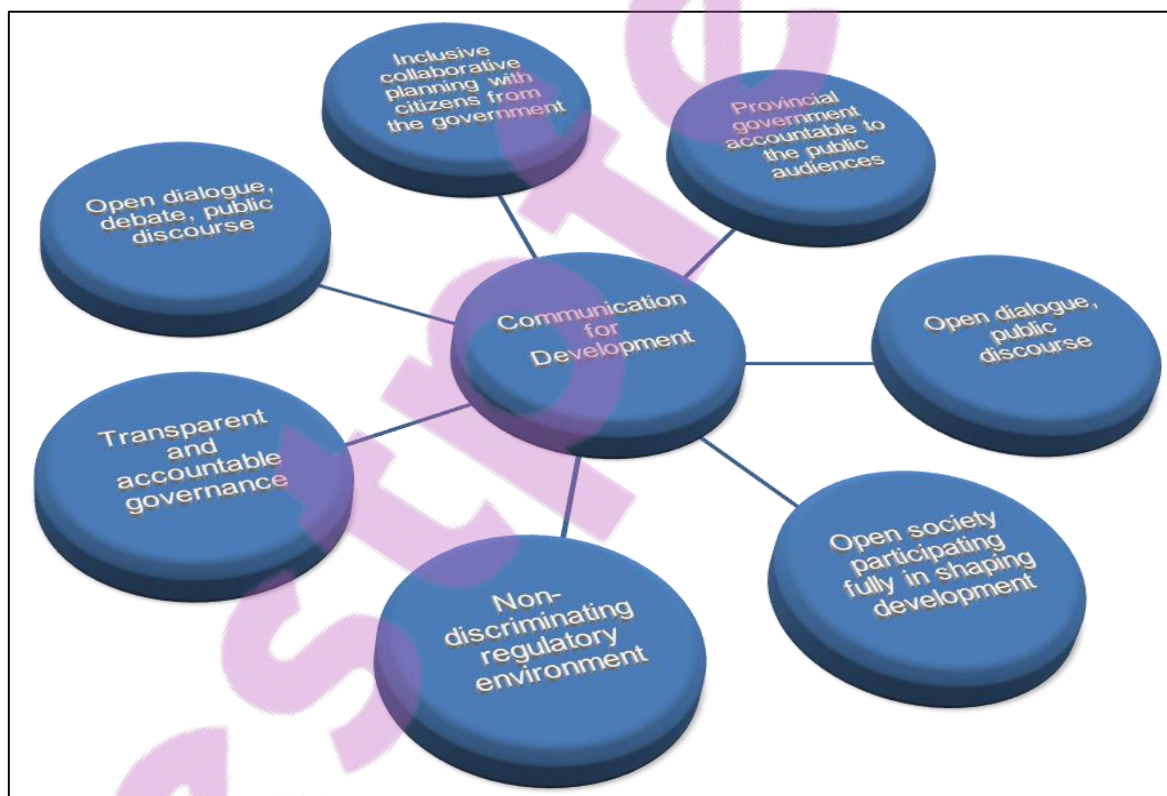
Source: Adapted from UNDP (2011).

Additionally, communication for development is based on the premise that successful rural development calls for the conscious and active participation of the intended beneficiaries at every stage of the development process. Rural

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development cannot take place without changes in attitudes and behaviour among the people concerned. Communication for development is defined as the planned and systematic use of communication, through inter-personal channels, ICTs, audio-visuals and mass media:

- o To collect and exchange information among those concerned with planning a development initiative, with the aim of reaching consensus on the development problems being faced and their solutions;

- o to mobilise people for development action and to assist in solving problems and misunderstandings that may arise during the implementation of development plans;

- o to enhance the pedagogical and communication skills of development agents (at all levels) so that they may have a more effective dialogue with their audience; and

- o to apply communication technology to training and extension programmes, particularly at the grassroots level, in order to improve their quality and impact (CDR Report, 2005).

3.3.2 Communication about development in government

The focus of this study is not primarily on communication about development; however, it is prudent to distinguish it as a crucial perspective. Moreover, it is imperative to explore communication about development as an approach to both development communication and the possible link to participatory communication. In the main, communication about development is contextualised to give meaning to the core perspective of this Chapter, which is the participatory communication perspective for inclusive citizenry engagement – reasonably, it is important to understand various dimensions of development communication from the premise of communication about development.

Dwelling briefly on communication about development contextually positions the current study to indicate that the participatory communication perspective is about dialogue, participation and the sharing of knowledge and information. It takes into account the needs and capacities of all concerned. A major institutionalised question

therefore becomes: What effect does communication about development signify in the context of the North-West Province?

Communication about development is crucial to the success of the whole development initiative, as it concerns the allocation of resources to development actions. However, communication for development determines the level of acceptance of the proposed changes by the community and therefore its sustainability (Cadiz, 2005). From this perspective, the current study notes that it is not peculiar to interchangeably use both communication for development and communication about development to support sustainable change in development operations by engaging key stakeholders. Communication about development in the context of the North-West Province simply propels the Provincial Government to allocate adequate resources and support development initiatives. This would further be approved by communication for development with the confidence of project/programme beneficiaries.

In essence, a conducive environment needs to be established by the North-West Provincial Government in order to assess potential risks and opportunities, while disseminating relevant and timely information, and inducing citizenry behaviour and attitudes for social change to materialise.

It can thus be argued that communication about development and communication for participatory development are methods of communication through which information is utilised as a tool to enhance governance, particularly at a local level, by way of emphasising elements of democracy, participation and community development. It is the living conditions at the grassroots level that encourage people to participate actively in an effort to seek appropriate mechanisms and management approaches that will bring about developmental changes in a particular environment. Thus, the root of development communication is intrinsic in community participation (Cadiz, 2005).

3.4 PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

It is important to first achieve a common understanding of the term sustainability as applied in the context of this study. Sustainability can be conceived and defined in a number of different ways as indicated in the previous chapters, but this does not
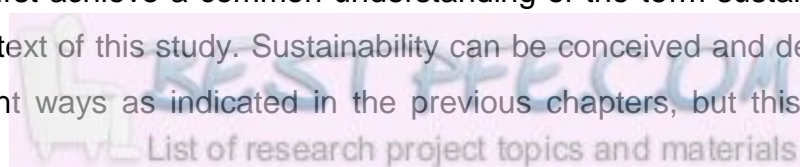
mean that only one among those is correct and the others are wrong. The term sustainability has enjoyed little status in relation to the participatory communication perspective – most significant is the understanding and employment of the term during a participatory process that benefits the greater public (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2002). Although the definition of sustainability has emerged with various misinterpretations and lack of proper utilisation – there are generally acceptable definitions that encompass the mood of sustainability. The sustainability definition embraced and interpreted to the context of the current study is that, sustainability refers to transparent methods of accountability, which allow citizens and those in positions of power, to enter into a dialogic process of communication. This influences the current affairs and does not jeopardise future relations located within the strategic management of continuous communication.

Equally, various definitions of participatory communication reflect the diversity of communication objectives, approaches and functions. Some of the broad communication approaches that can be considered (each of which can operate within one or more of the three basic communication "modalities" or modes), are: mass, interpersonal and mediated (through radio, internet or other technologies) communication (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2004). Participatory communication can be used in a variety of situations. It is most meaningful when used for assessing the situation and devising solutions to problems through dialogue among representatives of all parties. This should lead to the appropriate and sustainable identification of the project/programme objectives and to the design of the related communication strategy (Servaes, 2015; Barranquero, 2011).

For participatory communication to be sustainable through its efforts to address social change and citizen inclusivity, it is imperative to identify all relevant inputs for a participatory communication strategy (the first stage). The function of communication is mainly analytical. Dialogue then becomes a tool to identify relevant stakeholders, probe their perceptions, investigate their needs and problems, share knowledge and identify the causes of the situation that is to change (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2004).

As a key driver of the inclusive participatory perspective, communication provides support to other analytical work by building trust, facilitating the exchange of

information and reaching a common understanding of the situation. A number of empirical, quantitative and qualitative tools are applied in this phase (such as opinion polls, surveys, Participatory Communication Rural Appraisal and others) (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2002). At this stage, the final output of communication is the definition/refinement of the communication objectives and not the objectives of programmes and projects. This is no minor achievement and many development initiatives have had their roots in projects that did not deal with the top-priorities of the so-called beneficiaries and that were considered unclear and not feasible.

3.5 PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

It must be understood that for participatory communication to be effectively used as a means towards enhancing proper governance through the emphasis on democratic public participation for community development, there will have to be a critical perspective of public awareness at a local governance level. Theron, Van Rooyen and Van Baalen (2000:29) define governance as a process in which power and authority around the allocation of resources are exercised between and within institutions in the state and civil society.

Good governance, as explained by Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:9) is the attainment of government's ultimate goal to create good conditions and a satisfactory quality of life for each citizen. Attention has to be drawn to the compatibility of public participation in democracy in general, in accordance with the ethos of representivity. This issue becomes more relevant in the South African context, where public participation is seen as not only playing a pivotal role, but also as enhancing local democracy.

Since the post-apartheid government took office in 1994, different expectations have been raised concerning policy and how government should relate to communities. However, there is a general agreement that participation is pivotal to the success of local development processes. By this, it is implicitly implied that there has to be a representative and administrative system through which the views of citizens can be heard and fed into policy formulation. It is therefore essential to ensure that control over local municipalities and civil society is not restricted to the new urban elite in the South African context.

Swilling and Monteiro (1994:32) assert that the new type of government should promote distinctiveness around development planning. According to Atkinson (1992:43) there is a notion of "popular sovereignty"; a notion that indicates that governance is not a separate entity from its citizenry, but that the two are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, the North-West Provincial Government should be aware that implicit in this form of governance is the notion that government is accountable to the community in an on-going manner. This form of democratic and good governance inculcates an impression that governance is owned by the community. Such contextual analysis is in line with the shift from the concept of government to governance (Kooiman, 1993:34).

From a South African perspective, Swanepoel (1992:23) states that a broad understanding of political leadership in governance is that of managing the relationship between the government and civil society. If good democratic governance entails working with and listening to the citizenry as individuals, interest groups and society as a whole, active co-operation and on-going engagement in the process of policy formulation and implementation between politicians, public officials and members of communities are required. The government has to ensure that all its structures enable the public to exercise a meaningful say. Governance as a process of facilitating and ensuring the delivery of goods and services through the management of social power and power relations therefore represents a means of social stability and well-being through deepening democracy.

Governance has been described as both a broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society, with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent, and more democratic (Monique, 1997:4 in Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999). For other authors, it represents a change in the meaning of government (referring to a process of governing): a changed condition of ordered rule; or a new method through which society is governed (Rhodes, 1996:652).

3.5.1 Public participation and communication

According to Madison (2002), knowledge will forever govern ignorance; people who intend to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power that

knowledge provides. Knowledge is, in effect, power and can be acquired only through access to information (South African Parliament, undated). Communication is a two-way process. It does not benefit citizens only, but also government decision-makers. This interactive communication enables each party to learn about and better understand the views and positions of the other.

According to Raga and Taylor (2005:42), open, transparent and accountable government is an imperative prerequisite for community-oriented public service. Through communication with citizens, government gathers information on needs, opinions, values and perspectives from the broadest spectrum of the public, enabling it to make better and more informed decisions – this approach should be factored into all government processes, particularly in the context of the North-West Province.

Additionally, the North-West Provincial Government should be of the view that the ability to access information and to communicate appropriately is imperative to economic and social empowerment in all spheres of society. Illiteracy remains one of the most disempowering factors faced by the large majority of citizens of this country, and in particular rural provinces such as the North-West Province. This affects democratic participation and hinders human development. An illiterate citizen cannot have access to one of the important channels of communication, namely the media (both print and electronic) (South African Parliament, undated).

The South African government therefore considers communication to be a strategic element of service delivery. As a result, communication promotes an informed and appropriate response to people's needs in order to enable all South Africans to become active and conscious participants in social transformation. It ensures that government is sensitive to the needs of the people (GCIS, 2014).

3.5.2 Limitations and challenges to public participation

Greyling (as cited in Bradshaw & Burger, 2005:48) points out that participation is not necessarily aimed at building consensus, but rather at 'generating a diversity of opinions and views'. This in itself presents a huge challenge. It is furthermore problematic that public participation is too often just conducted as a type of therapy for stakeholders, while the crucial decisions have already been taken. Jansen (2002:208) notes that, internally, the "processes of participation have a number of

significant limitations: not all groups are able to participate equally due to differentials of access, power and expertise; and the views expressed in various final reports often did not reflect exact opinions of stakeholders and participants".

Creighton (2005:2) additionally emphasises that there are many challenges in converting the concept of public participation into the difficult reality of everyday interaction between the state, companies and the public; for example, budgets and legal constraints. There is sometimes a need to make quick decisions; and decisions should be based on the best available scientific and technical information. These are some of the external political realities compounding the challenges relating to public participation. There is also a negative attitude toward participation, which stems from two chief sources: lack of clarity on the definitions used to describe public (or citizen) participation; and the use of inappropriate strategies to achieve it (Theron, Ceaser & David, 2007:2).

3.6 PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE APPROACH

It is critical to have a contextual understanding of the on-going contestation of different approaches in the communication discourse. It is conceded that the impact of the Frererian humanism approach to development communication has been phenomenal (see, for instance, Lie & Servaes, 2015; Servaes 2014; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). However, there are some scholars and activists in the development discourse in general, and more so in communication, who still ascribe to a participatory communication for social change approach.

In the model, participation is seen as a mediating mechanism that facilitates the dispensing of power relations that involve both political and economic resources. This takes place on a comparable basis so that influence on decision-making by one group over other less powerful participating stakeholders is eliminated or reduced. It is suggested that the objective of this model is the distribution of related power and available resources (Molwana & Wilson, 1987 cited in Servaes, 2002).

Building on current arguments within the fields of communication for development, participatory models reinforce the case for effective communication being a central and vital component of participatory forms of social change, something that needs to be appreciated by decision-makers. Participatory communication for social change

also considers ways of increasing the effectiveness of evaluation capacity development from grassroots to management level in the development context, an issue of growing importance to improving the quality, effectiveness and utilisation of monitoring and evaluation.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, it is quite evident that those working for participatory communication for social change often move mountains as partners with the people of local communities and villages across the globe. Through communication for social change, actors or initiators seek to move mountains of apathy, mountains of hopelessness, mountains of scepticism and even mountains of public inefficiency. Inspired by participatory communication for social-change principles and skills, actors can also build mountains of empowerment for those who have previously been voiceless or seemingly invisible in the development context.

Against this backdrop, Molwana and Wilson (1987 as cited in Servaes, 2002) argue that participatory communication models in nature suggest that communication policies are basically derivatives of the political, cultural and economic conditions and institutions under which they operate. They tend to legitimise the existing power relations in society, and therefore, they cannot be substantially changed unless there are fundamental structural changes in society that can alter these power relationships themselves.

Figure 3.5: Various participatory stages with stakeholders
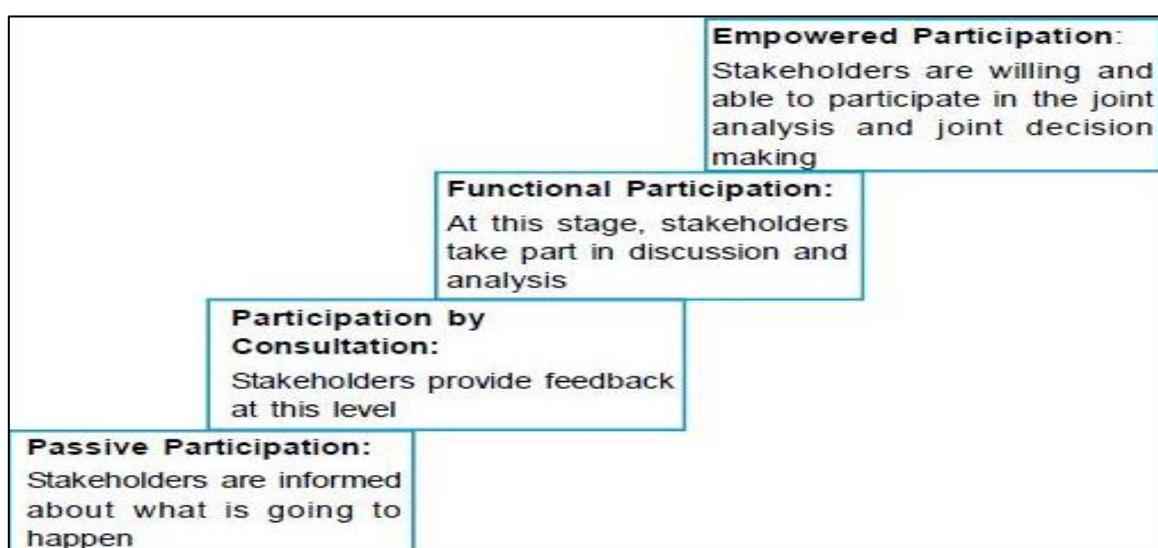
Source: Summary of existing literature

Thus, the development of a participatory communication model must necessarily incorporate the emancipation of communities at all levels in order for it to be sustainable and to meet its objectives. Latin American scholarship authority in the participatory paradigm is reflected in the critical attributes of the participatory model by Juan Somavia (1981) in the following summary:

- o Communication is a human need: The satisfaction of the need for communication is just as important for a society as the concern for health, nutrition, housing, education and labour. Together with all the other social needs, communication must enable citizens to emancipate themselves completely. The right to inform and to be informed, and the right to communicate, are thus essential human rights both individually and collectively.

- o Communication is a delegated human right: Within its own cultural, political, economic and historical context, each society has to be able to define, independently, the concrete form in which it wants to organise its social communication processes. With a variety of cultures: there can also arise various organisational structures. But whatever the form in which the social communication function is embodied, priority must be given to the principles of participation and accessibility.

- o Communication is a facet of the societal conscientisation, emancipation and liberation process. The social responsibility of the media in the process of social change is large. Indeed, after the period of formal education, the media are the most important educational and socialisation agents. They are capable of informing or misinforming, exposing or concealing important facts, interpreting events positively or negatively.

- o The communication task involves rights and responsibilities/obligations. Since the media, in fact, provide a public service, they must carry it out within a framework of social and juridical responsibility that reflects the social consensus of the society. In other words, there are no rights without obligation.

Accordingly, the right and freedom of choice to communicate must be considered from three dimensions:

- o Firstly, it is a condition in the communication field that the public must participate effectively in

- o Secondly, the framework must be designed appropriately so that public participation can take place

- o Thirdly, there must be guaranteed professional autonomy – free from all forms of pressures including economic and political (Somavia, 1981).

It can be argued that the participatory communication model for social change is derived from the Frererian humanist approach, with an elaborate emphasis on public participation as a condition for developmental projects. The problem with the participatory model is that it could be seen as reductionist, as it seeks to ignore or deliberately exclude the socio, economic, political and cultural reality that may prevail in the contested space and environment occupied by various social actors (Molwana & Wilson, 1987 as cited in Servaes, 2002).

3.7 PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AND THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION

The developmental discourse underwent a critical review since the 1970s and has since shifted more towards a participatory approach in communication practice. Development communication recognised the need for the participation of stakeholders in developmental projects. Scholars such as White (1994) have observed that very few contemporary development projects are operated without a component of a participatory model (see also, Servaes, 2014; Srampickal, 2006; Barranquero, 2011; Huesca, 2002). Development communication is seen as an approach that utilises appropriate communication mechanisms and techniques with the objective of increasing the levels of participation by stakeholders in developmental projects, including information sharing, motivating and training, particularly at the grassroots level (Oliviera, 1993).

The linkage between strategic communication and participatory communication (development communication) is captured correctly in the recent publication of Lie and Servaes (2015). The authors, Lie and Servaes (2015:245-6) argue that strategic communication in the field of development communication is often applied in the thematic sub-discipline of health communication, but is not restricted to this sub-

discipline only. This perspective explicitly links the strategic component of communication to participative development. Moreover, communication whether participatory or strategic, deals with co-ordinated organisational planning and relates to persuasive communication with a strategic, intentional goal.

For this reason, participatory communication is considered to be strategic and intentional because participatory projects and programmes require some form of planning, objectives, co-ordination and implementation. Accordingly, such participatory projects and programmes in the main must be communicated effectively with the people and are often constituted for social change (see also, Lewis, 2011; Mahoney, 2012; Paul, 2011). Another linkage between strategic communication and participatory communication can be observed from the top-down diffusion versus bottom-up participation approaches. In this regard, strategic communication efforts would not have succeeded if the bottom-up participation approach were to be neglected and the focus were to be placed only on the top-down diffusion.

3.7.1 Government for the people by the people

Government normally involves citizens in areas where they know they will get a positive response. There is generally a problem of apathy in local government, with the result that only a handful of citizens participate. Inflexible institutional arrangements and work procedures designed for efficiency rather than for responsiveness to public participation usually hamper public participation. The perception of the public is that it is not worthwhile to participate, since their views will not be taken seriously; leads to apathy and little public participation. As a result, there is a general lack of government response to or feedback on issues raised by communities, which renders them despondent and de-motivates them from further participation in local government.

Often, citizens are not provided with sufficient information to enable them to participate. It must, however, be said that regardless of these limitations, current participation channels and approaches at the local government level in South Africa reflect a shift from participation by the elite towards a community orientated, "bottom-up" approach. For many years in South Africa, the disadvantaged were marginalised and had no say in shaping their own destiny. Although progress has been made, many challenges are still being encountered with regard to community participation.

However, with time and community empowerment, the ideals of community participation will eventually be realised (Bekker, 1996:41).

3.7.2 Public participation in a strategic context

Public participation is an augmented concept, with a multiplicity of definitions and roots in various disciplines and domains. Burkey (1993:42) argues that participation is a process of conscientisation (stimulation and empowerment) – the process whereby people become aware of the political, socioeconomic and cultural conditions. An analysis of this definition reveals the importance of communication in empowering people to participate in government planning and decision-making processes. On the other hand, the South African Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality's Communications Strategy (2008 – 2012) defines communication as a two-way process that involves the constant flow of information by people for people, which implies that people reflect institutions of government and participation. Subsequently, effective and efficient communication is an integral part of service delivery, as well as a prerequisite for public participation.

In South Africa, public participation is also a constitutional obligation in terms of Section 152(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which emphasises the following principles:

- o To provide democratic and accountable government for local communities
- o To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner
- o To promote social and economic development
- o To promote a safe and healthy environment
- o To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

Therefore, communication management as a process becomes a prerequisite for public participation. Tsatsire (2008:166) goes further to highlight that public participation is both a constitutional and a legal requirement. A number of statutes promulgated after the 1994 democratic elections make provision for public participation. These are all underpinned by and based on possibly the most famous
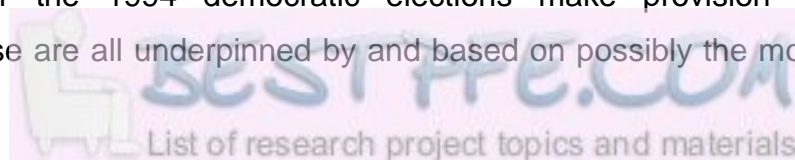
statement ever to emanate from South Africa, that is, the Freedom Charter. Notably, public participation requires all actors to be engaged in a dialogic communication process which is symmetrically two-way, to unify the importance and purpose of public participation in government programmes.

The strategic context of public participation does not advocate the role of the state as delivering goods and services to a passive citizenry. Rather, it emphasises growing empowerment and reliance on the energies of communities. In support of this, Bekker (1996:75) states that citizen participation can serve as a means of converting dependants into independents – that is, converting the poor from the passive consumers of services into the producers of those services, thereby benefiting both economically and socially by taking part in governing. This includes taking advantage of opportunities such as tendering for government contracts and forming co-operatives as practical engagement programmes.

According to Pope (2000:247) an informed citizenry, aware of its rights and asserting them confidently, is a vital foundation for a national integrity system. An apathetic public that does not take part in governance provides a fertile ground for widespread corruption, fraud and maladministration. Furthermore, participation in government must empower citizens with information and the vital tools to shape their own destiny. Public participation and communication can never be viewed as a matter of legislative compliance only, but lies at the heart of good governance. In order to become a reality, public participation must be underpinned by inclusivity, diversity, transparency, flexibility, accessibility, trust, accountability, and integration.

3.7.3 Citizenship as a participative action mechanism

Citizenship as practice assumes the existence of legal rights and responsibilities. It forces us to look not just at citizen action but also at the responsibility of the state to facilitate citizen action. Understanding citizenship for better citizen engagement and inclusivity rely heavily on a broader approach of involving citizens through efforts of social change and cohesion. A two-way symmetrical relationship becomes the heart of dialogues and engagements. In the main, citizens' will-power and expectations are integrated within a dominant coalition of decision-making and thought processes.

To a greater extent, citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined: citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents. However, a distinction can be drawn between two formulations: to be a citizen and to act as a citizen. To be a citizen means to enjoy the rights necessary for agency and social and political participation – to act as a citizen involves fulfilling the full potential of the status. Those who do not fulfil that potential do not cease to be citizens (Lister, 1998:228-9).

Gaventa (2003) opines that the key to building an environment for deeper democracies is through facilitating better relationships between the people and the governance institutions. Notably, more institutions that look into the welfare of the poor and the marginalised are required to facilitate, promote and accelerate citizen engagement and participation. Marginalised citizens resemble apathy, a lack in their participation in matters of governance means that their points of view are excluded from the decision-making process. This demands newer methods of citizen engagement that go beyond the traditional voting rights.

In context, sufficient knowledge of citizenship and the underlying principles of democracy, such as, peoples' empowerment, engagement can be positive indicators of strategic management and the road to communication management. Consequently, strategic communication processes that enable citizens to be headers of programmes and other social facilitation factors require competent actors with citizenship knowledge. Of importance, is to cease from applying a top-down approach and one-way communication that precludes the needs and expectations of a citizen.

3.8 STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

To a certain extent, the South African government and its spheres is at times facing critical inclusivity challenges – how to manage engagements, pursue high levels of inclusivity and build social cohesion, both today and in the future. These challenges stem partly from the failure of having an inadequate integrated approach to stakeholders and the absence of directed citizenry engagements. The increase in the country's population and intensified competition among cities, farmers, industries, energy suppliers and ecosystems have often contributed to a

disconnected state of affairs because of the unequal distribution of resources. In this regard, poor stakeholder management can have devastating effects on the prosperity, governance, economic development and social stability of the country.

Everywhere, stakeholders are the heartbeat of building proper institutions, organisations, governments and countries. It is through proper measures of stakeholder management and inclusivity that individuals within units of engagements can demonstrate significant power and the right attitude for the success of institutions. Such individuals are navigated from societal segmentations as general members of the public, employees, stockholders, customers, and so on. As a matter of fact, Rensburg and De Beer (2011) expound that the inclusion of all stakeholders in corporate issues has taken centre stage in corporate governance. In any given communication situation, a stakeholder could play many roles in an internal or external organisational environment. Total stakeholder involvement (engagement) is crucial and will have implications for organisational practices, reputation and corporate sustainability.

Rensburg and De Beer's (2011) exposition, along with the King III Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa, 2009 (with a separate chapter on Governing Stakeholder Relationships) not only highlights the significance of stakeholder management – but also emphasises how imperative it is to give stakeholders ownership of their destinations and to embrace their contribution to governance and engagement. For inclusive citizenry engagement to be compelling, stakeholders need to be co-ordinated to integrate their role in decision-making, planning, and most importantly ownership of ideals that leads to inclusivity in the dominant coalition of stakeholder management.

3.9 A CORNER-STONE TO PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION – INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

In a Development Communication Sourcebook, Mefalopulos (2008) elucidate that when the promises of the modernisation paradigm failed to materialise; and its methods came increasingly under fire; and the dependency theorists failed to provide a successful alternative model, a different approach focusing on people's

participation began to emerge. This participatory model is less oriented towards the political-economic dimension and more towards the cultural realities of development.

The development focus has shifted from economic growth to include other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful results in the long run - as indicated by the consensus built in the definition of the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainability and people's participation became key elements of this new vision, as acknowledged by the World Bank (1994:3). Internationally, emphasis is being placed on the challenge of sustainable development, and participation is increasingly recognised as a necessary part of sustainable development strategies. Meaningful participation cannot occur without communication. Unfortunately, too many development programmes, including community-driven ones, seem to overlook this aspect and, while paying attention to participation, do not pay similar attention to communication, intended as the professional use of dialogic methods and tools to promote change.

In the foregoing, Mefalopulos (2008) further positions that communication is increasingly considered essential in facilitating stakeholders' engagement in problem analysis and resolution. Similarly, there is an increasing recognition that the old, vertical, top-down model is no longer applicable as a "one-size-fits-all" formula. While acknowledging that the basic principles behind the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver model can still be useful in some cases, development communication has increasingly moved toward a horizontal, two-way model, which favours people's active and direct interaction through consultation and dialogue over the traditional one-way information dissemination through mass media.

Many past project and programme failures can be attributed directly or indirectly to the limited involvement of the affected people in the decision-making process. The horizontal use of communication, which opens up dialogue, assesses risks, identifies solutions, and seeks consensus for action, came to be seen as a key to the success and sustainability of development efforts and a step towards citizenry inclusivity. There are a number of terms used to refer to this emerging conception (Mefalopulos, 2003); some of the better known are "another development," "empowerment," "participation," and "multiplicity paradigm". This last term, introduced by Servaes (2015, 1999), places a strong emphasis on the cultural and social multiplicity of perspectives that should be equally relevant in the development context.

The new paradigm is also changing the way communication is conceived and applied. It shifts the emphasis from information dissemination to situation analysis, from persuasion to participation. Rather than substituting it for the old model, it is broadening its scope, maintaining the key functions of informing people and promoting change, yet emphasising the importance of using communication to involve stakeholders in the development process.

In the afore-mentioned view, participatory communication is a term that denotes the theory and practices of communication used to involve people in the decision-making process that is part of the development process. It intends to return to the roots of its meaning, similar to the term community (Mody, 1991). As a result, the purpose of communication should be to make something common, or to share. Moreover, it implies the sharing of meanings, perceptions, worldviews or knowledge. In this context, sharing implies an equitable division of what is being shared, which is why communication should almost be naturally associated with a balanced, two-way flow of information. Instead, the ramifications of the power structures in society and the emergence of mass media have often reduced the conception of communication to a one-way, top-down, flow of information, from a single source to many outlets (Mefalopulos, 2003).

Participatory communication is the chemist of inclusivity and citizen empowerment. The overarching idea of participatory communication is to manifest sustainable programmes that highlight citizens at the heart of every development project and process (Mefalopulos, 2003). Precluding citizens through a top-down and one-way method of integration often leads to disconnections of societies, people and most important, the strategic role of authorities at a local level. Discussions always ensue about the strategic role levelled against authorities in building and facilitating dialogue and engagements – more often than not, authorities are always on the losing side as they neglect the voices of the general masses in pursuit of various disengaged programmes of governance and sustainability.

It should be emphasised further that various classifications in a participatory environment often limit citizens' participation and understanding of key programmes. One's status in society may lead to a lack of participation and more often than not creates a barrier for other unqualified citizens. Thus, participatory communication

programmes should assert and reflect goals and objectives of society at large. Collectivism and peer-understanding from both authorities and citizens is the recipe for good governance, and engaged and inclusive citizenry. The chemistry to managing citizens and open channels of communication through a strategic enactment lies in a systemic and two-way symmetrical process of information sharing, operationalisation and functionality in championing citizens' aspirations in a development environment.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This Chapter was devoted to gathering and interrogating contemporary and historical literature on a participatory communication perspective for inclusive citizenry engagement. In doing so, the Chapter analysed participatory communication from a development communication premise and evaluated associated models and participatory approaches relevant to understanding factors of inclusive citizenry engagement.

Participatory paradigms were also evaluated and engaged in this Chapter, so as to provide meaning, context, and the enacted role of citizenry participation in government programmes and projects. The meta-theoretical framework indicated a strong connection between the discipline of communication management, development communication, and the study of politics – political science. It is without a doubt that governance at a provincial government needs to be mainstreamed to unlock the potential of public participation and to encourage inclusive citizenry engagement. Additionally, through a dialogic approach, public participation manifests the attainment of inclusivity, shared goals, and common views about the governance of citizens.

Citizens' needs, interests, and expectations should be cordially managed through communication specifications and strategies. Participatory communication should be regarded as a panacea of engaging citizens in the realisation of efficient corporate governance. Through existing literature, the Chapter further heightened the call to provide some analytical insights for opening space for multiple perspectives and creativity, as well as for improving mutual interpersonal relationships in the governance process. In summarising the abovementioned sections, organisations

have to adapt to stakeholder expectations, values and norms in order to maintain a good reputation; they have to be regarded as societal (socially, environmentally and economically) responsible and sustainable; trustworthy; and a good (corporate) citizen (Steyn & Niemann, 2014).

Likewise, this Chapter advanced that participatory communication for social-change explicitly incorporates participatory evaluation into the process itself rather than leaving it entirely for others to do at some other time. Accordingly, a participatory communication perspective in the development context serve as a determinant for the realisation of inclusive citizenry engagement – this is because the nature of participatory communication requires active actors to be involved in dialogue and articulate common goals for societal impact.

It is further acknowledged in this Chapter that a participatory perspective to strategic communication describes a sequential process or series of steps that can take place within communities (some simultaneously) and which might lead to the solution to common problems identified. Subsequently, the established linkage between participatory communication and the strategic management of communication would ensure that consensus can be reached regarding common projects and programmes, and if successfully completed, community action is more likely to be successful.

This can be realised if mutual governance serves the needs of people, and as such, if communication bears maximum participation of actors as equals – not as client and provider. Citizens as stakeholders should be acknowledged and informed about any changes in sustainability programmes, policies and practical guidelines. In this regard, government policies, programmes and procedure guidelines have to be communicated through relevant common channels to all citizens – these processes should be the first stage in public participation and a step towards inclusive citizenry engagement hegemony. The link from strategic communication management as a strategic tool from a participatory perspective is broadened in more details in Chapter Four. The Chapter addresses strategic communication for governance and sustainability, while reviewing both contemporary and historical accounts of strategic communication and its related perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT FOR GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Chapter is to explore the strategic management of communication for governance and sustainability. In doing so, the historical and contemporary ontology of strategic communication management (also referred to as SCM) is investigated to determine its status as a scientific sub-domain of corporate communication. Furthermore, the Chapter addresses strategic communication management in governance, with the aim of appreciating how SCM can aid governance processes. Likewise, an exploration of SCM in government as a public institution, qualifies the study to link the field of communication management to corporate governance.

In this sense, the importance of how SCM can support sustainability programmes to address the needs, interests and expectations of citizens is also pondered – the triple-context is registered to recognise how strategic communication management can support government programmes through governance initiatives. As a consequence, strategic communication efforts are advanced to explore its significance in attaining and advocating for inclusive citizenry engagement at the North-West Provincial Government level.

Gutierrez-Garcia (2008:1) makes two significant assertions: Firstly, that the changing economic, social, and political contexts during the past few years make the evolution of corporate communication interesting. The author argues that communication management has become steadily more important for organisations, especially since the nineties, as has also happened in the field of academic research. Secondly, corporate governance and information transparency is regulated by norms which have come into law – this has prompted corporations to be concerned about their public profile and the need to manage communication strategically, because of the possible consequences for their reputation. Accordingly, these assertions and other circumstances point to the following emerging field of research in corporate communication: the relationship between corporate governance, strategic

management, transparency, and communication, as elucidated by Gutierrez-Garcia (2008:1).

Contextually, it is for the afore-mentioned assertions that this study strive to understand how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives through identified sustainability programmes in the North-West Province, among others, to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. Strategic communication management herein is identified as a matrix to understand the strategic nature of communication at a provincial level of government.

Strategic communication management (SCM) as emphasised in the **Pretoria school of thought** through the conceptualisation of Steyn and De Beer (2012:30) has been viewed as a scientific worldview or paradigm that conceptualises communication management in the strategic context of the organisation. In this view, communication management is not equated with 'strategic communication management'. Communication management is defined as the management of communication between an organisation (institution) and its internal and external stakeholders, and other societal interest groups, and is performed at the functional level of an organisation. SCM assumes corporate communication to be a strategic management function with a mandate to function at the strategic (macro, societal, or environmental) level, as considered by Steyn and De Beer (2012:30) (Steyn, in Toth, 2007; in Karakaya Satir, 2011).

4.2 GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

Governance, as a management concept, has progressively become a major concern for the success of any development initiative. In Africa, governance has been debated since the 1960s following the independence of some African countries. Recently the concept of governance has been captured from different perspectives by political leaders, institutions, and national and international communities. Already, it represents a key item on major international agendas. Many publications are issued on governance and several initiatives are taken both in the international arena and at national level (Mekolo & Resta, 2005; King III Report, 2009; King IV Report, 2016).

It must be pointed out that governance is linked to country specific contexts but it also evolves within the framework of international commitments, visions of development and continental plans of actions such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Brussels Programme of Action, and many other initiatives currently underway in Africa (Mekolo & Resta, 2005). In addition, intense negotiations have taken place with the G8 countries and with various international organisations. These negotiations have a profound impact on the welfare of the African people. In this perspective, governments and their development partners have executed governance programmes, projects and other specific initiatives at national level, guided by appropriate policies that need to be in line with the development vision adopted by each African country (Mekolo & Resta, 2005).

Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) write that the concept of governance, in fact, is simple. It is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as social (triple-context) processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. In principle, the concept of governance is not new and is probably as old as human civilisation. It generally means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented.

As a consequence, the concept of governance relates to the quality of the relationship between the government and citizens whom it serves and protects. Governance could be viewed as a phenomenon where the concerned authority, if any, exercises power, exerts influence and manages the country's social as well as economic resources leading to better development. In a more precise manner, governance is the way those with power, use their power. Thus, governance has social, political, and economic dimensions (Sahni, 2003:1-2).

Governance is the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm (Hyden, 1992:7). Governance consequently, is concerned with uncovering viable regime forms, as well as the degree of stateness – the capacity to entrench the authority of the central state and to regularise its relations with society. The World Bank (1989:60) defines governance

quite narrowly as "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs." In the view of Barkan (1992:263-264), governance involves less in the way of administrative management and more in the way of political management. With its emphasis on developing networks of reciprocity and exchange, governance increases the possibilities of accomplishing more, while spending less.

The understanding of governance in Africa is no different from the global landscape, as the practice of governance centres around the implementation of values, principles, laws, and the execution of central authority to the governed. As a result of the global contexts of governance, its uniqueness is therefore based on how countries implement sets of rules, regulations, and their entrenched legitimacy. Legitimacy is mainly achieved through social, economic, and political recognition of state authority and the relationship with citizens.

4.2.1 Historical perspectives on governance in Africa

At the heart of understanding governance in the African context, Mukumunana (2006:142) writes that African societies were organised in kingdoms based on lineage/kinship – a social system in which the exercise of power and authority did not rely on bureaucratic arrangements to carry out the political and social requirements of the communities during pre-colonialisation. The historical account of governance in Africa is not new, as governance existed before civilisation of mankind. In South Africa, some societies are still organised in kingdoms governed by a chief or paramount chief. The chieftaincy can still be witnessed in the North-West Province, as many villages and towns are still under the rule of chiefs, which is often as a result of royal inheritance.

The analysis of the political structure and stability of pre-colonial African kingdoms reveals a combination of administrative configurations and leadership strategies, including the important role of democratic processes in traditional governance. For example, Godfrey Tangwa argues that traditional African leadership and authority systems might be understood somewhat paradoxically as the "harmonious marriage between autocratic dictatorship and popular democracy" (1998:2). Specific formal practices (which varied between cultures) positioned the citizenry to authorise,

critique, and sanction the ascension of their ruler, his/her continued reign and the selection and ascension of his/her successor.

These practices (rituals and procedures) are also described by Michael Tabuwe Aletum as "the exercise of democracy in traditional institutions, through checks and balances imposed by citizenry participation in the transition and maintenance of leadership" (Aletum, 2001:209). Aletum describes the Bafut kingdom of Bamenda in Cameroon, where, when the new ruler was installed, he had to be presented to the Bafut population for stoning. The ceremonial stoning may consist of tiny, harmless pebbles in the case of an approved and respected new leader, or of large, injurious rocks hurled to maim, chase off or kill the undesired incumbent. In either case, it reminds the new ruler what could happen if his rule became illegitimate (Aletum, 2001).

The choice of a leader was politically charged and if contestation arose, many traditional African cultures employed rituals of checks and balances for resolving conflicts, especially those relating to succession issues. Maumakwana (2006:143) further indicates that transfer of power had to follow the customs and traditions dictated by the ancestors. Some offices had categorical requirements of gender or age that narrowed the competition. In some cases, certain responsibilities fell to the eldest male or youngest female, or choices could be made between several people of approximately the same age. A prescribed inheritance pattern that connected certain classes or families was sometimes required.

While some top positions were lifetime appointments, other titles were graded, whereby one could enter the kingdom in one administrative capacity but might hope, with time and good assessments, to be promoted. Chieftaincies could be graded according to status and population size. These grades were also politically important and, dependent on their level of rank and popularity, chiefs could have a lesser or greater influence on community life and resources. Noble status in pre-colonial African society thus often depended upon both the fact of birth and upon some form of community approval (Tangwa, 1998).

The above descriptions point to the important place that people held in these societies. In fact, through ritual acts, the king and chiefs swore allegiance to the

people. The reign of a particular king, however loved or despised, was never more significant than the endurance of the kingdom itself. In this regard, Tangwa observes that when the ruler was perceived to be a political liability, in some traditional African kingdoms the King/Queen could even be quietly executed or asked to voluntarily drink poison if his/her continued reign was considered dangerous for the survival and/or well-being of the kingdom (Tangwa, 1998:3).

Likewise, African governance and leadership were characterised by a balance of authority and democracy. Several scholars of African politics argue that it is the various colonial administrations, which introduced pure dictatorships, that is, dictatorships without any checks and balances (Tangwa, 1998; Aletum, 2001; Gordon, 2001).

From this perspective, governance and politics in Africa are intertwined and signifies the act and manner of managing public affairs. Through the process of governance, the essential link between the civil society and the state is established, giving shape to the way decisions are made for serving public interest. In recent times, the Constitution and the applicable laws of the country provide the legal framework for governance. In this sense, the institutions embodying the governance process include the executive, legislature, judiciary, army, bureaucracy, political parties and interest groups.

Notably, it is the moral principles and rules of conduct, having a bearing on both the legal framework and the institutions that basically determine the government and the governed. Without a doubt, it is with the new authoritarian demands of erstwhile colonisers, such as the widespread seizure of land and forced manual labour, which African people came into contact with dictatorial rule.

In the view of Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012), governance is legitimate in a positive sense when the government is installed by the people through institutional arrangements that are put in place by the people; and when the performance of the ruler is judged good and acceptable by the people. When the people have no power to remove the ruler in the case of a very grievous offence, such a government is often illegitimate and undemocratic. For example, the South African government is elected to office through a voting system, in which, the government of the day is the

result of multi-political contestations – the elected political party assumes the governance role and parliament (composition of political parties according to seats allocated through elections/voting results) becomes the check and balance system.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, Hyden (1992) suggests that although governance is practiced by political elites, it manifests in the condition of citizenry. This implies that a strong state is unlikely to emerge in the absence of a vibrant civil society. It concerns the institutionalisation of the normative values that can motivate and provide cohesion to the members of the society at large. Indeed, Hyden's efforts to operationalise governance inevitably lead to associate good governance with democratic values and procedures. Although Hyde's concept of a governance realm is applicable to all political systems, it is addressed primarily to African polities because of a breakdown of governance across the continent (Barkan, 1992:167). It is no coincidence that the diminution of the governance realm across Africa has accompanied the spread of personal rule.

4.2.2 Governance in the South African context

To understand and conceptualise governance in the South African context and the context of this study, it is imperative to place governance at the door-step of government as the administrative arm for social cohesion and change. In South Africa, governance is wide and means more than government. It refers to the style of interaction between a government and the society that it governs, this perspective is also shared by the World Bank (1994). Olowu and Sako (2002:37) position that the concept of governance can be regarded as a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interaction within and among the state, civil society and the private sector.

Governance has also been conceptualised in the corporate world – all the King Reports on governance have over the years attempted a broader understanding of governance in South Africa (see, King III Report, 2009; King IV Report, 2016). From this perspective, governance is seen as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs through legitimate and regularised institutions. Furthermore, governance can be viewed as the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens

articulate their interest. Such mechanisms and processes apply to the North-West Provincial Government and citizens as the governed; citizens should therefore be considered as co-governors for transparent and efficient implementation of governance initiatives.

To this end, Cloete (2000) also contend that on the other hand, governance is conceptualised as the achievement by a democratic government of the most appropriate developmental policy objectives to sustainably develop its society. This is done by mobilising, applying and coordinating available resources in the public, private and voluntary sectors, domestically and internationally, in the most effective, efficient and democratic way. In South Africa, Layman (2003:12) asserts that the democratic government, elected in 1994, faced the task of transforming a society built on centuries of racial segregation and apartheid, resulting in wide disparities in levels of income and development. The impartiality within the South African system which manifested through a race-based municipal dispensation; an unequal access to resources; and a lack of both provision of services and resources to local inhabitants, have for many decades defined the South African society.

The racial segregation or discrimination and the later more defined apartheid policy of the National Party government has made a negative imprint on human settlement patterns and municipal and other institutions in South Africa. In order to comprehend, monitor, evaluate and contribute to the new transformation that government is called upon, a basic understanding is required of the historical mission of government (Layman, 2003). As a consequence, governance in South African has to maintain that the best governmental mechanism for undeniable social change and fulfilment of developmental government is a shared decision-making process between the government and civil society – in true/actual sense, this statement is a direct link between the strategic management of communication and the participatory perspective of communication.

To support Layman's assertion, Maloba (2015) writes that the government is not a unique political actor on a national, regional or local scale. As a matter of fact, the state, civil society and the bureaucracy make up the whole government. These three must work in tandem based on norms provided by governance to insure good governance. Likewise, it should be recognised that this is only possible through

institutional development and capacity-building that will bring about effective, efficient and expected delivery of services at the local level in a manner that improves the lives of communities.

In South Africa, it is important to note that in the days of the apartheid system, governance was highly centralised and fragmented along racial lines. The contention of the apartheid government system aimed to curtail systematically the extent to which Africans could have benefits (economically, socially and otherwise) from the resources of the land as articulated by Layman (2003). From this vantage point, the apartheid government introduced the Group Area Act – legislation of which the main objective was to institute strict residential segregation and removal of Africans to townships, slums and own group Bantustan areas. This Act was used as a vital yardstick for influx control – the perpetual results of the Group Area Act can be witnessed in areas such the North-West Province with its rural character and underdevelopment.

In support of the afore-mentioned, Kjaer (2004) stresses that the term governance was considered distinct from government during the 1980s, which, in the public administration context, included civil society actors, and dealt with the management of different networks within a government (all informal rules governing the interactions between the state and different organised interests) more specifically in the area pertaining to the delivery of services. A distinct approach between the traditional notion of governance and new governance states that the old governance was moved by the traditional notion of steering by national governments from the top down, whereas new governance has more to do with how the centre interacts with society – it proposes that there is more self-steering in networks (Kjaer, 2004:11).

To a greater extent, Kjaer (2004:14) argues that one of the most important core concepts in governance theory is the respect of rules that need to be legitimated by being derived from democracy and contributing to efficiency. In context, this study concurs with Kjaer's assertion that most governance theories take the view that representative democracy on its own is an increasingly inadequate institutional method to achieve democratic accountability in the modern world and needs to be supplemented with more participatory forms. In this sense, governance in South

Africa should be central to addressing the needs and interests of citizens. Its contribution to poverty alleviation cannot be overemphasised.

Despite numerous elaborations and developments on the term 'governance', the researcher is in support of Kjaer's view, which attributes that governance is the total sum of representative democracy, where the government and citizens share common goals of development and policy requirements. Governance in the context of South Africa and in particular, the North-West Province, should therefore be participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follow the rule of law, while addressing citizenry demands and expectations.

In this regard, citizens should be considered as the building-blocks of governance initiatives. Consequently, the King IV (2016) Report, like its predecessor King III, (2009) affirms the importance of stakeholder inclusivity in the governance initiatives of organisations. Stakeholders should be positioned as the life-blood of organisational success and good governance, in which their value is recognised, and their needs, interests and expectations are addressed through the dominant coalition. In this view, it can be argued that for governments, such as the North-West Provincial Government to co-govern with citizens, communication should be positioned as a strategic engagement tool. In doing so, communication adopted and implemented for strategic purpose and intention, can support governance initiatives in order for inclusive citizenry engagement to materialise.

4.3 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SCM

Strategic communication is a term that has become quite popular in communication science education in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Originally only used for a niche, that is, communication programmes in the domain of national governments and the military (Farwell, 2012; Paul, 2011; Lewis, 2011; Mahoney, 2012), it is now increasingly popular as an umbrella concept embracing various goal-directed communication activities usually covered by public relations, marketing and financial communications, health communications, public diplomacy, campaigning, and so forth. In the United States, many universities have merged formerly distinct public relations and advertising programmes into strategic communication curricula (Farwell, 2012; Paul, 2011).

In Europe, strategic communication is often used to signal a managerial approach to the field of integrated communications for all kinds of organisations. In Asia and Australia, strategic communication is a concept used in the professional field, in education and in literature alike (see Mahoney, 2013). In the South African context, strategic communication is a strategic tool incorporated in organisational strategy and used in education and professional literature as well, which is not far different from the European and Asian world-views. However, strategic communication is not just a term used in substitution for disliked or ill-reputed concepts. It is a distinct approach focusing on the process of communication which offers complementary insights and open up new fields for interdisciplinary research (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2013).

The handbook of strategic communication published in 2015 offer some insights of the historical accounts in the field of strategic communication. The Routledge handbook edited by Derina Holtzhausen and Ansgar Zerfass serves a collage of contributions from numerous authors and researchers. Accordingly, the authors argue that the term 'strategic' is a much contested, albeit neglected, concept in communication studies (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). One of the reasons for this neglect is that strategic communication may be associated with persuasion in its most negative sense. However, others argue that strategic intent is inherent in all communication. From this perspective, strategic communication extends well beyond its practical application in various fields of practice (see, Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015; Tench & Yeomans, 2014; 2017).

The approach to strategic communication and scientific understanding simply refutes Howard Nothhaft's (2016) claims, that strategic communication lacks scientific rigour and leans more towards the social sciences. To refute these claims, Christensen and Svensson (2017) contend that when it comes to the practice of strategic communication, it is not difficult to recognise how attempts by professional communicators to influence attitudes, opinions, behaviours, etc., over time, affect and shape the very conditions for influence, partly because the intended audiences – internal and external – become accustomed or even blasé to the messages and strategies employed. The question of how strategic communication works, thus, cannot be answered once and for all.

Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015) further posit that, in particular, thinking about communication as situated at the centre of society, requires reflections on the frameworks of power and interests in which communication is enacted in all kinds of organisations. These include corporations, non-profit organisations, activist groups, political parties or movements, government organisations, and all other kinds of actors who form part of the patchwork of today's culture. As a consequence, strategic communication should exist on all levels of governance structures and should acquire a legitimate status in institutions.

Application and adoption of strategic communication methods and techniques often yield positive performance over a short and long-term. Strategic communication becomes strident in organisational philosophies and approaches in order to achieve better and improved outcomes of a managed communication effort. Therefore, the North-West Province, as the study's' orientation, is not immune to the practices and adoption of strategic communication principles, techniques, and frameworks – significant to that, is championing an inclusive framework that integrates the voices of citizens and the building of relationships for optimum performance.

It is said that the term 'strategic' was first used in organisation theory in the 1950s and aimed to describe how organisations compete in the marketplace and gain a market share (Hatch, 1997 in Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). This modern approach to strategic communication defined the fundamental goals of strategic planning as "controlling the environment and maintaining the organisation's autonomy" (Preffer & Salancik 1978 in Hallahan *et al.*, 2007:12). The term strategic communication is also associated with power and a rational decision-making process in organisations (Hatch, 1997 in Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). Thus, the process of strategic planning involves: goal setting, strategy formulation and implementation, and evaluation (Porter, 1985 in Hallahan *et al.*, 2007).

Also, the two key words that compose the term of strategic communication are significant. Accordingly, Hallahan *et al.*, (2007) write that strategic communication is a rich and multidimensional concept and must not be defined narrowly, as in the case of Howard Nothhaft (2016). Firstly, the word strategic indicates that communication activities are intentional and intended. Strategic used in conjunction with communication, emphasises that communication practice is a management

function. Arguably, Hallahan *et al.*, (2007:12-13) explain that such an approach is clearly visible if communication is defined as the essential activity of management.

4.3.1 Momentum of the concept

It is said that since the publication of the article "Defining Strategic Communication" (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007:243) in the inaugural issue of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, the definition put forward in this article has been used to explore, limit, argue, debate and study strategic communication. By the end of 2013 the article had been cited numerous times in other journal articles and had been downloaded more than 2,000 times. Accordingly, not much has changed since 2007 in terms of the definition of strategic communication.

However, much has been clarified and at this time a better picture emerges of what goes into a strategic communication process, what defines its success, what the impact is on the public sphere and what the commonalities are among different areas of strategic communication practice. In the main, strategic communication discourse has therefore gained much popularity and attention over the years.

Hallahan *et al.*, (2007:4) define strategic communication "in its broadest sense, (as) communicating purposefully to advance (the organisation's) mission". They also held that strategic communication "implies that people will be engaged in deliberate communication practice on behalf of organisations, causes, and social movements". The article further elaborated on the concept of strategy and argued that being strategic does not necessarily mean being manipulative, because practitioners often decide that being inclusive and collaborative will be more strategic and effective than being propagandistic or manipulative. However, influencing the levels of knowledge, changing or maintaining attitudes and influencing the behaviours towards issues, products or services remain the preferred outcomes for strategic communication.

Another property of the first definition was a focus on practice or action and on the role of the practitioner who serves as an agent communicating on behalf of others. Thus, rather than merely concentrating on the strategic communication process, it also focused on the factors that enable or prevent communicators to execute a communication plan. Finally, the article pointed to the importance of communication in the strategic communication process, as opposed to a strategic organisational

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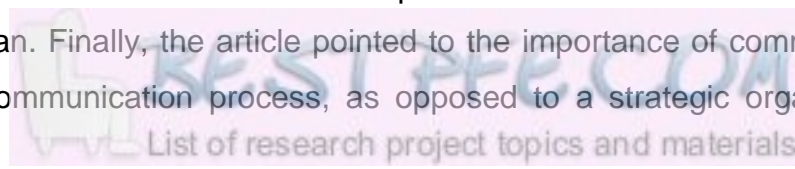
process that does not necessarily revolve around communication. The strategic communication process, typically, is a communication process that follows from an organisation's strategic plan and focuses on the role of communication in enabling the organisation's strategic goals and objectives.

Through the article's premise, two communication models were discussed. The transmission model followed from Shannon and Weaver (1949) and eventually evolved in discussions of two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical communication in public relations literature (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). The interactive or ritualistic model of communication, developed by Carey (1989), has its foundation in symbolic interactionism and organisational communication and focuses on how messages and people themselves are shaped during the communication process.

Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2013:74) proposed a more comprehensive, single definition incorporating most of the attributes above, with the inclusion of the public sphere. They proposed the following definition: "Strategic communication is the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals". Holtzhausen (2008:48-49), further provided an account of how the communicative entities "cover the full spectrum of economic and social sectors, such as trade and industry, politics, non-profit and government agencies, activist groups, and even celebrities in the sports and entertainment industries".

While strategic communicators indeed do a great deal of work outside of the public sphere, such as managing communication programmes and communicating with internal stakeholders, the ultimate aim is to maintain a healthy reputation for the communicative entity in the public sphere. Set against this more advanced definition, this Chapter will review each of the attributes of the definition, with the purpose of assessing previous and new theoretical approaches to the study of the field. First, it will review the philosophical foundations of strategic communication, particularly as they pertain to the public sphere, before moving to the role of practitioners and the organisational environment in which strategic communication is practised, and finally to an assessment of the actual communication process in its various contexts.

4.4 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The conception of control of public dialogue has continuously been inherent in the deliberations on the role of strategic communication. It is argued that Habermas (1989, 2006) in particular has been critical of the ability of those in power to hire powerful agents to communicate on their behalf and so influence and skew public debate. His work was largely influenced by the reality that, at that time, the media was crucial in shaping and instigating public discourse, with the assumption that the media were neutral in this role and thus open to influence by strategic communicators. Popular understanding of the public sphere has changed, particularly during the past decade, with the increasingly important role of the Internet, which brought a radical expansion of the public sphere and a marginalisation of the major public media. While Bentele and Nothhaft (2010) argue that the virtual sphere can only exist in a solid and real society that surrounds it, they also contended that:

> *The dominant characteristic (of the public sphere) is that the communication sphere, to a degree, collapses structural constraints, such as time, distance, technical limitations, and physical handicaps of the person, to mention a few. The public sphere is not a place of gathering as the Tingstead any more (sic). Neither is it a force field of media attention constituted by a limited amount of actors. It is a network of points of interest. Something, e.g., a brand, the swine-flu, a politician or any other topic, is in the public sphere because communicators, who are points in the network of communications, communicate about it (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2010:112).*

The authors argued that the public sphere is now controlled by the truthfulness of the statements issued in the public communication sphere as perceived by the public. If strategic communicators can argue that their communication is in the public interest and contributes to the wellbeing of society, and if their arguments are accepted as such, they will make a contribution to the public sphere, even if they use their own communication platforms to do so.

In an analysis of the contribution of Dewey to the understanding of the public sphere, Self (2010) argued that Dewey believed that discourse in the public sphere can already be regarded as action, which is preserved in the form of shared meaning.

Thus, for Dewey, discourse was already action that shaped the public sphere and subsequently society. Similar to Bentele and Nothhaft (2010), Self (2010) argued that the public became activists through participating in the public sphere, which eventually leads to solving society's problems. Whereas in the past the consequences of public deliberation only vaguely reflected the public debate because of mediators, "now the relation between public communication and public action seems to grow more and more ominous" (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2010:114).

What sets the current public sphere apart from that of the 20th century is that it is more participative rather than representative. There are still some major media channels that contribute to the public sphere but 'contribute' here is the key word rather than 'mediate'. Whereas the media was the main force in presenting different viewpoints representing society in the 20th century, digital media now allows members of the public to directly participate in public debate without going through mediated channels. Thus, the public sphere has become participative rather than representative. Now everybody matters in what is a communication sphere rather than a public sphere.

4.4.1 Public versus private

To understand the role of strategic communication in the public sphere it is important to briefly review the difference between the public sphere and the private sphere, which is also called "The good Life" (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1984:229–230). Conventionally, the public sphere was viewed as the arena where the wealthy, aristocratic and well-connected were expected to make a contribution. Women, peasants and trades people were typically excluded from the public sphere because they were viewed as second-class citizens who did not have the necessary competency, education and background to make decisions for them (Kohlberg *et al.*, 1984). Thus, the public sphere belonged to a very select group of people; it was a place where equals met, that is, the free and the privileged. This perspective led to the well-known quote that "The Personal is Political" (Hanisch, 1970) – also often presented as the private is political.

Although this scenario has now changed with a public sphere that is more accessible to a variety of voices than ever before, it nonetheless highlights the split between the

public and the private, which also frames the role of strategic communication in the public sphere. If strategic communicators are participants in the public sphere and the role of the public sphere is to solve society's problems, they have a responsibility to present debatable issues to the public sphere. If not, their work will be ridiculed. Individuals who wish to manipulate the public sphere for their own benefit, without bringing ideas and arguments that contribute to the public debate will be rejected, as is the case in the United States when Donald Trump used his own brand to make unfounded political statements about President Barack Obama's birthplace (Swindell, 2011).

The inclusion of the public sphere in a definition of strategic communication is therefore valuable in debating the role of the practice. In addition to its many other attributes, the role of strategic communicators should surely include helping others gain access to the public sphere through good, thoughtful arguments that can advance the interests of the communicative entity, while contributing to the improvement of society (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2010). That in itself already represents strategic action, as per Dewey (1954).

Furthermore, many strategic communicators will attest to the notion that the pervasiveness of the public sphere makes it more thoughtful about what and how contributors communicate about issues, even when they communicate in the marketing and branding context. As Bentele and Nothhaft (2010:114) succinctly point out, the public sphere has become a corridor that limits your manoeuvrable space when trying to make sense of reality.

4.5 CONNECTING COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT TO GOVERNANCE

Gutierrez-Garcia (2008:4) notes that good corporate governance has become a crucial issue on the agenda of executives, public institutions and communication practitioners. One question arises: What are the roots of this issue in different sectors? In both management and corporate communication fields, scholars seem to converge on one idea: how to manage mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its constituencies. This conception takes the notion of an organisation as a social institution that generates value, not just in economic terms, but also in a social sense, as its starting-point (ibid.).

In consequence, executives have to develop a management culture that focuses on a vocation of service to the public, or in more specific terms, to different stakeholders (Llano, 1992); that is, to decide how to respond to stakeholders' expectations and necessities in order to gain competitive advantage and to adapt to a demanding environment.

In this sense, there are several issues and drivers in the evolution of the organisational environment, such as: the information society and the increasing information demanded of organisations; sophisticated people; increased legal pressure; *the economics of reputation* (Sparkes, 2003:3); the rise of empowered citizens; and globalisation (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Hall, 1993). This helps to understand why there is a renewed discussion about what an organisation is and its contribution to society as a whole. In the main, the organisation's public dimension has to be managed, and specifically its relational nature.

Post *et al.* (2002) posit that, organisational leaders ask themselves how to deal with specific and various stakeholder demands, and how to include them into management decision-making processes and the formulation of strategies. This topic leads to an integrated governance system – taken as a whole, this network of relationships constitutes a 'governance system' for the modern corporation (Post & Carroll, 2006:133). In this view, scholars emphasise the emergence of a new corporate governance paradigm, from a shareholder-based approach to a stakeholder-based approach (see, Money & Schepers, 2007:4).

Therefore, corporate governance involves a set of relationships between an organisation's management and all its stakeholders. Additionally, Barley (2007) suggests that corporate governance refers to an engagement of managers with stakeholder groups. This approach to shared governance can also be witnessed in government institutions, which endeavour to build mutual relationships with citizens through various communication strategies and mechanisms.

Against the above background, communication activities become a critical issue in gaining engagement with citizens, social support and trust in organisations (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies, 2008; Rahbek, 2006). Public relations and corporate communication literature has traditionally stressed the impact of communication

relationships on achieving strategic goals (Melewar, *et al.*, 2017; Kelvin-Iloafu, 2016; Husain, 2013; van Riel, 2012; Toth, 2007; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005; Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verçic & Sriramesh, 2007; DeSanto & Moss, 2004; Moss, Warnaby & Newman, 2000; Dolphin & Ying, 2000; Caywood, 1997; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992).

Accordingly, communication management is acquiring new meaning in organisations. Public relations literature underlines the public relations manager's role in the dominant coalition or the 'executive suite', and his/her power and influence inside organisations (Berger & Reber, 2006; van Ruler & de Lange, 2003; Dolphin, 2003; Tixier, 1998). Certainly, this is a crucial issue in the institutionalisation of the practice. But it is not the only one. The real contribution of communication practice as a management strategic tool must also be taken into account. This contribution has two main consequences for the governance of companies:

a) Learning from the environment – prompts listening to stakeholders' concerns, and stimulates managers to take the right decisions (Ulrich, 1995:5) in response to the public's demands.
b) Facilitating innovation – companies are encouraged to innovate in response to market challenges, thus facilitating a competitive advantage and undoubtedly adding value in the management process.

Essentially, communication management in the 21st century, according to Muzi-Falconi (2010:5), focuses on building relationships with stakeholders through dialogue to improve the quality of organisational decision-making processes by listening to stakeholders' expectations. Muzi-Falconi's assertion of communication management is equally imperative to be applied in government's context – government institutions adopt communication techniques to foster positive mutual relationships with citizens. Therefore, the strategic management of communication is important as an organisational function, to address the information requirements mentioned by Dawkins, and can therefore be regarded as the 'missing link' in the practice and communication of governance initiatives (Dawkins, 2004:108).

Moreover, dialogue can be viewed as the essence of strategic communication management, and as Llano remarks, '*the nature of organisations is a dialogic one*'

(Llano, 1992:25). Furthermore, dialogue with stakeholders has other consequences: it reduces conflict situations, avoids risks and increases confidence (Burchell & Cook, 2006:163-166). As a result, authentic dialogue leads to engagement and, in the end, could bring about changes in organisational behaviour. Burchell and Cook (2008:37) suggest that organisations should be opened to dialogue as a channel through which to transcend traditional conflictual processes of communication between organisations and to develop a more progressive form of engagement and understanding.

The ever changing global environment necessarily requires organisation's managers and executives to be conscious of the authentic nature of communication. What is the authentic nature of communication in governance? It means to focus on bidirectional communication that leads to a genuine dialogic process in which both company and publics share their views and the company tries to handle the latter's expectations and demands (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006; Baum, 2004; Cortina, 2003; Steinmann & Zerfa, 1993). This approach denotes a proposed form of organisational management in which executives accept that their decisions may include public perspectives in the governance of the organisation.

These considerations lead to a more integrated and consistent communication management function, that manifests as strategic communication. Governance, particularly communication efforts, would require, in this context, the well-founded and co-ordinated management of communication relationships with various publics to achieve specific and directed goals. This is one of the most significant challenges facing organisations: how to be authentic and project a strong identity to all of their stakeholder groups (Cornelissen, 2004:24; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004:165).

4.6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN GOVERNANCE

Communication plays a number of roles in fostering good governance. It can improve societies' ability to identify and articulate their needs and to measure government performance. It can improve citizens' understanding of their rights and build their capacity to engage in public dialogue and public affairs. It can also provide citizens with direct information on the performance of government and the information required to hold government to account.

Improved communication between citizens and states has also been credited with encouraging government responsiveness to citizens' demands and resulting in better public services (GSDRC, 2010). More often than not, however, this communication between citizen and state cannot be realised directly and must be facilitated by intermediary actors. Creating the ideal public sphere for good governance requires an active and inclusive civil society and a self-regulated, professional media sector both of which are able to interact effectively with each other and with the state (CommGAP, 2008).

Therefore, it can be stated that good communication is both a function and a proof of good governance – particularly in a democratic context and the confines of accountability:

> *In a democracy informative and transparent communication is essential to the maintenance of a productive and enduring relationship between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the electorate. Communication therefore has a constitutional significance, in other words, and the democratic process can be damaged when communication is insincere, inadequate or incomplete* (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011).

In recent years, the strategic management of communication in various institutions (whether governmental or non-governmental) has become a prerequisite for practising good governance and organisational performance. Prevailing views on good governance centre upon concepts of capability, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness. Emphasis is placed on the need for the full participation of citizens and civil society actors in governance and is predicated on the effective flow of information and dialogue between citizens, governments and other actors (ODI briefing paper, 2006). By situating communication, information dissemination and dialogue as key components of governance, a positive correlation between communication and good governance is tacitly assumed.

Sen (1999) situates that institutions, such as government and various businesses, now recognise that stable, democratic government and well-managed public institutions are essential to improve the living conditions of poor people and to combat poverty. The level of mutual understanding and strategic management demonstrates a strong association between good governance and improved

investment, growth rates, better economic performance, improved adult literacy, a reduction in state corruption, and improved service delivery. There is also a growing recognition that a well-functioning and capable state alone is insufficient to ensure quality public service delivery to citizens that meets their needs and aspirations. It is also recognised that the state needs to be accountable and responsive to its citizens. This broader conception of governance builds on concepts of 'rights based development' and 'development as freedom', as alluded to by Sen (1999).

To date, the role of communication and its strategic intent is vastly contested by various governments seeking to practice good governance – this is done against the backdrop of succeeding within the parameters of governance and accountability (Julius, 2006). The South African government and its governance spheres are not mutually exclusive from the dilemma of sustainable governance and peoples' representation. The measuring of communications' impact on governance in South Africa is gauged against the need to recognise that citizens, civil society and political organisations are entitled to an active voice in how society is governed; how state resources are allocated and spent; and the capacity to effectively hold government to account for policies and their outcomes. To do so, citizens and their representatives need goal-oriented information to make informed choices and to open channels of communication operating in two directions – from government to the citizenry, and from the citizenry to government.

Contrary to the notion of good governance, governments all over the world, including the South African Government, often miss recognising the conception of governance as:

> *… civil society where citizens organise to raise issues and exchange information; political society where societal interests are aggregated into organisations that seek power and generate support for governments and policies; bureaucracy through which government implements policies and interacts with citizens, business and civil society; as well as economic society and the judiciary (Julius, 2006).*

Similarly, governments must move away from a statist view of governance to a broader view of governance based on:

Voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Julius, 2006).

Contextually, strategic communication in governance involves creating mechanisms to broaden public access to information on reforms; strengthening governments' ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with them, empowering grass roots organisations to achieve a more participatory process, and undertaking communication activities that are grounded in public opinion research (Julius, 2006). Given the scope of strategic communication and its integrative nature, strategic communication has fluid boundaries, seeking to integrate theories, models, and methods from various academic disciplines in new and meaningful ways to achieve objectives (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014). Integrative theories and models can be adopted in government reforms to effectively engage citizens and reach consensus on identified activities. In this approach, governments and citizens become co-governors.

From a governance perspective, managing strategic communication is essentially the same as managing any other strategic activity in government (Thomas & Stephens, 2015). Thus, it must involve actions and practices like organising public-based events or disseminating information for public access (Hallahan, 2015). In the main, strategic communication can be used to effectively communicate with citizens strategically with very limited resources and still be able to achieve objectives through thoughtful management and diligent execution.

Additionally, strategic communication is always goal oriented, seeking to achieve a specific desired outcome that the planners determine to be beneficial for them (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). In their document, Global Monitoring Report (2006), the World Bank demonstrates how communication (defined as citizen engagement, underpinned by access to high quality information) can act as an important contributor to good governance, depicting this link in a virtuous circle of transparency.

Figure 4.1: The virtuous circle of transparency: from disclosure to responsiveness
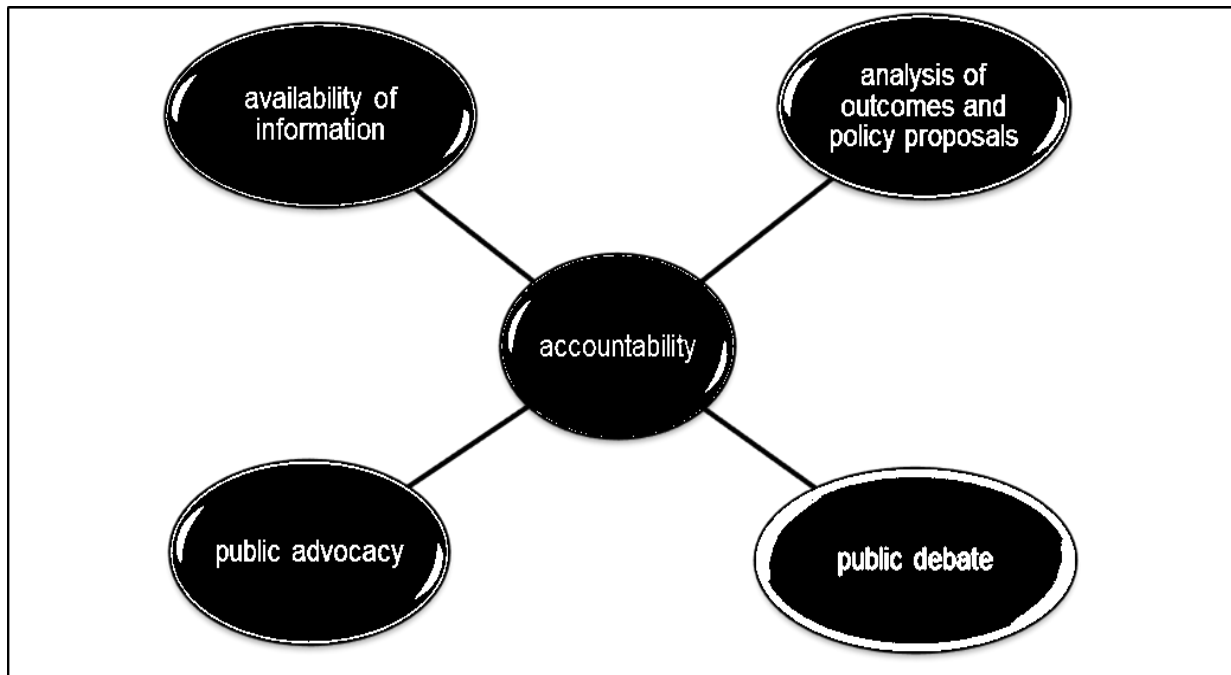
Source: Adapted from World Bank, Global Monitoring Report (2006).

In this model, information reveals the actions of policy makers – evaluation and monitoring are facilitated, activism rises and with it the level of public debate. Policy becomes more contestable and citizens are motivated by the possibility of holding the government accountable. Similarly, communication with the government becomes a two-way flow, generating further demands and more reliable information. The virtuous circle is completed as government practices become more open and more responsive to citizens (World Bank, Global Monitoring Report, 2006).

The model above further indicates that communication has a number of roles to play in fostering good governance. Communication can improve communities' ability to identify and articulate their needs and to measure government performance. It can improve government responsiveness by improving citizens' understanding of their rights and building their capacity to engage in public dialogue and public affairs. It can also improve government performance by providing citizens with direct information on the performance of government and equipping them with the information required to hold government to account.

As a consequence, communication can also build social capital by encouraging networks and social movements around particular issues (World Bank, Global Monitoring Report, 2006). This model is specifically imperative for the South African Government, in particular the North-West Province, in striving for inclusive citizenry engagement in government reforms. Strategic communication programmes should be developed and co-ordinated with the sole aim of advancing mutual relationships with citizens and achieving consensus in dialogue.

To this end, strategic communication in governance therefore serves as a tool to promote good governance through communication activities and efficient mechanisms directed at goals driven-achievements. The centric approach to good governance lies in the ability to legitimately respond to the needs of the people promptly, and actively promoting open and accountable government and helping it to prevent corruption, communication overload and misconstrued interpretations. However, support for the notion that communication practised at a strategic level can promote good governance, is by no means universally accepted (World Bank, Global Monitoring Report, 2006).

Indeed, there are cases where communication can serve to protect poor governance rather than promote governance, for example, if communication acts as a protector of the state rather than the voice of the people or if communication is subject to elite capture and is used to voice the views of one segment of society at the expense of other people's rights and freedoms (Tharoor, 2007). There is also an issue over the sheer multiplicity of voices now emerging in many countries presenting governments with a challenge of mediating between conflicting demands and adopting sustainable and effective outcomes (World Bank, Global Monitoring Report, 2006). In addition, the link between governance and communication is thought to be reciprocal – effective communication can promote good governance, but equally, a permitted government can promote more effective participation and communication. However, the direction of causality between governance and communication is not straightforward.

Tharoor (2007) articulates some of these issues in integrating approaches to good governance, press freedom and intercultural tolerance. Referring explicitly to the media, she demonstrates how a free media cannot always be seen as virtuous.

Rather, the media can be used as a substitute for democratic political expression. Furthermore, an irresponsible media, or undue pressure from particular pressure groups, can have a disastrous impact on politics. In her view, the establishment of an effective enabling environment for the media is essential to establishing a sound positive correlation. Looking more broadly to communications, the World Bank similarly maintains that certain enabling factors are required to engender transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

A suggestion by Tharoor (2007) is to look more broadly at aspects of intended communication in the following ways: the production and dissemination of good quality information; and disclosure of information as a critical factor in turning information into a tool for civic accountability, an independent media, and an engaged civil society. In particular, a civil society that is not subject to overbearing elite capture.

Such issues require a more substantive analysis both to establish a direct causal link and also to identify the enabling factors that are needed to encourage a positive correlation between communication and governance. Creating the ideal public sphere for improved governance requires an active and inclusive public society and a self-regulated, professional media sector; both of which are able to interact effectively with each other and with the state. Civil society, in particular, has the potential to drive the governance agenda through communication; balancing the messages that emanate from government and mainstream media sources; and offering a voice to those excluded from political discourse (KPMG Impact Paper 6, 2012).

4.7 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN GOVERNMENT

Government communication is the essential lifeblood and the strategic element in service delivery. Government's ability to deliver optimal transparent, productive, communication and collaborations at all levels is imperative to a nation's future success. Due to the era of rapid change and great complexity, the challenges facing societies, communities and organisations are complex and difficult, and there is a general need for leadership in communication from government. Government communication has a critical role to play in harnessing goodwill for productive purposes, and in helping to shape the national mood and nation-building.

Government has to ensure that all its information is provided to all people at all times. It needs to be acutely aware of the need to communicate effectively, both to influence public opinion, and to maintain its legitimacy. In this effort, government should also explore a two-way communication approach as this will ensure a closer engagement between the state and its citizens. The ability to engage in two-way communication with citizens involves a complex set of interlocking structures, processes and practices, which government has to put in place to communicate effectively with the public.

Government should provide information to the public in a co-ordinated manner. Given the rapidly changing information and communication environments around the world, strengthening government communication capacity should leverage existing and potential convergences in a country's communication space and media mix. New information and communication technologies can help enhance the government efforts to communicate proactively with the public.

In planning the communication of government messages, a combination of new and traditional information and communication technologies can provide opportunities in some contexts. Therefore, government spheres should embrace both media handling and direct communication with the public; hence, the role and scope of government communication is defined to mean a citizen-focused continuous dialogue as an element of inclusive citizenry engagement.

In the book *Corporate Communications: Theory and Practice*, Cornelissen makes a significant contribution in mapping out the impact of corporate communication programmes. The author suggests that the things that organisations communicate to adapt over time, fall within the remit of corporate communication programmes - the process of organising and planning for these programmes, as well as executing them, is called management. Although the word 'management' often calls to mind a deliberate, rational process, communication programmes of organisations are not always shaped in that way. Sometimes, they come about by reactions to sudden crises, or as the result of political activity within the organisation (Cornelissen, 2004, 2011, 2017).

Cornelissen (2011) further posits that the management of corporate communication and how organisations can do this in a strategic manner – that is, by supporting and organising the corporate communication function in such a way that corporate objectives are met and the organisation as a whole is served – remain crucial to the development of strategic programmes.

It is, of course, well-known that Provincial Governments derive much of their mandate and official operations from the national sphere of government – the mandate simply becomes an extension of programmes dedicated to fulfilling the demands and challenges of the local sphere of government. Although the strategic mandate of the national government is to administrate progress and implementation of programmes, the Provincial Government serves as the direct linkage between specific communities and the government programmes.

In the main, the role of the Provincial Government goes beyond the national level operations, as a result that communities receive services directly from the provincial and local spheres of government. Accordingly, community members are positioned as the immediate strategic constituents or strategic citizens of both the provincial and local spheres of government – much of this implies that local departments are charged with the responsibility of communicating programmes to the immediate publics.

Provincial Government communication practitioners today are faced with the challenge to do more than provide media relations and lobbying publics into their programmes. Some of these individuals are referred to as public relations practitioners or communication professionals. PR practitioners, especially in government, tend to concentrate more on the media relations function, which at times is executed at a non-strategic level. For example, they plan and organise their diaries and focus more on media exposure than any other function. They do not necessarily attend to the basic function of developing citizenry confidence and participation in government activities.

In strategic communication, stakeholders come in different names and forms, depending on the nature of the communication. For instance, in political communication they might also be called constituents or voters and in government

communication they come in the form of communities, societies or citizens, and so forth. Each area of strategic communication practice has several individuals or groups of people with unique features who are affected by the organisation or who have the ability to affect the organisation. This is more evident in government, as citizens are affected and affect the operations of government. From this perspective, it becomes clear that government communication and planning should be based on public consent and the capacity to integrate citizens as an important stakeholder group.

A report issued by 'The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011' articulates that, strategic communication should be visible from the outset in the activity of each government department, in a number of ways. Firstly, there should be evidence of a high-level understanding of the broader effects that policies should and might have. Secondly, there should be sensitivity to the possibility of a variety of interpretations and implications of policy in different quarters. Thirdly, there should be an awareness of the influence required to achieve consensus and support for any given policy. And finally, there should be recognition of the affected stakeholders and audiences, whose support will be necessary for the fulfilment of given national strategic objectives and government policies.

The report further alludes to the fact that strategic communication should be both a 'centre of government' concern (i.e. an organic and critical part of the policy-making and strategic process at the highest levels) and a tool to unite the whole of government (i.e. a common feature of all activity at all levels of government), (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011). In context, effective strategic communication is a two-way process, relaying the reactions and views of the various audiences involved. This audience feedback should inform the periodic adaptation and adjustment of policy and strategy. This means moving away from an approach to communication that focuses disproportionately on domestic media relations, 'sound-bites' and 'photo-opportunities' at the expense of a stronger, but perhaps more subtle, strategic message (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011).

More ambitiously still, strategic communication could be understood as going beyond media messaging to help develop a targeted campaign of behavioural or social change informed by close knowledge of the audience – the South African

Government is not mutually exclusive from this paradox of understanding the sophistication of applying strategic communication activities to attain strategic outcomes of governance. Strategic communication extends its effectiveness through a strategic commodity – the *strategic influence* - which in nature is wholly dependent on effective co-ordination across and beyond government in order to achieve national strategic goals. Given the centrality of influence to national strategy, a strategic communication framework must be intrinsic to strategic planning and policy preparation and implementation, as further indicated in the report of The Royal Institute of International Affairs (2011).

In summary, the North-West Provincial Government, as part of the broader scheme of the South African governance system, should consider the strategic influence of communication recommendations as set out in the report from The Royal Institute of International Affairs, (2011). The recommendations have a direct bearing on the methods of governance and sustainability as the cornerstone for inclusive citizenry engagement, and are thus documented as follows:

- o Strategic communication should become a more prominent component at the highest levels of government; at an early stage in the development of government strategies; during a crisis response or a contingency operation; and generally as a critical component of policy-making

- o In planning government strategies and the delivery of policy, activities should be considered and undertaken as much for their communicative value as for their physical impact. But messaging and narrative alone will do little without constructive and credible actions to reinforce the message and address audiences. Consistency should be sought between spoken and practical means of communication, or more simply between words and actions

- o Strategic communication should not merely be part of a one-way process where the narrative flows from the core of government to be applied unquestioningly by agents and stakeholders. Rather, they must be responsive and flexible, so that they can simultaneously respond and adapt to facts on the ground, and to the reaction of target audiences and adversaries

- In addition to understanding the what, why and where of strategic communication, governments and strategic communicators across the policy process must be able to recognise the 'who': the audience to whom policy is addressed. Strategic communication must recognise the diversity in audiences and their different motivations, interests and ideas

- There is a need for a greater connection between the national strategic and operational levels of stability operations and a systematic attempt to connect the communicative value of words and deeds. In conflict and crisis situations people must be able to communicate quickly and accurately within an established structure. Strategic communicators should be included within the process as early as possible within the conflict cycle

- In counter-radicalisation efforts, strategic communication can have particular potency in addressing the early phases, including pre-emptive and non-violent intervention, carefully targeted at those most susceptible to radicalisation. Strategic communication could be used simultaneously as a tool for social deterrence and social inclusion.

In order to organise and manage strategic communication in the North-West Province, there must be an effective culture in which a normal and fully integrated part of the policy and strategic processes is acknowledged. This culture should be steered by a shared and implicit awareness of the role and value of strategic communication. More importantly, this environment must be seen to have a strong and credible leadership operating within a framework of responsibility and accountability, without seeking to exert complete control over either the 'message' or the 'medium'. Within this environment people at all levels, both civilian and government officials, must be empowered, trusted and taught to be effective strategic communicators (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011).

There should be one end to government communication, rather than several conflicting aims. If several strategic objectives are at play then each should address a discrete area within this overarching common purpose. In the main, to ensure the centrality of strategic communication to planning and action, there must be a much tighter relationship between political leaders, government institutions and

communicators. Citizens should be given greater status to contribute to the overall message. Furthermore, there is a need for greater recognition of the ability of those outside government to communicate strategically through local engagement and outreach programmes within and between communities and populations.

To drive government spheres to speak with one voice, government has to adopt a strategic communication approach which is more than just getting the right message to the right people. The proposed approach seeks to ensure that communication programmes meet the objectives of both the public and government. Strategic communication is typically supported by a detailed plan in order to meet government's objectives.

Through strategic communication, government will be able to convey deliberate message(s) through the most suitable channels and platforms to the designated citizen(s) at the appropriate time to contribute to and achieve the desired long-term effect. Thus, the North-West Provincial Government communication should provide citizens with information about how they can take part in local, provincial and even national discourse so that they influence the direction in which the country is going.

Therefore, of particular importance is that strategic communication in the North-West Province should be considered as:

- a way to respond to the ever-changing communication environment regarding the issue at hand;
- a practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies and principles of communication to bring about positive social change;
- a stakeholder or client-centred approach to promote changes in people's attitudes, knowledge and behaviour to achieve development objectives; and
- a conceptual umbrella that enables government to integrate their disparate messaging efforts. It allows them to create and distribute messages that, while different in style and purpose, have an inner coherence (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011).

Seemingly, it can be put forth that Provincial Government communication should not be framed as propaganda. It is better understood as 'information development' with

two major dimensions: first, information development is about creating a culture of public disclosure; and, second, it is about developing the capacity to make relevant information available as articulated by 'The Royal Institute of International Affairs (2011). In South Africa, communication structures and resources available to government should be used to ensure an informed and participatory citizenry.

Government should communicate policies, programmes and decisions, as well as the implementation of a programme of action, and the provision of services to the people. This information would empower the citizenry to know where to go and what to do to receive assistance from Government. Furthermore, this communication, using all communication channels, is supported by two-way communication between citizens and Government.

4.7.1 Segmentation in strategic communication practice

Despite many attempts to formulate global theories of communication practice, they all fall apart in the face of situational variables such as: economic, political and media systems; organisational variables such as culture, products or services; and many other factors (e.g., Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003). The result is that strategic communication practice is highly situational and that a normative theory of the field is neither practical nor desirable. There are, however, a few practices, approaches or problems that relate to most areas of practice, whether in public diplomacy, politics, government, non-profit or for-profit, which became evident from the works published in strategic communication, specifically since the Hallahan *et al.* (2007) article.

It is said that the segmentation of stakeholders is one of the biggest problems in strategic communication, based on the pre-determined skill sets of the communication practitioners involved, e.g., human resources practitioners communicate with employees; marketing communicators communicate with consumers; public relations practitioners communicate with publics and the media; other practitioners target business-to-business; and so forth (Holtzhausen, 2008). In light of this perspective, it can be assumed therefore that government practitioners communicate with citizens. However, the nature and methods of communication often differ because of the information demand. Although these communicators need

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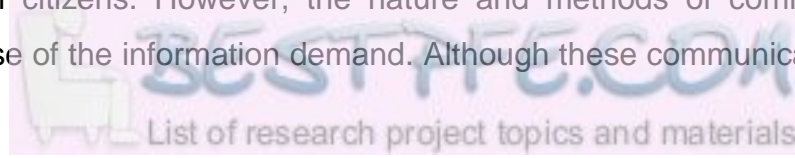
to work together, this often does not happen, because they do not have the knowledge to communicate beyond their expertise, or are cautious of exceeding their scope of responsibilities.

This leads to unnecessary fragmentation of strategic communication activities in organisations. This is often exacerbated in education, when communication practice is taught as public relations, advertising, marketing, political or health communication (Holtzhausen, 2008). From the onset, the strategic communication project can focus on finding those commonalities in practice that will alleviate this problem. One way of determining what a strategic communication practitioner should do is to originate the strategic communication process with the stakeholder-centred approach once the strategic plan has determined the different stakeholder groups.

This means that, instead of determining communication activities depending on the skill set or specific organisational charge of the communicator, strategic communicators should have the ability to communicate equally well with stakeholders who are citizens, consumers, activist groups, communities, other businesses, individual power holders, as well as the media, to mention a few. That is what a unified body of strategic communication should mean, and it is the reason why many universities have ceased to teach students in previously defined professional categories in favour of broader professional communication education.

This approach allows communicators on all levels with the requisite skill sets and knowledge bases to communicate equally well with all stakeholder groups, using all available media channels and so provide a more holistic approach to strategic communication practice, as also elaborated by Holtzhausen (2008).

From the afore-mentioned perspective, it is evident that, for strategic communication programmes and efforts to flourish both in the corporate world and in the government spectrum, stakeholder groupings must be segmented based on their information needs and ability to participate in reforms. For instance, the key stakeholder group for any government remains its immediate citizens – citizens become more important as a stakeholder group because of their ability to give public consent, and to legitimise organisational operations. Therefore, strategic communication messages and programmes must be tailored to represent the interests of citizens in the North-

West Province and ultimately to meet their expectations. Moreover, citizen's inputs should be factored into the planning and organisation of strategic communication programmes. This will not only empower citizens, but will equally encourage the Government to develop citizen-oriented programmes.

4.7.2 The atmosphere of strategic communication

The notion that communication can be controlled and regulated is now largely redundant. In fact, one of the most important emerging perspectives in strategic communication is the rejection of linearity in the communication process. It is indeed tempting to still teach and adhere to Shannon and Weaver's (1949) transmission model, which is simple and easy to grasp. It also still has a use in the sense that it reminds practitioners in particular to think about media used for a particular communication process, message construction, and target audiences (Boromisza-Habashi, 2013). As Bell, Golombisky and Holtzhausen (2002:5) argued, the transmission model only investigated "how we get information from here to there". While this remains a valid question, the more important one really is: "What happens to communication in that process and how is meaning shaped and co-created?"

While the transmission model focuses on how to get information from one point to another, constitutive communication focuses on the importance of communication to bring about actual change and action, as Dewey (1954) argued. From this perspective, the role of the strategic communicator is not to send information via the most effective channel, although that is an important starting point. More importantly, the role of the practitioner is to send information that can act as the point of departure for meaning creation between a communicative entity and its stakeholders, which can actually lead to social change and social action.

Indeed, an organisation has to act publicly (Hallahan, 2010). Instead of transmitting information, with the underlying assumption that one can control communication so transmitted, strategic communication increasingly focuses on the process of communication, which might take place over long periods of time, and stretch over time long after a message has been transmitted.

For all intents and purposes, both symbolic interactionism (Bauer, 1964; Blumer, 1969; Carey, 1989; Thayer, 1968) and postmodernism (through the extensive

writings of Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard) have deeply changed perspectives on the role of communication in organisations and society, and they both form the basis of today's communication theories. Collectively known as the constitutive model of communication, these theories represent "a dialogical-dialectical disciplinary matrix" (Craig, 1999:120) that represents seven different theoretical approaches to communication theory and, broadly speaking, focuses on how individual and shared meanings are shaped through the communication process itself.

It is therefore, without a doubt, that the process of communication is imperative for organisational performance and success. Communication simplifies even the most abstract phenomenon in organisations. It is also true that everybody has the ability to communicate; however, communication is more than mere talking or interacting with others. In a government context, communication should assume the catalytic role in order to harness structural problems, the managerial style of leadership, and citizenry communication.

In essence, deliberate and intentional communication has the potential to harmonise service delivery unrest in government and to quickly offer possible solutions. However, such communication must be considered as a strategic process to provide institutional hegemony and to bridge the information-deficit – in this way, communication promotes access to relevant and timely information for immediate action.

In essence, it is particularly important for communication strategists and managers to understand that all meaning is constructed through a communication process that often focuses on opposing arguments, through what Ermarth (2001:211) referred to as the "linguistic in between." Without communication there cannot be co-construction of meaning. For the strategic communicator this might occasionally be in a face-to-face context, but it mostly relates to communication through other channels.

With their focus on action, it is also important for strategic communicators to understand and utilise "mediatisation," which "is a concept used to analyse critically the interrelation between changes in media and communication on the one hand,

and changes in culture and society on the other" (Couldry & Hepp, 2013:191-197). Mediatisation goes beyond media effects:

Simply put, something is going on with media in our lives, and it is deep enough not to be reached simply by accumulating more and more specific studies that analyse this newspaper, describe how that program was produced, or trace how particular audiences make sense of that film on a particular occasion.

Couldry and Hepp (2013:196) argue that as social communicators, strategic communication practitioners and audiences use the media on a daily basis meaning here the media in their broadest sense include all forms of internet and electronic communication. In the past, strategic communication largely focused on mediatisation from an institutional perspective. In this perspective, the media are institutions that have to be understood through "media logic" – understanding how the media operate – and is the reason why politicians and other interest groups who wish to have access to the media hire communication practitioners to do this work for them (ibid). However, following the constitutive model of communication described above, it is important for communication practitioners to also be aware of how the media are and can be used to shape social and cultural realities.

From a theoretical perspective, it is the convergence of these two strong theoretical traditions in communication that sets strategic communication apart from other communication disciplines. Couldry and Hepp (2013:196) concede that the theoretical tradition forces academics and practitioners alike to consider both the constitutive nature of all communication and the role of the media in the strategic communication process. Thus, instead of only viewing the media as channels of communication, and audiences as the receivers of messages, strategic communicators need to consider how meaning is shaped in the interaction process involving stakeholders and the media practitioners, and how stakeholders interpret and recreate media content. Only then will strategic communicators truly understand how their practices impact the shaping of society and the bringing about of change (ibid.).

Vuori (2012) asserts that in defining strategic communication, it is important to underline its focus on how organisations transfer information among different

organisational endeavours and how an organisation functions as a social actor in order to reach its goals. When referring to strategic communication it can be mentioned that it recognises power and leadership as a fundamental purpose of organisational communication. The term strategic is associated with power and decision-making, implying all the management functions of communication practices and tactics (Hallahan, 2007).

In the main, it is imperative that the definition of strategic communication be traced from that of an informational resource, building persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication in order to achieve the organisational mission (Hallahan, 2007).

Rensburg and De Beer (2011) highlight that strategic management and strategic communication management theories support the argument that one of the main purposes of integrated internal communication should be to disseminate strategic information – obtained from internal and external stakeholders – to the dominant coalition and top management. Information on the legitimate expectations of stakeholders should be obtained by communicators through research and environmental scanning; contextualised from the perspective of the strategic intent of the organisation; and subsequently included in the development of its different strategies. Feedback should then be given to stakeholders through various communication channels, such as the web, brochures, events and specifically the integrated report, on how these expectations were addressed by the organisation.

4.8 GOVERNANCE: A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL

Governance issues have involved significant worldwide attention in dialogue, debate, and research in recent years. Globally, governance standards have been initiated through a thoughtful amalgam of the three available routes – legislation, regulation and self-discipline (Kendirli & Caglar, 2010). A world-class governance system is where values are as imperative as rules. Governance is an important part of strategic management that can improve organisational performance. However, despite its importance, many people are unclear about what governance is precisely.

Kendirli and Caglar (2010) write that all role-players should understand what governance is and the role that it plays in organisations. Being aware of what

governance entails will allow them (key role-players) to see how it affects their respective organisations and environment at large. Good governance methods necessitate vigorous participation of stakeholders in the direct and indirect management of the organisation through the arrangement of productive checks and balances among stakeholders and the management of organisations.

For the purpose the current study, viewing governance through the lens of a provincial sphere of government is often more complex than expected. The complexity comes as a result of managing the communication process among citizens with different ideological backgrounds. Administratively, Provincial Governments in South Africa are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that effective governance initiatives are collated and implemented to the best interests of citizens.

In doing so, consolidated governance initiatives can bring about checks and balances for efficient accountability and transparency. Different from management alone, governance is the combination of management, communication and interaction, and it means 'manage together'. Thus, the strategic management of communication becomes more important for the implementation and execution of governance initiatives.

Figure 4.2: Administration of governance in government
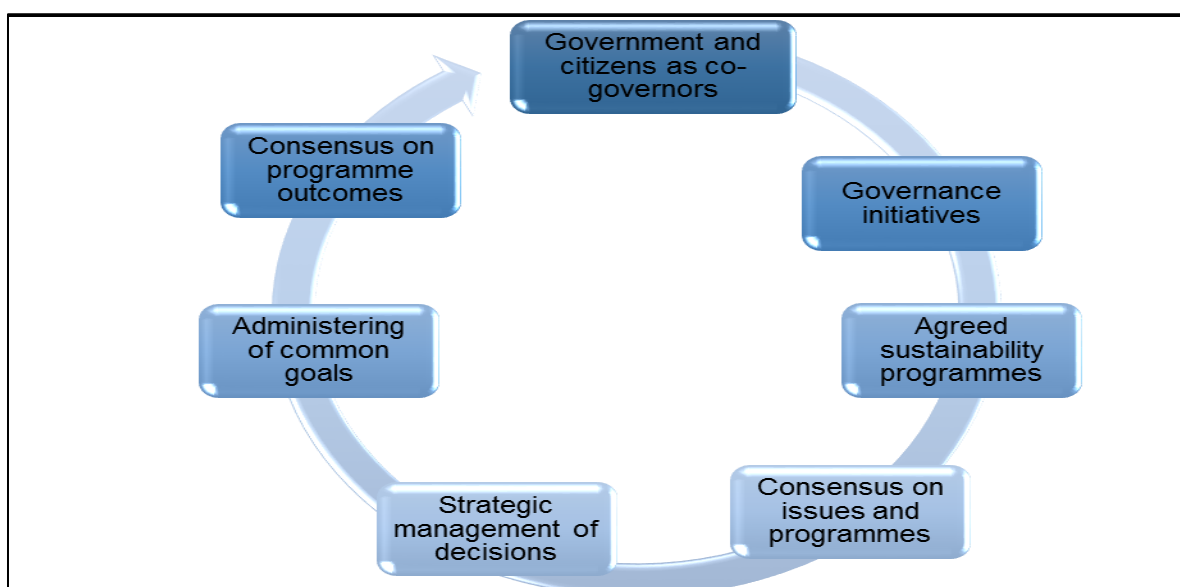
Source: Own conceptualisation.

To manage together, the people must have the same knowledge level and equal understanding of the shared value, goals and mission of various communicative programmes and governance. Kendirli and Caglar (2010) are of the view that governance is easier in institutions where the education level is high; however, it is also difficult in these institutions, since everybody wants to participate in management. Corporate governance is like a 'corporate constitution', which regulates how different partners are managed and controlled. Governance focuses on the stakeholders, common goals, and administration that will realise these goals, with a view of inclusivity in all spheres of interaction.

Figure 4.2 illustrates a strategic relationship of how governance should be administered between the government and citizens as co-governors. This strategic relationship can ensure that the strategic management of communication is evenly cascaded to relevant stakeholders through consensus. In essence, the co-governors collaborate to develop agreed-upon developmental programmes; these programmes require consensus to be reached as part of the strategic management of communication; involved parties would therefore strive to fulfil common goals based on dialogue, debates and renegotiations; the last aspect is to attain positive outcomes through measured objectives.

This approach would benefit both the government and citizens and more so, assist the parties to move towards stratified goals sharing and administration. The basic principle of governance is that the organisation's internal and external stakeholders benefit from an effective control system and can bring somebody to account. More generally, governance is related to the administration and control of the organisation, reporting and monitoring these activities for the favour of the stakeholders (Ozeren & Temizel, 2004:5, as cited in Kendirli & Caglar, 2010).

The concept of governance has seemingly attracted the attention of governments, business managers, accountants, auditors, investment managers and governance officials globally since the mid-1980s (Aras & Crowther, 2008:439). In her thesis, Meintjes (2012) re-affirmed that governance can be viewed as the body of principles and rules which guide and limit the action of executives. From this view, it is essential to consider that the said body of principles and rules must be adopted through consensus. Consensus allows parties involved to strive for similar outcomes

and benefits. It is through shared beliefs that governance initiatives can prosper and ultimately harness mutual relationships.

Governance is rarely considered from the point of view of compromise and the instability of rule, except where the interests of stakeholders and shareholders are concerned. In this regard, Bonnafous-Boucher, (2005:37) indicated that there is a hierarchical difference between stakeholders with direct rights and those with indirect rights. To improve their strategies, institutions must know that the governance principles are transparency, accountability, responsibility and fairness, which are all related to the organisations' corporate social responsibility (Aras & Crowther, 2008:441).

4.9 TRIPLE-CONTEXT DIMENSIONS TOWARDS RESPONSIVENESS

As a context to the current study, the triple-context dimensions simply refer to the social, economic and environmental factors that positively or negatively impact on the operations of an organisation. For this purpose, both Chapters Two and Three respectively indicated that the North-West Province has, through the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal strategy, developed five key concretes/programmes to serve as the triple bottom-line of government. Moreover, the identified five concretes/programmes are said to be aimed at accelerating socio-economic transformation, provincial economic growth, and an efficient governance system.

The Provincial Government's concretes (sustainability programmes) are therefore identified as the 5th administration's governance pillars by the North-West Province. However, it remains unclear how the concretes are communicated to citizens to ensure maximum participation and the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement in government programmes. It is equally unclear if the Provincial Government did consult with citizens in the development phase of these concretes. The main issue here is whether consensus was reached or not, and notably, whether governance standards compel governments to enter into dialogue with citizens, debate, negotiate and ultimately reach consensus on developmental programmes.

Consensus should be the corner-stone in the planning and execution of those sustainability programmes for governance initiatives to thrive. The term sustainability was conceptualised over time, and today includes three dimensions namely social,

economic and environmental (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010:343). These three dimensions stem from a concept, the triple-bottom line, which was coined in 1994 by Elkington (2006:523). Elkington argued that caring for the environment (planet), as well as contributing to the social dimension (people), should be added to the traditional bottom line (profit).

Aras and Crowther (2008:437) furthermore allude to the fact that four aspects of sustainability need to be recognised, namely:

o societal influence, which implies the impact that society has on the organisation in terms of a so-called social contract and stakeholder influence;

o environmental impact, which is the effect of the actions of the organisation on its environment;

o organisational culture, which is the relationship between the organisation and its internal stakeholders, i.e. employees; and

o finance, which is the adequate return for the level of risk taken.

Sustainability focuses on the future and is concerned with ensuring that the choices of future resource utilisation are not constrained by decisions taken in the present. As a consequence, the identified sustainability programmes in the North-West Province should render positive prospects on future generations, as a result of the decisions taken in the present. Likewise, these sustainability programmes should not compromise the future allocation of resources, nor constrain future citizenry participation and dialogue. This approach does not only have implications for society, but also for the organisation itself. Moreover, the creation of value within the organisation must be followed by the distribution of value to the stakeholders of that organisation (Aras & Crowther, 2008:439).

In essence, the North-West Provincial Government should ensure that its activities positively impact on the external environment, implying that the Provincial Government must become accountable to a wider citizenry spectrum than just political leaders based on affiliation. This approach is therefore referred to as the social performance of the Provincial Government as a member of society. Aras and Crowther (2008) posit that organisational social performance challenges the

traditional role of accounting in reporting results in that a wide stakeholder community should be recognised, rather than an ownership approach to accountability.

The need for a new social contract between an organisation and its stakeholders exists with sustainability at its core. Organisations that understand that an inter-relationship exists between sustainability and governance will ultimately be able to practice better governance standards (Aras & Crowther, 2008:435-444). In other words, governance is concerned with creating a balance between the economic and social goals of an organisation, including such aspects as the efficient use of resources, accountability in the use of its power, and the behaviour of the organisation in its social environment (Sethi, 2002:38).

For most organisations to prosper in any given situation, it becomes imperative for that organisation to align its social relations with its mission, goals and organisational values. Notably, government institutions exist as public citizenship organisations and further have a role to relate socially to the ever changing environment and its complexities – such relations can often be equated to rendering service delivery and social responsibility to citizens. For the purpose of this study and its nature, the focal point is on social responsibility as a tool that the North-West Provincial Government can adopt to engage citizens for social change and sustainability. Social responsibility in the context of government should be considered as part of the broader government's strategy, developed to render quality services to citizens and to socially integrate citizens into the government system of governance.

In the context of the current study, it is important for the North-West Provincial Government to position social responsibility as a governance activity. This activity should be based on the triple-context dimensions as part of the North-West Provincial Government's responsive strategy and the integration of sustainability programmes into governance initiatives. In doing so, it is prudent to ask: what aspects of social responsibility are considered efficient and legitimate for social change and inclusive citizenry engagement? Perhaps, the answer to this question requires the North-West Provincial Government to connect its sustainability programmes with the aspirations of citizens to have maximum impact on social, economic, and environmental factors.

Importantly, such would also assist the Provincial Government in creating value for citizens through inclusive governance initiatives. In the main, strategic communication is about value creation through sustainable communication activities and the overall strategy. The traditional focus of strategic management to position the organisation where it can leverage its resources to deliver superior economic value (perceived citizenry benefits) and sustainable social standards, is addressed in a complementary way by environmental and resource-based theories in contemporary literature.

Environmental based strategies focus on environmental characteristics and examine how best an organisation can configure its value chain to obtain reasonable improvements (Porter, 1985). Resource based theories address how organisations can perform activities within the value chain more efficiently utilising specific resources which must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). People participate in activities that guarantee higher benefits, which should fulfil a particular need. The North-West Province should, therefore, conduct activities that have positive economic outcomes that are socially acceptable to citizens.

Similarly, resources should be evenly distributed and aligned to the overall government's empowerment strategy. In essence, organisations adopting a resource-based approach begin the strategy process by identifying their core resources; and how they can be leveraged and developed to achieve the mission and differentiation strategies of the organisation. It is imperative for the North-West Province to co-develop a sustainable value creation strategy based on the premise of co-governance standards and to ultimately recognise governments' responsibility in directing and shaping societal perceptions.

4.10 INCLUSIVE VALUE CREATION THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

In a bid to demarcate the role of strategic communication for sustainability and governance, it becomes imperative to discuss strategic communication efforts in line with an inclusive value creation approach. In doing so, this study attempts to describe the importance of social, economic, and environmental dimensions with regard to the strategic management of communication; and with governance as the

corner-stone to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. Understanding the legitimacy of value-creation and the added contribution approach in a strategic context has long been attempted and contextualised in many corporate communication discourse (De Beer, 2014).

De Beer (2014:1) makes an important assertion about aligning communication opportunities for value creation. She highlights that communication can play a significant role in the value creation process of the organisation, considering the fact that the value of the assets produced by the organisation can increase and decrease depending on what the organisation says and does. Integrating the corporate communication process into the strategic management, governance and value creation processes therefore pose an opportunity for communication professionals to illustrate how communication can contribute to the creation of value for organisations, and as such be of benefit to the society. Introducing these communication approaches to value creation in the organisation requires a new responsible, integrative perspective on the role of corporate communication.

As a context, the North-West Province, through their identified five concretes, should be able to create value for citizens. The identified concretes serve as the North-West Provincial Government's developmental programmes to render social, economic and environmental services to citizens, as part of value creation. Social dimension issues include citizen's welfare in the broader government strategy, as echoed through the Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal policy thrust. Moreover, the North-West Provincial Government should be engaged in citizenry education for both self-development and economic growth.

An educated and informed citizenry would make informed decisions and co-govern with the Government to ensure sustainable development and inclusiveness in government programmes. To achieve this policy thrust, the Provincial Government has to create economic value through citizenry empowerment initiatives. Key resources also have to be unlocked to the benefit of citizens and relevant information has to be distributed to citizens for their economic action. Environmental sustainability is furthermore important for the North-West Province. Accordingly, all of these dimensions have to be integrated in the Provincial Government's governance strategy for maximum value creation as an organisational asset.

For value creation to be realised in the North-West Province, strategic communication should be advanced as an organisational asset or capital. In support of communication capital as an asset to enable organisational success and efficiency, De Beer (2014:17) advances that communication should also be regarded as an organisation-wide activity managed by communication professionals. This is an indication that for the strategic management of communication to create value for all parties concerned, communication requires proactive communicators, whom by nature are well conversant with the profession.

From this perspective, strategic communication can therefore create an atmosphere were citizens are empowered with information and education for their personal aspirations and economic growth. Additionally, strategic communication can mitigate challenging factors that lead to a lack of public participation in government activities, by being analytical and by providing strategic direction through directed strategies and co-ordinated dialogue – this process would be facilitated by communicative leadership.

In the main, organisations need to broaden their perspective on integration from an intra-organisational to a more holistic, integrative approach, initiating processes of organisational integration that merge stakeholders' voices into the development of corporate strategy. Implications involve the organisation's ability to listen to, self-reflect and co-develop with stakeholders as part of a responsible integrative approach to strategic communication management (Johansen & Andersen, 2012:284, as cited in De Beer, 2014).

In consequence, the King Report on Governance for South Africa, 2009 (2009:13) refers to the stakeholder inclusive approach to governance in addressing the same phenomenon of considering the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders other than shareholders. The board of directors considers these expectations in their strategic decision-making on the basis that it is in the best interest of the company, as a sustainable enterprise and responsible corporate citizen, to do so (De Beer, 2014:18).

It is evident from this perspective that an inclusive approach can be realised and maintained in government. However, the attainment of inclusive citizenry

engagement would require the North-West Provincial Government to prioritise and consider the legitimate interests and expectations of citizens. At the apex of government programmes and strategic thinking, citizenry needs should be identified as a contributing factor to inclusive engagements.

In support of strategic communication as a champion for governance initiatives Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2007:55, in Rensburg & De Beer, 2011) advance that the need for a proactive role by governments, business and civil society in development has motivated three interlinked business movements, namely: corporate social responsibility, corporate sustainability, and global reforms on corporate governance. Corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability involve the organisation's assessment and improvement of its economic, environmental and social impact to align it with stakeholder requirements using integrated reporting.

Corporate governance (legal responsibilities) provides the foundations upon which corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability practices can be built. This assertion is a clear indication that social responsibility and social sustainability can be positioned as precursors of involving citizens in the broader governance strategy. In doing so, both social responsibility and social sustainability can be regarded as key drivers of service delivery at the Provincial Government level and can further yield positive and fulfilling results if integrated in strategic communication efforts.

4.11 TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY APPROACH

The current study, among others, aimed to contextualise inclusive citizenry engagement as an extension concept of both stakeholder engagement and stakeholder inclusiveness. In doing so, this study advances that inclusive citizenry engagement in nature allows mutual ownership of the strategic communication process and principles – the concept creates an informed, active, and engaged citizenry. Moreover, inclusive participation and co-governance are therefore embedded into the inclusive citizenry engagement concept. In the main, the concept further promotes 'common good' as a societal objective and an outcome to be achieved. The fundamental principles that can be associated with inclusive citizenry

engagement are: inclusive transformation, empowerment, and citizenry-development, which are promoted through pragmatic and developmental programmes that enable citizens to take charge of their destination and sustainable future – this process warrants a co-governance approach.

Accordingly, the inclusive citizenry engagement concept highlights the importance of opportunity creation and challenges the existing ones through consensus building, which thus becomes imperative to societal objectives. Inclusive citizenry engagement basically promotes equal opportunities between government and the governed as a way to bring legitimacy and democratic control to foster strategic relationship management. The concept of inclusive citizenry engagement can be attained through strategic thinking that is aligned with strategic planning and co-governance among the Provincial Government and its citizens. Stakeholder engagement and the stakeholder inclusive approach relate to inclusive citizenry engagement, because they advocate for the fulfilment of stakeholders/citizens' legitimate interests.

Additionally, inclusive citizenry engagement, through strategic communication management, has the potential to deliver active and informed citizens. As a result, strategic communication can be viewed as an instrument to engage with citizens in order to identify, understand and address key concerns wherever possible. Earning the trust of the concerned communities is essential to continue to gain access to vital resources and to retain citizenship. Most importantly, inclusive citizenry engagement seeks to build trust through beneficial interactions among citizens/stakeholder groups, as part of a process aimed at understanding issues of material interest and responding to expectations.

Through communication as a strategic platform to attain collaborative governance with shared common-objectives, Figure 4.3 illustrates the role of inclusive citizenry engagement within the participation process – both the governor and the governed equally have a responsibility of ensuring that communication as a strategic instrument is continuously updated and reciprocal. Rensburg and De Beer (2011:152-3) indicate that the role of communication in information dissemination and conversation in organisations is changing in a triple-context (people, planet, and profit) environment.

Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes, according to the "stakeholder-inclusive approach to governance", has become important globally, but particularly in South Africa with the publishing of the King III and King IV Reports. In the main, following the traditional approach to integrated communication will not be sufficient in a new organisational context where governance and sustainability issues have become important in organisational decision-making.

In consequence, inclusive citizenry engagement should therefore be considered as a people-oriented approach in the manifestation of dialogue, debates and mutual discussions with actors and citizens concerned. The participation circle (Figure 4.3) stems out of the desire to identify and consolidate citizenry needs, interests, and expectations for efficient planning and directed strategic communication opportunities. Strategic communication in the main has the potential to create engagement platforms as a way to address citizenry material interests/concerns received. Analysis and recording of citizenry concerns is the building block of unlocking the potential of inclusivity within the premise of engagement. In this regard, the identified and consolidated concerns need to be prioritised and examined for potential opportunities and possible threats to both the organisation and its immediate environment.

Figure 4.3: Inclusive citizenry engagement circle of participation
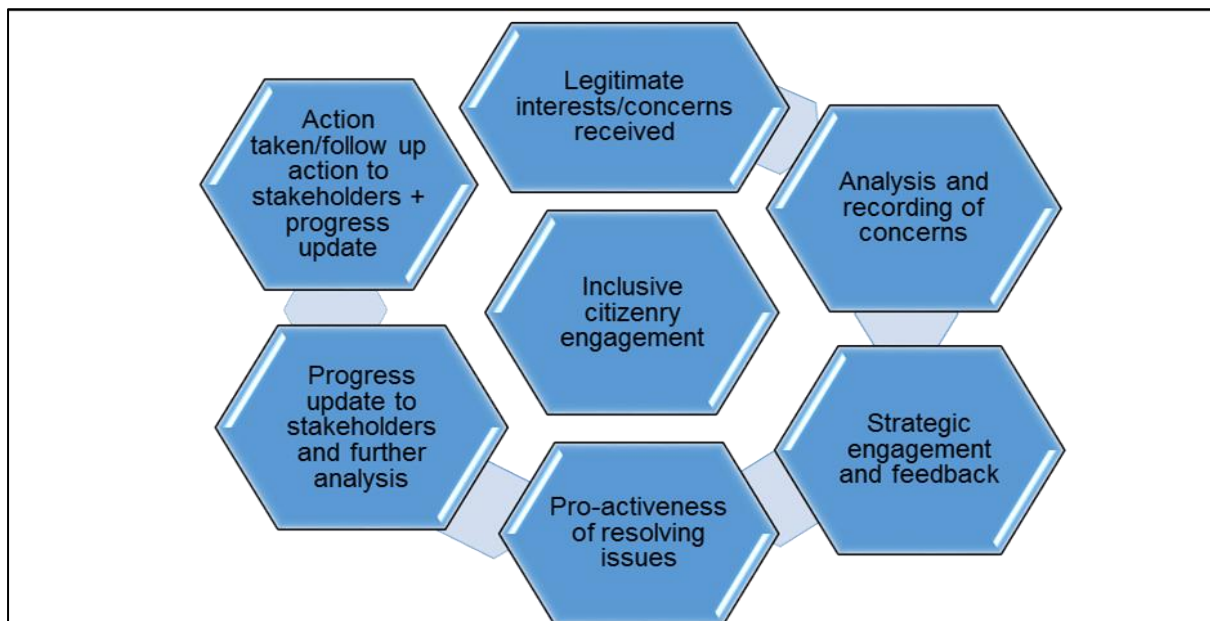
Source: Own conceptualisation.

In doing so, all parties concerned in the participation circle need to acknowledge and realise the imperative nature of strategic engagement as a process towards the realisation of inclusivity. Feedback from the strategic engagement and administration of analysed and recorded concerns must be prioritised and be regarded as a step towards inclusivity. It is often without a doubt that citizens participate only in self-empowering and rewarding programmes – such programmes should resemble affirmative results and moreover address material interests of those concerned.

In this way, addressing material concerns becomes the first step towards the process of engaging citizens, reaching consensus through common goals, and ultimately striving for inclusivity through effective strategic communication efforts. Another important element in the participation process is the ability to respond timely to citizenry concerns and to continously provide progress updates on unresolved issues.

In essence, the purpose of co-governance, strategic engagement and the provision of timely feedback in the participation process is to measure the level of citizenry involvement through a two-way symmetrical communication process towards inclusivity. Niemann-Struweg *et al.* (2007:160) explain that the two-way asymmetrical model focuses on scientific persuasion. This model uses a two-way communication system with the main source of the model being the receiver. It has an imbalanced effect, as feedback is not always received. This model is mainly used in competitive business agencies.

On the other hand, the two-way symmetrical model is based on the concept of mutual understanding, meaning that the receiver understands and analyses the message as the sender intended. This model is based on two-way communication that leads to a balanced effect. Feedback forms the basis of this model. Therefore, feedback is equally important in the participation process as a way to attain mutual understanding and shared objectives.

For inclusivity to thrive, the participation circle must be dialogic in nature, meaning that equal opportunities must be created and presented to all parties with legitimate interests or material concerns – prompt two-way feedback should enable added-value creation through deliberate strategic communication programmes. Moreover,

strategic communication programmes should enhance governance initiatives and become the driving indicator towards inclusivity in the implementation and communication of sustainability programmes. All actors in the participation circle need to be pro-active in resolving issues that are of concern and immediate.

On the other hand, reactiveness would simply drive citizens in particular away from the collaborative participation initiatives, which would be the first step towards disempowerment and disengagement. Pro-activeness in resolving issues in this context implies that necessary measures to understand, prioritise, compromise where possible, and finally to address material concerns of citizens need to be categorised as imperative and included in the dominant coalition of decision-making, as part of the organisational communication strategy.

Positive influence in resolving issues will thus lead to continuous progress updates to stakeholders. This process cultivates into further analysis of the concerns in the environment. Importantly, communication professionals should be regarded as key advocates for the implementation of strategic communication plans and programmes in the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement. But first, those professionals should understand both traditional and contemporary roles as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Traditional and contemporary roles of communication professionals

TRADITIONAL ROLES	CONTEMPORARY ROLES
The *expert prescriber* role is identified as the role played by informed professionals who are regarded as experts in communication management; best informed about communication management issues; and best qualified to answer communication management questions (Dozier, 1992:329). Furthermore, Steyn and Puth (2000:15) assert that the professional defines communication problems, develops programmes and takes responsibility for implementing programmes, but plays a passive role in management involvement.	The role of the *strategist,* or the most senior communication professional in the strategic management process, is to identify the organisation's strategic stakeholders and issues and to feed this information into the organisation's strategic formulation processes, suggesting the appropriate organisational response. It also involves managing environmental turbulence by developing and maintaining excellent relationships with strategic stakeholders and developing communication programmes to address key strategic issues and stakeholders (Steyn, 2007:141).
The *communication facilitator's* role concerns process, the quality and quantity of information flow between management and publics, and serves as interpreter for the organisation (Dozier, 1992:330). In this role, professionals are sensitive listeners who share information and provide a link in relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:15).	The *manager* role involves using formal and informal research, and participating in management decision-making. They also make communication policy decisions and are involved in all communication decision-making. They counsel management and are held accountable for communication programme outcomes. The manager facilitates communication between management and publics and solves problems within stakeholder relationships (Steyn, 2007:141).
The *problem-solving process facilitator* is a	The contemporary *technician* role as referred to by

professional who helps others in the organisation to solve their communication management problems and works with top management in defining and solving communication problems (Steyn & Puth, 2000:15).	Steyn and Puth (2000:21) is the same as the traditional technician role (see, *Communication technician*).
The *communication technician* does not participate in management decision-making, but carries out the mechanics of generating communication products that implement the policy decisions made by others. They provide the communication and journalistic skills but do not conduct research to plan or evaluate work (Steyn & Puth, 2000:15).	

Source: Adapted from Meintjes (2012).

In the participation circle, action taken, or follow-up action to stakeholders/citizens, is often the determinant of inclusivity and citizenry engagement – it is through this stage that inclusive citizenry engagement can be realised, measured and further supported through governance initiatives. In consequence, strategic communication efforts need to deliver positive end-results to the participation circle for parties to benefit and continue with engagements through vigorous progress updates and further analysis.

A popular view is that for inclusive citizenry engagement to be recognised and strategically co-ordinated, it is necessary to view citizens as the lifeblood of government's success and the overall performance. Therefore, realising the contribution and significance of citizens starts with understanding their purpose and role in governance. The integrative approach to citizens cannot only aid government programmes positively, but can equally present an opportunity where consensus can be achieved.

Inclusive citizenry engagement is dialogue based and requires all parties involved to share a common vision. The outcomes of attaining inclusive citizenry engagement should be the results of strategic communication efforts and collaborative governance initiatives. Interactions and discourse with citizens should be the responsibility of government officials at all levels, and not simply the focus of a specialist department such as communication management. However, the specialist department should develop strategic communication guidelines aligned to the overall governance strategy.

Those guidelines should be clear and precise in determining how the government, together with citizens, should plan for mutual relations; who should be responsible for what; what structures and processes are required; which priorities to focus on; and finally, how should the output, or perhaps rather outcome, be measured. This approach to strategic communication can effectively contribute to the delivery of inclusive citizenry engagement at Provincial Government level.

4.12 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study's research question emanates from literature chapters three and four and serve as the linkages between relevant interdisciplinary approaches adopted. Given the need for an interpretive framework to understand how inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved through strategic communication management in the North-West Province, the following primary research question is posed.

Primary research question: How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of strategic communication management for governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province?

Secondary research questions:

1. How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory perspective?

2. How can strategic communication management for sustainability programmes support inclusive citizenry engagement?

3. How can strategic communication management for governance initiatives support inclusive citizenry engagement?

To achieve this, the study adopted a qualitative approach with various techniques and methods.

4.13 CONCLUSION

By nature, strategic communication involves the inclusion of informational, influential, and conversational, as well as relationship communication. Strategic communication integrates various organisational efforts, such as management communication, marketing communication, public relations and political communication in an attempt to obtain collaboration and participation at all levels of the organisation and with recognised stakeholders (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010:391). This Chapter was devoted to the exploration of strategic communication management for governance and sustainability.

In achieving this, the imperatives and complexities of how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives, and the nexus of effective communication for sustainability programmes, were discussed. As a point of departure, governance was conceptualised in the African context – historical accounts of governance in Africa and the political system is also documented in this Chapter, in order to ultimately conceptualise governance in the context of South Africa, in particular at the Provincial Government level.

The linkage between communication management in its strategic approach and process towards good governance was also indicated. Additionally, techniques and applicable methods of strategic management were explored to understand the function of SCM in the government context and equally as a strategic management function. Through the realisation and implementation of SCM programmes, the reviewed literature acknowledges that strategic communication management assists the organisation to adapt to its environment by achieving a balance between governance imperatives and socially acceptable behaviour, identifying and managing stakeholders and issues through communication with those stakeholders.

Against the afore-mentioned, strategic communication is based mainly on the communication management approach to strategic management. In this approach, the organisation is viewed as a socio-economic system, where stakeholders are recognised as partners who create value through collaborative problem solving, as also indicated by Meintjes (2012). This strategic perspective is no different when practised in the government context – citizens should be considered here as equal partners in the administration of government. In this way, an organisation (whether

governmental or non-governmental) is able to integrate its resources; and gain political support and knowledge that each stakeholder offers, as this provides a competitive advantage to the organisation and leads to inclusivity.

In consequence, the strategic management of communication becomes an asset and organisational resource as it provides focus and direction for an organisation's communication in building relationships with strategic stakeholders. It further considers the internal and external environment of the organisation. It is a proactive endeavour and competency to adapt the organisation to changes in stakeholder needs, interests, expectations and opinions and can create a competitive advantage for an organisation through the detection and management of issues. It aligns communication goals to the organisational goals and mission as postulated by Steyn (2003:179-180).

Importantly, this Chapter also highlighted that although communication is cohesive and coherent; it often leads to confusion, when not strategically applied. The main reason behind such confusion is the lack of integrative communication efforts to achieve value creation. Value creation in this context should be the result of a harmonious relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders – through corporate citizenship. Communication needs to be managed and organised strategically to provide communal value – this in particular, should be executed by skilled and trained communication professionals for better results and inclusive participation at all government institutional levels.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One, an orientation of the research was provided. This study focuses on how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective. In doing so, the needs, interests and expectations of citizens are examined, in accordance with the aim to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. As a result of the problem statement referred to in Chapter One, the all-encompassing purpose of this study is to develop a strategic communication management framework to assist the North-West Provincial Government in addressing citizens' needs, interests and expectations.

It is essential to analyse the existing knowledge, as a background to the current study. In this way, the researcher endeavours to generate new knowledge, which could make the strategic management of citizens' concerns and expectations more purposeful, efficient and sustainable. Consequently, this Chapter strives to operationalise the theme of the research design and methodology in the current study, as well as to substantiate the choices made in the study.

The research design guided the identification of suitable research methods to ensure the attainment of the goals and intentions as set out in Chapter One. The research design acts as a plan or blueprint for the research. Moreover, this qualifies the researcher to ensure the validity of the final results. However, firstly, it is important to consider a theoretical perspective/paradigm for the research design.

5.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In qualitative research, at times, there is a fundamental challenge of relating to and understanding the role and importance of theory in research, from the researcher's view-point. As a consequence, the concept of theory necessitates some clarification to broaden and enhance one's understanding. In this regard, Verma and Malick

(1999:6), as well as Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2011:36) are of the opinion that the main role of theory is to help to guide the researcher.

In the social sciences, it usually implies a set of statements describing and explaining the relationship between human behaviour and the factors that affect or explain it. In the view of Best and Khan (2006:10), a theory could best be described as an attempt to develop a general explanation for some phenomenon. More specifically, a theory, according to these authors, defines non-observable constructs that are inferred from observable facts and events, and are thought to have an effect on the phenomenon under study.

From this perspective, one could simply come to the conclusion that a theory is primarily concerned with providing clarification; and that it therefore focuses on determining cause-and-effect relationships. It further implies that a theory describes the relationship among key variables for explaining a current state or predicting future concurrences.

A theory is thus an essential tool of research for stimulating the advancement of knowledge (Inglis & Maclean, 2005:17; Kawulich, 2009:37). Theory should, consequently, drive the research process and should provide a framework for action and for understanding. The view of authors and researchers on the topic can provide the impetus, and endorse the view and rationale for a discussion of the research design and methodology in this Chapter.

Apart from a proper understanding of the concept of theory, the researcher also requires an understanding and knowledge of the related research philosophies that underpin the different principles of the research. In this study, the research philosophy that underpins the study is reflected in principles of a research paradigm suitable for the study.

On the whole, a theoretical perspective helps the researcher to summarise any previous information and to guide the future course of action. Simultaneously, the formulation of a theory may indicate missing ideas or links and the additional data required to fully understand how concepts are connected, and to establish sets of propositions or generalisations (Henning *et al.*, 2004:14). From this perspective, interpretivism is situated as the research paradigm of the current study.

5.2.1 Research paradigm

The current study espouses an interpretivist paradigm. Reeves and Hedberg (2003:32) are of the opinion that the "interpretivist" paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context. The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. As a perspective of the current study, the interpretivist approach in context is viewed as the use of theory as a guide between the design and collection of data. As a consequence, the interest of interpretivists is not the generation of a new theory, but to judge or evaluate, and refine interpretive theories.

Furthermore, Chapter Three synthesised a meta-theoretical approach which at helm evaluated various complementary theories that guide this study from an interpretivist perspective. Walsham (1995b) presents three different uses of theory in interpretive studies: theory guiding the design and collection of data; theory as an iterative process of data collection and analysis; and theory as an outcome of a case study.

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) interpretivism is not a single paradigm; it is in fact a large family of diverse paradigms. The philosophical base of interpretive research is hermeneutics and phenomenology (Boland, 1985). Hermeneutics is a major branch of interpretive philosophy with Gadamer and Ricoeur arguably being its most well-known exponents (Klein and Myers, 1999) – it emerged in the late nineteenth century (Kaboob, 2001). Hermeneutics can be treated as both an underlying philosophy and a specific mode of analysis (Bleicher, 1980). As a philosophical approach to human understanding, hermeneutics provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism. It attempts to understand human beings in a social context. This principle is foundational to all interpretive work that is hermeneutic in nature and includes all verbal and non-verbal forms of communication.

The phenomenological approach to interpretivism, on the other hand, focuses on discovering and expressing essential characteristics of certain phenomena as they really are. Literally, phenomenology is the study of 'phenomena' – appearances of things (or things as they appear in our experience), or the ways we experience things, (thus the meanings things have in our experience) (Stanford Encyclopedia,

2011). Subsequently, it is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Creswell (1998:51) contends that a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences of several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon. In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering "deep" information and perceptions through inductive qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observation, representing the information and perceptions from the perspective of the research participants (Lester, 1999). Observation and interviews are the key data collection methods within phenomenology (Aspers, 2004).

From this perspective, both the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches strengthen the interpretivism paradigm and compliment the intention and goal of this study. Table 5.1 displays the characteristics of interpretivism, as used in this study, categorised into the purpose of the research, the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired-into (epistemology) and the methodology used (Cantrell, 2001).

Table 5.1: Characteristics of interpretivist paradigm

Feature	Description
Ontology	- There are multiple realities. - Reality can be explored and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions. - Discover how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. These writings could be in the form of text and visual pictures. - Many social realities exist due to varying human experience, including people's knowledge, views and interpretations.

Epistemology	➢ Events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that are influenced by interaction with social contexts.
	➢ Those active in the research process, socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings.
	➢ Inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing.
	➢ More personal, interactive mode of data collection.
Methodology	➢ Data collected by text messages, interviews, and reflective sessions;
	➢ Research is a product of the values of the researcher.

Source: Summary of existing literature.

Consequently, the key words pertaining to this methodology are: participation, collaboration and engagement (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In the interpretive approach the researcher does not stand above or outside, but is a participant observer who engages in the activities and discerns the meanings of actions as they are expressed within specific social contexts.

5.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Myers (2009) asserts that research methodology is a strategy of enquiry, which moves from underlying assumptions, to research design, and data collection. Although there are other distinctions in the research modes, the most common classification of research methods is into qualitative and quantitative. At one level, qualitative and quantitative refer to distinctions about the nature of knowledge: how one understands the world and the ultimate purpose of the research. On another level of discourse, the terms refer to research methods, that is, the way in which data are collected and analysed, and the type of generalisations and representations derived from the data.

It is necessary to explain what each research method entails, since research aims can lend themselves to either one or both of these paradigms – that is, qualitative or quantitative research. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2006:8-9) provide an explanation of these paradigms by contrasting their nature and purpose as follows:

> The purpose of quantitative research is to evaluate objective data consisting of numbers, using complex structured methods to confirm or disprove hypotheses. These methods, furthermore, focus on the abstraction of reality, rather than on everyday life, by seeking a science based on probabilities derived from the study of large numbers of randomly selected cases.

Quantitative research methodology relies upon the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables, rather than involving the investigation of processes. The method focuses more on reliability and stability in the measurement of data to ensure that this can become replicable. In contrast to the above, Padgett (2004:3) states that a qualitative paradigm offers an approach that is both complementary to, and transcendent of, conventional scientific inquiry. Its central tenets of flexibility, exploration and captivation situate the qualitative researcher in a position away from the blind pursuit of answers, toward thinking about questions, in contrast to the quantitative researcher. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2006:8-9) provide the following explanation:

> Qualitative research methodology deals with subjective data, generated by the minds of participants or interviewees. Data are presented in language, rather than numbers, and as such the researcher attempts to understand the meaning that participants attach to their situation.

Neither of these methods is intrinsically better than the other; the suitability of which needs to be decided by the context, purpose and nature of the research study in question. In fact, sometimes one can be an alternative to the other, depending on the kind of study. For the purpose of the current study, the qualitative research approach is espoused; this is because of its rigour to rely on participants' experiences, perceptions and their social context – world of reality.

Morse (2002:96) denotes that research methodology constitutes a systematic way and a set of methods used for collecting and analysing research data. Methodology includes the following as they relate to a particular discipline or field of study: a collection of theories, concepts or ideas; a comparative study of different approaches; and critique of the individual methods (Creswell, 2003:37). In summary, methodology refers to the rationale and the philosophical assumptions that underlie a particular study relative to the method used. Based on the foregoing facts,

methodology can refer to the theoretical analysis of the ways of investigation appropriate to a field of study or to the body of inquiry. These are underpinned by the principles particular to a branch of knowledge. This enables the researcher to choose the most suitable design and method to produce valid and reliable data.

In the view of Mouton (1996:39-40), the choice of methodology depends on the research problem and research objectives. The author distinguishes between three levels of the methodological dimension of research. Firstly, methodological paradigms, the most abstract level, which includes the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Secondly, research methods, which are those that are used in certain stages of the research process, for instance sampling, data collection and data analysis.

Thirdly, research techniques represent the most concrete level of the methodological dimension and include specific techniques related to sampling, data collection and data analysis, as Mouton (1996:39-40) positioned. The distinction between paradigms, methods and techniques is helpful in forming a better understanding of the concept of the research methodology of this study. According to Leedy (1993:91), methodology is an operational framework within which the facts are placed so that their meaning may be seen more clearly. In essence, research methodology is the means for the collection of data needed for a study.

This research involves various domains of enquiry, namely, the processing of empirical evidence that is obtained from the research participants with a view of reaching conclusions about the research problem and research questions. It also involves the theoretical analysis of how the strategic management function of communication can support participatory communication. This implies that participatory action is recursive or dialectical and is focused on bringing about change in practices. Thus, at the end of this study, the researcher will attempt to advance an action agenda for change through the development of a strategic communication framework.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

As a context, this study, with its qualitative engagement, seeks to obtain both retrospective and real-time accounts from those people (participants) experiencing

the phenomenon of theoretical interest. The research approach of this study is premised from Crotty's (1998) groundwork of establishing ideas, therefore the author's framework of elements of inquiry is espoused. According to Domegan and Fleming (2007:24) qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem at hand, because very little is known about the problem. There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of the problem. It uses 'soft' data and gets 'rich' data. According to Myers (2009) qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Such studies allow the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented (see also, Pandey & Pandey, 2015; Yin, 2014, 2011; Griffee, 2012).

In this study, qualitative research is primarily viewed as exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations regarding the phenomenon. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas. Subsequently, qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and to dive deeper into the problem in the current study.

Figure 5.1: Knowledge Claims: Strategies of Inquiry and Methods

Source: Crotty, 1998 as cited in Creswell (2003).

5.4.1 Exploratory

This study has an exploratory purpose because much needs to be explored on the existing literature on the topic. Exploratory studies aim to clarify and improve the understanding of a problem (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:133). As illustrated in the previous Chapters, there is relatively rich literature on the topic of strategic management of communication and its contribution to various domains. Therefore, it is important to explore how the literature would connect with the empirical evidence as envisaged from the study's participants. An exploratory study is the best way to understand participants' experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation and to develop the necessary background for future investigations of this topic.

One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality, which enable the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

5.4.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting. Qualitative research furthermore involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

These methodologies also consist of the philosophical perspectives, assumptions, postulates, and approaches that researchers employ to choose their research methods and to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation. In this respect, qualitative methodologies refer to research approaches as the tools with which researchers design their studies, and collect and analyse their data (Given, 2008). Qualitative methodologies are not a single research approach, but different epistemological perspectives – pluralism have created a range of "approaches" such as grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, action research, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study, because it is appropriate for both the research questions and the conceptual framework adopted. In this regard, qualitative research seeks to understand the complex nature of phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94-95). In its simplest form, it uses words, images or anything non-numerical as its sources of data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5, 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:470). However, the approach is much more complex than this description suggests. Qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis (Brick, 2007).

Qualitative research methodology is effective in obtaining specific information about values, opinions and behaviour in the social context of the population under study (Du Plooy, 2009). This method aims to answer questions about the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon, rather than the 'how many' or 'how much', which is answered by quantitative methods (Bricks, 2007). If the aim is to understand how a community, or individuals within it, perceive a particular issue, then qualitative methods are often appropriate. As a consequence, this study endeavours to understand how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes – this largely depends on participant's experiences and knowledge.

Neuman (2011) propounds the importance of context in qualitative studies. The author argues that qualitative studies should emphasise social context, because meaning of social action, event or statement greatly depends on the context in which it appears. "If the social context is stripped from an event, social action, or conversation, the social significance of context thereof could be changed" (Neuman, 2011:175). Social context include time (when something occurs), spatial context (where something occurs) and socio-cultural context (the social situation and cultural milieu in which something occurs). Without including the surrounding context, meaning cannot be assigned to an object/project as Neuman (2011) argued.

5.4.3 Characteristics of qualitative research

Four characteristics of qualitative research make it a particularly appropriate approach for this study: (1) naturalism, (2) the insider perspective, (3) the level of

detail and (4) flexibility. Naturalism refers to the fact that qualitative research techniques are better situated than quantitative research to examine phenomena in their natural environments (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). Unlike the quantitative techniques, which often try to isolate variables from their environments, qualitative research seeks to understand events and phenomena as they naturally occur (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:6). In this sense, qualitative research allows the researcher to obtain some form of direct experience of the phenomenon (Trochim, 2006). As a result, qualitative techniques are often embraced by interpretive, critical and postmodern scholars (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:163) because of the importance placed on context.

In addition to fitting the worldview of this study, naturalism is particularly relevant to the study's topic as well. Essentially, strategic communication management is a phenomenon that is firmly embedded within its environment. Secondly, since the purpose of the study is exploratory, the goal is to understand how strategic communication is applied in context and how it is 'naturally' occurring, and not to test any interventions or specific variables.

Another characteristic of the qualitative approach, which makes it ideal for a study with a dialogic approach and social constructivist worldview, is its emphasis on the insider perspective. The insider perspective refers to the qualitative researcher's desire to view and understand the world through the eyes of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:6). In this study, it means that the researcher can investigate how those who actually manage strategic communication efforts, see it work.

This characteristic places the focus on the perspectives of the participants and not on the researcher. In particular, qualitative research fits the ontological assumptions of this study, that reality is socially constructed based on each individual's perspective (Trochim, 2006). As a direct result of its naturalism and insider perspective, this kind of research is able to provide a higher degree of detail about the research phenomenon within its context, than quantitative research.

Qualitative research thus enables the researcher to describe the research phenomenon in greater detail (Trochim, 2006). It allows for the development of a

fuller description of the subject than depending solely on quantifiable elements (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:472). In the main, the goal of this study is to explore the characteristics of the research problem, and to find a solution. Achieving a high level of detail is a necessary condition for the success of the research.

Finally, qualitative research tends to be more flexible than quantitative research. It allows the researcher to be flexible in the inquiry, in each particular context (Trochim, 2006). As such, it is appropriate for an exploratory study, such as this one, because it allows the research to explore new avenues of research, should they arise and prove to be relevant. In addition, the qualitative approach is mindful of the role of the researcher in research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5, 2011) and is therefore in line with the value-conscious axiological position of this study.

5.4.4 Advantages of qualitative research

In order to satisfy the aim of the study, a qualitative research approach was followed. The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable (see Table 5.2). Its basic advantage, which also constitutes its basic difference from quantitative research, is that it offers a complete description and analysis of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of the participants' responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

However, the effectiveness of qualitative research is heavily based on the skills and abilities of the researchers. The outcomes may in some instances not be perceived as reliable, because they mostly depend on the researcher's personal judgments and interpretations. Because it is more appropriate for small samples, it is also risky for the results of qualitative research to be perceived as reflecting the opinions of a wider population (Bell, 2005).

According to Babbie (2001), qualitative approaches have the advantages of flexibility, in-depth analysis, and the potential to observe a variety of aspects of a social situation. A qualitative researcher conducting a face-to-face interview can quickly adjust the interview schedule if the interviewee's responses suggest the need for additional probes or lines of inquiry in future interviews. During the course of an interview, the researcher is able to note changes in bodily expression, mood, voice

intonation, and environmental factors that might influence the interviewee's responses.

To this end, such observational data can be of particular value when a participant's body language runs counter to the verbal response given to an interview question. These advantages fit well with the exploratory nature of this study. The qualitative approach in this study becomes imperative because of its strength in uncovering more about participants' experience (why things may be the way they are) about the research topic. In essence, the flexibility aspect of the qualitative approach assists this study to gain deeper insights and to offer the researcher an opportunity to have solid relationships with the participants of the study.

One of the fundamental advantages of qualitative research is a strategy for going beneath the surface. It yields a holistic overview of participants' behaviour, which provides insights into emotions and motivations. Most importantly, the achievement of understanding happens in real time through a personal confrontation with participants. Insights are not channelled through graphs and statistical tables, but evolve as the researcher is confronting actual participants.

Table 5.2: Qualitative research

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	
The aim is a complete, detailed description.	*Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for.*
Recommended during earlier phases of research projects.	*The design emerges as the study unfolds.*
Researcher is the data gathering instrument.	*Data are in the form of words, pictures or objects.*
Subjective – individuals' interpretation of events is important e.g., uses participant observation, in-depth interviews etc.	*Qualitative data are more 'rich', time consuming, and less able to be generalised.*
Researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.	

Source: Adapted from Miles & Huberman (1994:40).

5.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design can be thought of as the *logic* or *master plan* of a research project that throws light on how the study is to be conducted. It shows how all of the major parts of the research study – the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programmes, work together in an attempt to address the research questions. According to Mouton (1996:175) the research design serves to "plan, structure and execute" the research to maximise the "validity of the findings". It gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to the data collection.

Yin (2003:19, 2011, 2014) adds that "colloquially a research design is an action plan for getting from *here* to *there*, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and 'there' is some set of (conclusions) answers". Therefore, the research design is similar to an architectural outline, which organises and integrates results in a particular way, resulting in an appropriate end product. From this perspective, the research design can be seen as the actualisation of a logic in a set of procedures that optimises the validity of data for a given research problem.

Mouton (2001:56) postulates that there are differences between the research design and methodology that any researcher must understand and recognise. Research design focuses on the end product, i.e. what kind of study is being planned and what kind of result is aimed for. Research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. For many decades, knowledge has been constructed to provide an understanding of what a research design entails. The logical deduction points out that a design is primarily focused or concerned with the action plan. For the purpose of this study, a design is a plan that guides a researcher to execute the initial intent of conducting a research study.

In the view of Patton (2002:15, 2015), the research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. The author further indicates that a design is used to structure the research – to show how all the major parts of the research project, the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programmes, and methods of assignment work together to address the central research questions. In corroboration with Patton's viewpoint, Holliday (2007:123) explains that

understanding the relationships between designs is important in making design choices suitable for particular research work, taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of different designs. Indeed, the choice of research design is imperative for successful execution, thus this study adopted an exploratory design.

Zikmund (2000:57) is of the opinion that researchers conducting exploratory studies should select one or more exploratory research technique. There are different categories of techniques available to obtain clarity and insight into the question at hand. This exploratory study includes an examination through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations.

The current research is therefore based on gathering empirical evidence through interviews. Face-to-face interviews, group interviews and observation of various participants' characteristics and behaviour are used to obtain in-depth feedback. Therefore, the research design in the context of this study remains a plan of how the research proceeds (see Table 5.3). An overview of how the study is carried out includes population and sampling, data collection methods, as well as data analysis techniques.

In support of this perspective, Burns and Grove (2001:223) posit that it is the blueprint for conducting the study that maximises control over factors that could interfere with the validity of the findings. Designing a study helps the researcher to plan and implement the study in a way that assists in obtaining intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining information that could be associated with the real situation.

Table 5.3: Distinction between qualitative design and quantitative design

	QUALITATIVE	**QUANTITATIVE**
Conceptual	Concerned with understanding human behaviour from informant's perspective Assumes a dynamic and negotiated reality	Concerned with discovering facts from social phenomena Assumes a fixed and measurable reality
Methodological	Data are collected through interviews and participant	Data are collected through measuring things

	observation	Data are analysed through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences
	Data are analysed by themes from descriptions by informants	
	Data are reported in the language of the informant	Data are reported through statistical analyses

Source: Adapted from Minichiello *et al.* (1990:5).

Given the interpretive position adopted in this research and the nature of the research questions, the qualitative methodology is considered to be the most appropriate approach to employ because it provides a systematic way to collect data, analyse information, and report the results, in order to understand a particular problem or situation in great depth. More unambiguously, it:

a) provides a variety of participant perspectives;

b) uses various data collection techniques; and

c) examines the strategic management of communication in aiding governance initiatives and sustainability programmes from a participatory perspective.

5.5.1 Population of the study

The identification of a precise population is imperative for this study because it leads to the correct selection of the sample size and procedure. A population is a cohort of people or subjects, where a sample class is selected based on the nature and direction of a research study. Accordingly, a population becomes important in obtaining a concise sample employing various sampling techniques beneficial to the goal of the research study. Polit and Hungler (1999:37) refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications (see Asimah *et al.*, 2017; Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the population of interest is the people of the North-West Province – which lead to the selection of two groups, namely: Provincial Government officials (Group A) and ordinary citizens (Group B). For the selection of Provincial Government officials, the purposive sampling method has been engaged; while for the selection of ordinary citizens' non-probability convenience sampling has been adopted.

The North-West Province is demarcated in four regions/districts, namely: Ngaka Modiri Molema, Dr. Ruth Mompati, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, and Bojanala district. Within the four districts of the Province, local municipalities serve as areas of occupancy for the population:

Table 5.4: 18 Municipalities in four districts of the North-West Province

BOJANALA PLATINUM DISTRICT	NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT
- Moretele - Madibeng - Rustenburg - Kgetlengrivier - Moses Kotane	- Mahikeng - Ditsobotla - Ramotshere - Ratlou - Tswaing
DR RUTH SEGOMOTSI MOMPATI DISTRICT	**DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT**
- Naledi - Mamusa - Greater Taung - Kagisano-Molopo - Lekwa-Teemane	- J.B Marks - Matlosana - Marquise hills

5.5.2 Sampling size and sampling procedure

As noted by Sandelowski (1995:179), "a common misconception about sampling in qualitative research is that numbers are unimportant in ensuring the adequacy of a sampling strategy". The process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population is known as sampling (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998:250; Polit & Hungler, 1999:95). Qualitative sampling is done for conceptual and theoretical reasons, not to represent a larger universe. The complex nature of this study informs that the sample size be determined at different levels. Purposive and non-probability convenience sampling are used in this study.

The reason for purposive sampling is that at some levels there is a need for deeper insights through a qualitative collection of data collected from semi-structured interviews from a portion of the population. These participants are purposively selected on the basis that they can provide information that is key to the study and

are in positions of power. An example of such population sampling includes: the Premier of the North-West Province, Director-General, three Deputy Director-Generals, and eleven Heads of Departments in the Province.

Patton (2015, 1990:15) states that a sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. When dealing with people, it can be defined as a set of participants selected from a larger population for the purpose of a study (Salkind, 2001:15). The purpose of sampling is to select a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population, for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Kotler, Adam, Brown & Armstrong, 2006:17). Sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, one may fairly understand a particular phenomenon of interest. Table 5.5 below clearly categorises the sample size and method that has been used in this study:

Table 5.5: Sampling size and techniques

GROUP LEVEL	STATUS	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLING TECHNIQUE
A	Participants in the Provincial Government (officials)	20 officials	Purposive sampling technique
B	Participants from Bojanala district (ordinary citizens)	20 participants from the district	Convenience sampling technique
	Participants from Ngaka Modiri Molema district (ordinary citizens)	20 participants from the district	Convenience sampling technique
	Participants from Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district (ordinary citizens)	20 participants from the district	Convenience sampling technique
	Participants from Dr Kenneth Kaunda district (ordinary citizens)	20 participants from the district	Convenience sampling technique

Source: Own conceptualisation.

Both purposive sampling and non-probability sampling have been employed. Purposive sampling includes participants (Group A), selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to gather
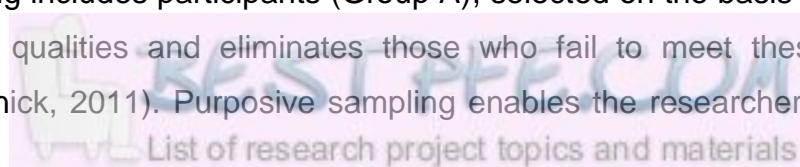
relevant data from the small sample of the study, thus allowing every participant to relate experiences and knowledge about the research topic in order to contribute to the overall collection of data needed for the research study. Amongst others, the researcher is able to know how to compile the sample size through a purposive sampling method, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection. This procedure depends on the resources and time available, as well as the purpose of the study.

A non-probability approach means that every unit (Group B) in the target population did not have an equal and therefore probable chance of being selected as part of the sample, implying that the sample did not necessarily have the same parameters (or characteristics) as the target population. The advantage of non-probability sampling according to Welman and Kruger (2005:69), is that the process is less complicated and more economical in terms of time and financial expenses. Non-probability sampling may be done on a spontaneous basis to take advantage of available participants, without the statistical complexity of a probability sample. Given the qualitative nature of this research study, the non-probability sampling method was preferred for ordinary citizens as participants to the study, as it is based on convenience.

❑ **Group A**

Provincial government officials were classified under Group A (purposive sampling) – semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were administered.

❑ **Group B**

Ordinary citizens were classified under Group B (non-probability sampling) – focus group discussions and observations were administered.

5.6 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

To yield data for the qualitative investigation, different measuring instruments were employed. Measuring instruments include different types of interviews (semi-structured, open-ended and focus group) and observations (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:183; Thomas *et al.*, 2011:357). Given the extent and purpose of this research, interviews were used to collect the data. Hence, Provincial Government officials and

ordinary citizens in four districts of the North-West Province were requested to participate in interviews to contribute to the achievement of the stated research aims.

According to Creswell (2008:213, 2013), qualitative research presupposes the identification of participants and research sites based on the context of such places and people's ability to provide valuable information on the phenomenon being studied. The strength of qualitative data gathering methods is highlighted by Merriam (2009:85) who observed that qualitative data collection strategies consist of direct quotations from the people whose situations are being studied, thus their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge can be captured vividly. In view of the above perspectives on data collection, this study adopts individual, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations to collect data.

For the exploratory study, the process of data collection entails in-depth interviews with as many participants as possible. Usually, for long, in-depth interviews, the emphasis is on the richness of data collected from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008:122). For one-to-one interviews, the researcher needs to have individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas and determine the setting in which the interview should take place.

As a consequence to this study, data collection represents any process of preparing and collecting data; and obtaining useful information that will contribute to the overall success of the research study in order to establish a factual basis for making decisions. The purpose of data collection is to obtain information to keep on record, to make decisions about important issues, or to pass information on to others. Data are primarily collected to provide information regarding a specific topic.

5.6.1 Instruments for data collection

Semi-structured open-ended questions and focus group discussions were chosen as instruments of this study. The informal group discussion should engender an atmosphere in which participants feel comfortable to express their ideas freely and to discuss their attitude and behaviours (Berg, 1998). The author also points out that one important distinction between focus groups and face-to-face interviews is the ability to observe interactions about a discussion topic during the focus group sessions. Focus groups are methods using group interview procedures for

evaluation. It has been a popular means of pre-testing the usefulness of texts. Focus groups furthermore use open-ended questions to solicit people's attitudes, perceptions and opinions about a single text or sometimes a group of texts (ibid.).

Facilitators of focus groups are not restricted to the questions that are prepared as part of the moderator's guide. Instead, the facilitator is free to explore comments and issues raised by members of the group. Of course, this exploration requires as much art as preparation on the part of the moderator, yet by asking follow-up questions and tracing new ideas, the moderator helps the group complete a thorough analysis of the topic. Sometimes, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), moderators have to deal with different sorts of group members, including the following:

- Shy people who must be encouraged to speak up;
- know-it-all people who must be prevented from dominating the group; and
- over-talkers who must be cut off and perhaps removed from the group.

Another category that can be added to the above list, is that of unsophisticated participants who are mostly found on a less developed level of the organisation. These participants tend to give answers that they think the researcher might want to hear in order to impress the researcher. This situation can obviously influence the validity of the research results. A further comment about this issue is made in the final Chapter.

The interview schedule consisted of two sections: Section A and B; questions were formulated and each linked to the overall research questions for the study. Importantly, individual interviews were designed solely for government officials, while focus group discussions were targeted at ordinary citizens of the North-West Province. The goal of any qualitative research interview is therefore to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees, and to understand why they have a particular perspective (King, 1994:14). To meet this goal, King (1994:14) lists the following general characteristics of a qualitative research interview: a low degree of structure imposed by the interviewer; a preponderance of open questions; a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee – as opposed to mere abstractions and general opinions.

The role of the interviewer is a demanding one as he/she has to ask questions, record answers and try to keep the interview session interesting and worthwhile for the interviewees (Powney & Watts, 1987:7-42; Verma & Mallick, 1999:122).

5.6.2 Semi-structured interview schedule for the study

The interview is defined by Fraenkel and Wallen (1993), as the careful asking of relevant questions. Cohen and Manion (1994:271) define it as:

> "… a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation".

A semi-structured interview was chosen to allow more clarifying, probing and cross-checking questions. The interview is a social relationship designed to exchange information between the participant and the researcher. The quantity and quality of information exchanged would depend on how astute and creative the interviewer is at understanding and managing the relationship (Monette *et al.*, 2008:178). The interviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within the participants (Greeff, 2011:342). Interviews can yield rich material unobtainable in any other way, which can support or be supported by other data from questionnaires and standardised test responses. The interview method is generally adaptable and flexible (Verma & Mallick, 1999:128).

Interviewing as a data-gathering method was used to:

- o clarify vague statements;

- o permit exploration of topics; and to

- o yield a deeply experiential account of the extent to which citizens' needs, interests and expectations are addressed through governance initiatives and sustainability programmes.

The interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain perceptions of role players in the Provincial Government regarding the problems currently being experienced by citizens in the North-West Province. In doing so, the study examined

the extent to which strategic communication management can support governance and sustainability programmes, through a participatory perspective. As a consequence, this was done to also examine the level of inclusive citizenry engagement.

The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates – interviewers need to have developed the necessary skills to successfully carry an interview (Fisher, 2005; Wilson, 2003). What is more, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially meant to be derived regarding a research subject. However, there is the risk that the interview may deviate from the pre-specified research aims and objectives (Gill & Johnson, 2002).

Another advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher can obtain detailed and multiple responses for the set of questions (Struwig & Stead, 2001:98). The semi-structured interview is also excellent because it allows the participants to use their own words leading to them being key players in the study. Additionally, Rogers and Bouey (1996:52) posit that "without a doubt the most utilised data collection method in qualitative research studies is the interview".

Accordingly, Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:232) describe an interview as a face-to-face interpersonal role situation in which the interviewer asks questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research. In-depth interviews offer researchers the opportunity to gather information from individuals in a more private setting in which group dynamics and social conformity is less likely to affect the responses.

In this study, through a semi-structured interview schedule, the researcher created an atmosphere for participants to feel comfortable to share their ideas, experiences and views regarding the subject under investigation. As a consequence, the semi-structured interview schedule allowed participants to engage freely with the open-ended questions asked by the interviewer, thus allowing participants the freedom to answer at the best of their knowledge.

Cohen and Manion (1994) further posit that one of the benefits of using a semi-structured interview schedule is that it allows for interaction between the researcher and the participants; therefore, the researcher is able to clarify or explain questions that are unclear or vague and to also ask the participants to expand on answers given. At times, this benefit may be a disadvantage, because the interviewers may be subjective and biased in following up questions to suit what they want.

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher noted that interviews took time to complete because they take a specific form of conversation. Kahn and Cannell (in Plowman, 2004) also postulated that interviews are conversations with a purpose.

i)   Individual interview schedule

Group A – government officials

SECTION A - SCM for sustainability programmes supporting inclusive citizenry engagement from a participatory communication perspective

1. Which methods is the Provincial Government using to communicate with citizens?
2. Do citizens have enough access to information about the identified five concretes/programmes of the Provincial Government to resemble high levels of public participation in the province?
3. Is public participation an important element of understanding the needs, interests and expectations of citizens through government identified programmes?
4. How responsive is the Provincial Government to the immediate citizenry needs and expectations?
5. In your own view, how effective is the consultation process conducted through community meetings or Imbizos to enhance people's knowledge of government programmes?
6. Is the practice of communication in relation to provincial programmes/concretes two-way (message-feedback process) or one-way in the Province?

SECTION B - SCM for governance supporting inclusive citizenry engagement from a participatory communication perspective

1. As the Provincial Government, do you think you're doing enough to communicate with citizens about policy matters and key decisions?
2. In your own view, can you say that communication platforms about governance programmes are open, transparent and responsive in the Province?
3. What is the role of citizens in influencing policy formulation and strategic planning efforts in the Province?
4. To what extent is the representation of citizens in decision-making for good governance and responsive-leadership in the Province facilitated?
5. Based on your understanding, do you think the Provincial government has a strategic plan to co-ordinate and manage communication efforts in order to enhance inclusivity of citizens?
6. What is the status of citizens in contributing to the identified programmes/concretes of the 5th administration (common-goal orientation)?

5.6.3 Focus group discussions in the study

While data collection can often be less structured in an exploratory study, this is not to say that there is no structure – instead, it is a matter of the extent of its structure. Generally, one area that requires less structure is that of focus groups. This can often be attributed to: (i) the difficulty in imposing structure on a group discussion; and (ii) the fact that data emerges through interaction within the group – a key feature of focus groups (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

As a context of the current study, the focus groups used in the study, shared many common features with less structured interviews (semi-structured). There is also more to them than merely collecting similar data from many participants at once (Bloor, *et al.*, 2001). In essence, Kitzinger (1994) contends that a focus group is a group discussion on a particular topic organised, specifically for research purposes.

Morgan (1998) concurs and goes further to position that this discussion is usually guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher (sometimes called a moderator or facilitator). In preparing an interview schedule for focus groups, this study considered

two general principles: 1) Questions should move from general to more specific questions, 2) The order of the questions should be relative to the importance of issues in the research agenda. As such, the focus group schedule was premised on issues important to the research agenda and more specifically to solicit favourable discussions.

Consequently, the current study adopted focus groups as a data collection tool, because they have the ability to generate information on collective views, and the meanings that lie behind those views. They are also useful in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs. Using focus groups is one way of involving participants in the discussion proceedings, as stated by Stage (1998).

By using focus group discussions, the researcher hoped to "obtain deeper levels of meaning" (Greenbaum, 2000:47). The spontaneous interaction between participants in an informal focus group discussion often reveals data that might not otherwise be discussed in the more formal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Group size is an important consideration in focus group research. From this perspective, the current study had eight sets of focus group discussions involving a small number of participants (ten participants per set) under the guidance of a facilitator. As a context, each district of the North-West Province hosted two-sets of the focus group discussions (The Province has four districts). The subject of investigation was explored extensively.

Accordingly, Zimmerman and Perkins (in Mmutle, 2015) are of the opinion that focus group sessions were originally used by commercial sector firms and has now become a method of conducting scientific qualitative research. As a research method, focus group discussions use group interview procedures for evaluation. It has also been a popular method used for pre-testing the usefulness of text. Open-ended questions are used to solicit people's attitudes, perceptions and opinions, either about a single text, or about a group of texts.

ii)   Community focus groups

Group B – ordinary citizens group interviews

SECTION A - SCM for sustainability programmes supporting inclusive citizenry engagement from a participatory communication perspective

1. How is the Provincial Government engaging you as a citizen of the Province? Please articulate further…

2. As a citizen, are you benefiting from the Provincial Government programmes/concretes and if yes, in what way? Explain please…

3. Do you think the Provincial Government is doing enough to involve you as a citizen in development programmes/concretes and what is your role as a citizen? Provide more clarity…

4. How responsive is the Provincial Government to your immediate needs and interests as a citizen in the Province? Explain more…

5. In your own view, how effective is the consultation process between the government and you as a citizen to share information either through community meetings or Imbizos?

6. How often do Provincial Government officials communicate with you as an ordinary citizens in the Province?

SECTION B - SCM for governance programmes supporting inclusive citizenry engagement from a participatory communication perspective

1. As a citizen, what steps or actions are you taking to enhance your knowledge of government programmes or activities and their benefit to you? Elaborate further please…

2. Do you think communication from the Provincial Government about programmes reaches you timely and allows for a two-way (message-feedback process) or one-way (one-directional) process in the Province? Articulate more please…

3. As a citizen, do you contribute to the Provincial Government policies and decisions that concern you and/or are you frequently consulted in the planning process? Please explain how…

4. In your own view, can you say that the Provincial Government is open, transparent and responsive when it comes to public consultations and participation in the Province? Elaborate further please…

5. According to you, what do you propose the Provincial Government to do in order to address your needs and meet your expectations through governance activities? Please explain more…

6. Do you think policies and laws in place encourage inclusivity and address your needs and interests as a citizen of the Province? Please elaborate more…

5.6.4 Participant observation in the study

Participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for the development of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999:91) define participant observation as the process of learning through exposure to, or involvement in, the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting.

Participant observation is a part of the broader qualitative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), where the researcher serves as the primary instrument for observing and collecting data (Creswell, 2008). Participant observation always takes place in community settings – in locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions. The method is distinctive, because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment, rather than having the participants come to the researcher.

The following aspects were considered in this section of the research:

o The socio-economic situation (status) of the community;

o physical location and surroundings;

o reception at Provincial Government offices;

o impression of office setting; and

o relevant comments.

The purpose of the observation list was to provide a brief account of the context of the source of the data, in order to facilitate an understanding of the setting in which the participants work and to provide information about the climate in which the interview would take place (Huberman & Miles, 2002:54; Creswell, 2003:8; 2009:177; Scott & Usher, 2011:106).

In understanding not only the setting of the research participants and their daily routines, it was considerably important to also understand the rationale behind their actions and social interactions/patterns. Participant observation presented the researcher with the opportunity to engage with participants as part of them to understand not only their viewpoints, but their social realities from an informed position. In addition, the researcher's involvement in the cultural environment of the research participants offered an opportunity to also understand issues such as their occupations, societal influence, religious fraternity and level of education as they all relate to the phenomenon under investigation in the study.

5.6.5 Recording, field-notes and transcribing of data

The current study utilised both an audiotape recorder and hand-written notes during the process of data collection. Participants' consent to record both the individual interviews and focus group interviews was sought and granted. The researcher had a notebook to write down all the responses given by the participants in both accounts of the interviews. In this regard, both the recorded audio and field-notes assisted the researcher to collate and corroborate all the responses received during the data collection phase. As a result, these methods indeed proved more useful when the researcher had to transcribe and code the data for analysis purposes.

According to Silverman (2001:161), using audiotapes in interviews is advantageous in that they are a public record that is available to the scientific community; tapes can be replayed and transcriptions can be improved, allowing for analyses to be unlimited. Furthermore, tapes preserve the sequence of talk. In other words, the researcher can scrutinise the sequences of utterances without being limited to the extracts that were previously taken through field-notes. The emergent disadvantage of an audiotape recording is that the emotional and facial expressions are excluded,

which might, depending on the research conducted, assist the researcher in the final analysis. Consequently, the emergent disadvantage of the audiotape recording was controlled through participant's observations, which proved to be the connection between the audiotape recording and the field notes.

With regard to field notes, Taylor and Bogdan (1998:66) suggest that they form an important factor in qualitative studies, especially in observations, as they help the researcher to take note of every conversational encounter they have during contacts with the participants and the environments in which these contacts take place. The authors further point out that it is essential that the researcher is able to record immediately after the interview, what has transpired during the interview, more so because the interview is only audio-taped and as such no facial or body reactions are recorded (ibid: 66).

In this study, it was imperative for the researcher to compile extensive field notes to enhance the validity and reliability of research done from an interpretive perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:275). Subsequently, it was also essential that the interviews be conducted in an environment, chosen by the interviewees themselves, with which the interviewees were familiar and felt more relaxed.

5.7 PILOT STUDY

Bless *et al*. (2006:184) define the pilot study as a small study conducted prior to executing a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate. Janesick (1994:213) concurs that the pilot test in qualitative research allows the researcher to make use of the actual qualitative interviews.

This study applied a pilot test to detect the possibility of flaws or ambiguity in the measurement process. According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:52), the researcher can begin to identify and correct imperfections by piloting or testing a questionnaire with a select group of people in order to establish their clarity. In the current study, individual and focus group interviews were carried out with a number of participants for two weeks as part of piloting the study. As a result, piloting further assisted in eliminating ambiguous questions, as well as in generating useful feedback on the structure and flow of the intended interviews. Welman *et al.*,

(2009:148) and De Vos *et al.*, (2011a:237) summarise the purpose of the pilot study as follows:

- o To detect possible flaws in the measurement process (such as ambiguous instructions, and inadequate time limits);

- o to identify unclear or ambiguously formulated items. In such a pilot study the actual questions are put to the participants and they are then asked to indicate how they have interpreted the formulated questions; and

- o an opportunity for researchers and assistants exists to notice non-verbal behaviour (on the part of participants) that may possibly signify discomfort or wording of the questions (Welman *et al.*, 2009:148).

Before the main study, a pilot study was conducted in order to pre-test or 'try-out' the instruments; to identify any problems associated with the proposed research design and its entire implementation; and then to modify the data collection instruments accordingly. However, the data from the pilot study were not mixed with the data from the actual study. Once the pilot study has been completed and the interview schedules for both the individual and focus group interviews have been refined adequately, the researcher conducted the main interviews with another cohort, which represents the main study.

5.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define qualitative data analysis as working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns. The aim of analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. Yin (2003) discusses the need for searching the data for 'patterns' which may explain or identify links in the data base.

From this perspective, the researcher discovered links in the data through identifying patterns, establishing similar concepts, deriving codes and organising them into emerging themes. In the process, the researcher concentrated on the whole data set first, then attempted to take it apart and to re-construct it again more meaningfully. As a result, categorisation helped the researcher to make comparisons and contrasts

between patterns, to reflect on certain patterns and complex threads of the data deeply, and to make sense of them.

Figure 5.2: Links of data collection and analysis process
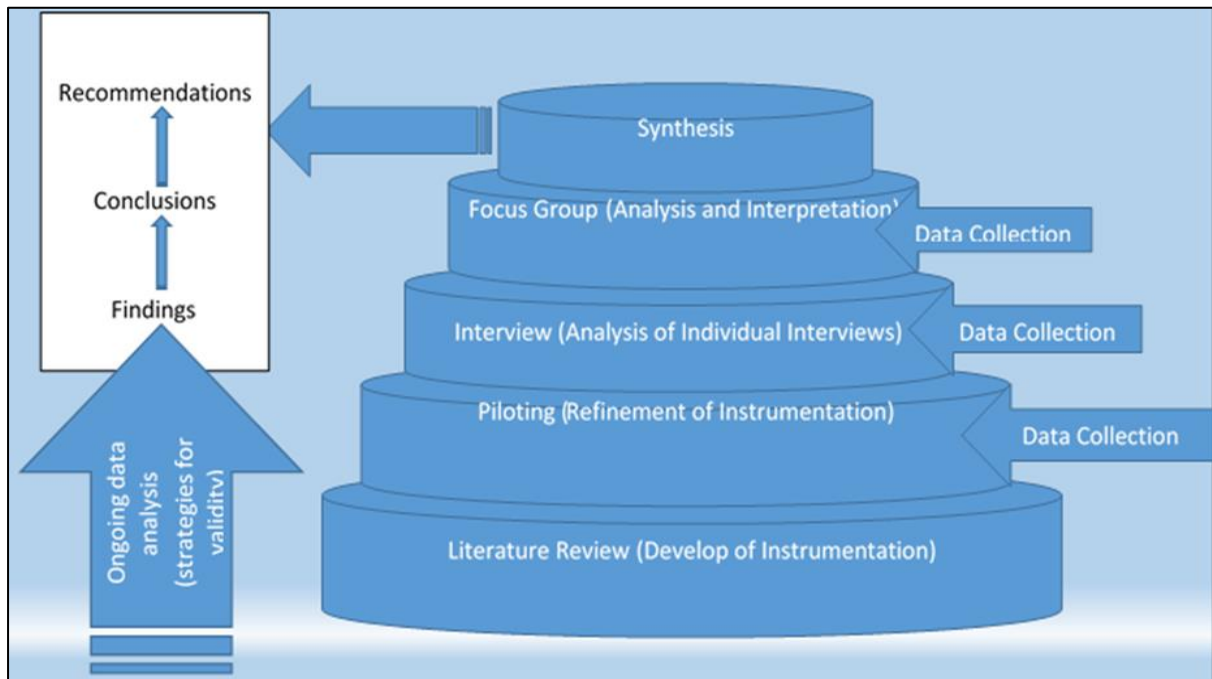
Source: Own conceptualisation.

For the purpose of the current study, data analysis was viewed as the process of making sense of the data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher has observed and read. Merriam (2009:176) acknowledges that data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts.

Silverman (2001:121) goes beyond Merriam's assertion and posits that data analysis does not come after data gathering, but that after each and every session with a participant the researcher should start transcribing. Indeed, the researcher in this study adopted the position of Silverman (2001) who emphasised the importance of transcribing data after each and every session with a participant(s).

To support the perspective of Merriam (2009) and Silverman (2001), Struwig and Stead (2001:15) contended that data analysis explains the route in which raw data is orderly organised, so that useful data can be spotted and used in the research study.

This was also the case in the current study. In a phenomenological qualitative study, data are analysed by categorising and identifying similar themes, quotes and observations, and then coding them.

5.8.1 Qualitative thematic (network) analysis

Wilson (1993:342) describes thematic analysis as a data analysis technique used in phenomenological inquiry that involves data from interviews with participants to discover themes or categories of experiences as seen from the participants' perspectives. According to Aronson (1994:1), thematic analysis allows for patterns of experiences to be listed from the transcribed conversations, which usually can come from direct quotes or paraphrasing of common ideas.

During interview questioning, the researcher determines what the responses from the participant represent; compares the responses with a segment of text; and labels it to that theme. During this process, there will be a variety of words, sentences, paragraphs and pages mentioned by participants; which would then be reduced to what is of importance and of interest; which imperatively requires the researcher to identify that which is of interest to the participant, without any bias or prejudice (Seidman, 1991:89).

For this purpose, the current study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) perspective of thematic analysis, which details relevant stages of conducting qualitative data analysis through thematic networks, as shown below:

Table 5.6: Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis
Familiarising with the data
• Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating initial codes
• Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set; collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes
• Collating codes into potential themes; gathering all data relevant to each potential

theme.

Reviewing themes
• Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set; generating a thematic map.

Defining and naming themes
• Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

Producing the report
• The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples; final analysis of selected extracts; relating the analysis to the research question and literature; producing a report of the analysis.

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006:87).

5.8.2 Coding of data

Coding is a qualitative research process in which the researcher makes sense of out of text data, dividing it into text or image segments, labelling the segments, examining codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapsing these codes into broad themes. In the view of Creswell (2003:225), coding helps to condense and reduce large amounts of data into small and manageable data under a few themes. Denzil and Lincoln (2005:426) further contend that coding is an interpretive technique that both organises the data and provides a means to introduce the interpretations of it into meaningful information. Most coding requires the researcher to read the data and demarcate segments within it.

5.8.3 Building thematic networks

After the reduction of transcriptions, the researcher focuses on the patterns that emerge and arranges them into categories or themes. The researcher then searches for patterns and connections among the excerpts within those identified categories (Seidman, 1991:99). All conversations that fit under a specific pattern are identified and placed with the corresponding pattern and label e.g. "commitment" as a process may be derived from a phrase or a sentence such as "the effort that employees put into their daily routine". In this study, similar themes were categorised or grouped according to patterns of significance and value, so as to unearth similar meanings and the correlation of responses.

Consequently, all related patterns were then combined and catalogued into themes. These themes were derived from the participants' stories, pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experiences. Valid arguments for choosing the themes were then built by reading related literature. By referring back to literature the researcher gained more information that allowed the current study to make inferences and then to develop a story (Aronson, 1994:1).

From the meaning gathered, the researcher was able to draw some inferences from each theme. This implies that the researcher coded the participants' assertions so as to identify similar themes or patterns of similar nature in the data. Thereafter, inferences were drawn using similar themes as detected from the responses of the participants. After the reduction of transcriptions, the researcher focused on the patterns that emerged and arranged them into themes.

Since raw data were analysed by identifying and bringing together fragments of ideas and experiences (which often are meaningless when viewed alone) the researcher's creative thought and analytical ability was needed to literally put the pieces together, so that a pattern or theme can be formulated that is compatible with the people being studied. This process proved more useful to the study (De Santis & Ugarriza, 2000:357).

Figure 5.3: Schematic description of thematic connections
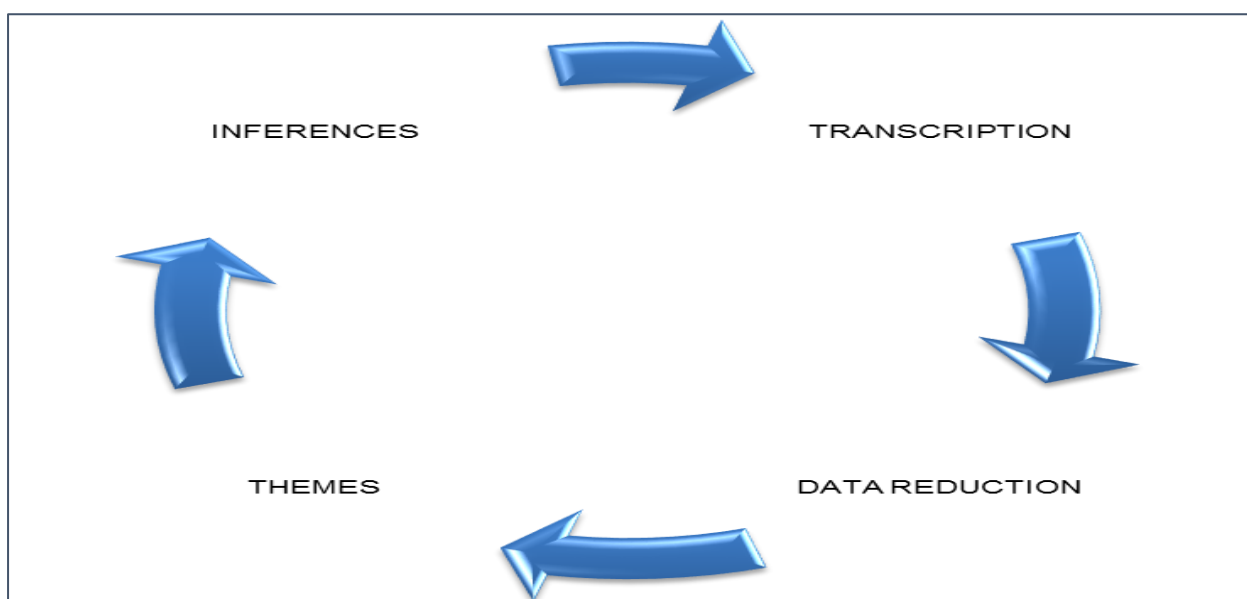
Source: Adopted from Mmutle (2015).

5.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Patton (1990:10-12, 2015) suggests that the validity and reliability of qualitative data depend largely on the methodological skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher. In this way, systematic and rigorous observation involves far more than simply being present and looking around. Likewise, skilful interviewing entails much more than merely asking questions. In addition, the author states that in qualitative research, the researcher uses validity as the instrument; therefore, it hinges largely on the skill, competence and rigour of the person engaging in the fieldwork. As a matter of fact, Vosloo (2014) cautions that some qualitative researchers have begun to question the relevance of the term validity in qualitative research. Some suggest that terminology such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, trustworthiness, verification and transferability be used instead of validity.

Notably, prolific scholars such as Huberman and Miles (2002:38) and Tobin and Begley (2004:388-389) are of the opinion that it is inappropriate to transfer terminology across paradigms. Inevitably, the authors suggest alternative ways to demonstrate reliability and validity outside the linguistic confines of a quantitative paradigm. The latter trend that emphasises the use of rigour to ensure reliability and validity in this qualitative research was followed (Tobin & Begley, 2004:389-390; Twycross & Shields, 2005:36; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:239). Based on the purpose and methodological orientation of the current study, terminologies such as dependability, confirmability, trustworthiness and authenticity were adopted to expound and stimulate the validity and reliability of the study.

As a consequence, rigour refers to the demonstration of integrity and competence in qualitative research by adhering to detail and accuracy to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research process. The rigour of qualitative research in the researcher's context relates to the overall planning and implementation of the research to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of procedures, according to the following criteria (Tobin & Begley, 2004:391-392; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006:49-50; Roberts *et al.*, 2006:43; Freeman *et al.*, 2007:28-29):

- Credibility: Engagement with the data (recordings, notes and transcripts) was done intensively to demonstrate clear links between the data and the

interpretations. Regular discussions were held and adjustments made in accordance with suggestions and recommendations.

- ✦ Dependability: According to Riege (2003:81), dependability is analogous to the notion of reliability in quantitative research. The purpose of this test was to show indications of stability and consistency in the process of inquiry. In this study, care was taken to ensure that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented in a reflexive manner by giving a detailed account of the research process.

- ✦ Authenticity: The development of the question items was based on a substantial theoretical basis and the literature. The interview schedule was first used during the pilot test to ensure the yielding of reasonable, unbiased and valid data.

- ✦ Confirmation: An audit process was implemented by working forward, as well as backward in the research process, to ensure that the data and interpretations of the findings were sound and confirmed findings. The intention during the interpretation process was not to generalise findings to a population, but to identify accepted principles and trends related to the research topic.

In the main, the trustworthiness of the current research study is ensured by applying the following criteria: credibility, dependability, authenticity and confirmation. The description in the qualitative research process of: what was done; how it was done; and why it was done – as well as adherence to the identified criteria for qualitative research - ensured the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research study.

5.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

In the context of the current study, delimitations are those characteristics selected by the researcher to define the boundaries of the methodology. The researcher makes conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions regarding the population (sample procedure and size – including such information as geographic location), the methodological orientation, the theoretical perspectives, the instruments, methods of data collection and analysis. To this end, the following characteristics are selected as contributors to the delimitation of the study:

a) *Choice of methodology and design* – This study was confined only to qualitative research, in order to discover participant's experiences, perceptions and knowledge of the phenomena under investigation. As such, the study was not concerned with quantitative measurements and statistical analysis, as the purpose was to understand how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective. In doing so, the study was set to further understand how citizens' needs, interests and expectations are addressed through strategic communication efforts that encourage public participation in order to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement from both ordinary citizens and Provincial Government officials.

b) *Inclusionary delimitations (participants)* – The target population of the current study remain all citizens of the North-West Province. However, to solicit direct and appropriate answers to the research problem and questions at hand, the study required a sample of participants with direct exposure and knowledge of the phenomena under investigation, particularly the selected Provincial Government officials, such as the Premier, Communication Practitioners, Stakeholder Engagement Officers and the Director-General. These participants were selected because of the assumed knowledge and experience that they possess, and their direct contact with governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the Province. Additionally, the study included twenty participants per district of the Province (the Province have four districts).

c) *Exclusionary delimitations (participants)* – Other members of the target population were not sampled because of convenience, time constrains and economic limitations. Additionally, other Provincial Government officials were not included in the sample, because the study assumed that they do not work closely with the topic under investigation and as such would not necessarily assist in achieving the goal of the study.

d) *Phenomena under investigation* - The study was delimited to examining the extent to which strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective. As a result, the study was only concerned about how inclusive

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citizenry engagement can be obtained in the North-West Province. Consequently, other variables that might contribute were not measured.

e) *Inclusionary delimitations (instrumentation)* – For the purpose of data collection, the study concentrated on gathering data through individual interviews with Provincial Government Officials, focus group discussions with selected ordinary citizens and participant observation as data collection instruments. These methods were regarded as appropriate for an interpretivist study which is concerned with social context and reality.

f) *Exclusionary delimitations (instrumentation)* – As indicated earlier, quantitative methods and techniques for both data collection and analysis were not adopted because of the exploratory nature of the study.

g) *Inclusionary delimitations (generalisability)* – The results of the proposed study will be generalisable to the target population and the study's setting – the North-West Province.

h) *Exclusionary delimitations (generalisability)* – The results of this study will not be generalisable to other provinces of South Africa, however, they can serve as a point of departure for future research and might assist other researchers interested in the same topic – perhaps with the inclusion of quantitative methods or combination of the two research methods (mixed methods approach).

5.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Silverman (2000:201) reminds researchers that they should always remember that while they are doing their research, they are in actual fact entering the private spaces of their participants. Understandably, this raises several ethical issues that should be addressed during, and after the research had been conducted. In this regard, Creswell (2003, 2013) states that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants.

Subsequently, Miles and Huberman (1994) list several issues that researchers should consider when collecting and analysing data. They caution researchers to be aware of these and other issues before, during, and after the research had been conducted. Some of the issues involve the following:

- o Informed consent (Do participants have full knowledge of what is involved?)

- o Harm and risk (Can the study hurt participants?)

- o Honesty and trust (Is the researcher being truthful in presenting data?)

- o Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Will the study intrude too much into group behaviours?)

- o Intervention and advocacy (What should researchers do if participants display harmful or illegal behaviour?).

Silverman (2000) argues that the relationship between the researcher and the subject during an interview needs to be considered in terms of the values of the researcher and cultural aspects. One of the normally unexpected concerns relating to ethical issues is cultural sensitivity.

In this regard, a detailed, prescribed application was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria for approval to conduct the research. Approval was granted. The current study was subject to certain ethical issues and the following considerations were afforded complete attention:

1) *Informed consent*

All participants in this study reported their written acceptance regarding their participation in the research, through a signed Consent and Briefing Letter. At the same time, sample members were asked to sign a Withdrawal Letter. The aim of both letters was to reassure participants that their participation in the research is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it at any point and for any reason.

2) *Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity*

Next to this, participants were fully informed regarding the objectives of the study, while they were reassured that their answers were treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes and only for the purposes of the particular research. The researcher made it clear that the participants' names would not be used for any other purposes, nor will information be shared that reveals their identity in any way.

3) Honesty and trust

The study adhered strictly to all the ethical guidelines served as standards about the honesty and trustworthiness of the data collected, as well as the accompanying data analysis.

4) Harm and risk

Except for the above, the researcher guaranteed that participants were not harmed or abused, both physically and psychologically, while conducting the research. In contrast, the researcher attempted to create and maintain a climate of comfort as stated by Trochim (2000a).

5) Intervention and advocacy

Fortunately, there were no intervention and advocacy issues needed, as all the participants co-operated and understood the purpose and intention of the research study. No one showed harmful or illegal behaviour, as all the issues were clarified by the researcher prior to the start of the engagement with participants.

5.12 CONCLUSION

In this Chapter the research design and methodology were set out. The afore-mentioned aspects of methodology in this study clearly identify the importance or significance of this study as an exploratory study with an interpretivist approach. The methodology described the process of exploration of being by the participants, as well as the realisation of being by the researcher. A specific, related research design was identified to ensure the accomplishment of the set aims for this study, namely to examine the extent to which strategic communication management is applied to support corporate governance initiatives and sustainability programmes.

In doing so, the study recognised the imperatives of peoples' needs, interest, and expectations through inclusive people's governance and their sustainability programmes. Consequently, the adoption of an interpretivism approach with two main philosophies, namely, phenomenology and hermeneutics were essential as the broader operationalisation of the research design.

As such, this Chapter has outlined the research paradigm, research methodologies, strategies and design used in the study, including procedures, participants, data collection tools, data collection and analysis methods, and data credibility issues.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the research design and related methodologies were developed with the aim of obtaining reliable and valid data to assist in the development of a strategic communication framework for the North-West Province. Ultimately, this would help the Provincial Government to effectively and efficiently communicate governance initiates and sustainability programmes to citizens. This would furthermore assist in addressing citizens' needs, interests and expectations - as a result inclusivity and engagement might be achieved through strategic communication efforts.

In Chapter Six, the data gathered through the qualitative research approach are presented, analysed, described and interpreted in a systematic manner to provide a methodological structure for the unfolding of the empirical section of this research. This will enable the researcher to develop a *Strategic Communication Framework* for the North-West Province. Thereafter, how the framework can support and enhance governance initiatives and sustainability programmes will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SIX
DATA MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The foregoing Chapter, which is Chapter five described and explained in detail the process, rationale and purpose of the qualitative methods and the research design in accordance with the aim of the study. The qualitative research design was applied in this research study to acquire an experiential overview of the extent to which strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes at the North-West Province, whilst espousing a participatory communication perspective.

As was clearly outlined in Chapter one, this study embraced a qualitative approach in order to obtain more comprehensive responses so as to provide the body of knowledge in respect of the phenomena under investigation and to clarify idiosyncratic circumstances or social realities. Furthermore, a theoretical framework based on an extensive literature study in Chapter(s) two, three and four assured the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments.

The conceptualisation of the rather sophisticated research process that was made possible by the interpretivist phenomenological research design and methods in Chapter five epitomised the reasoning for decisions and procedures pertaining to data collection and the deconstruction process. In this Chapter, the captured data from the qualitative research are managed, analysed, interpreted, described and presented in a systematic manner as the next step of the research process. The documentation and analysis process aimed to present data in an intelligible and interpretable form in order to identify trends and relations in accordance with the research aim.

In turn, the identified trends and relations in accordance with the research aim, enabled the researcher to develop a strategic communication management framework (see Chapter seven), based on the empirical evidence gathered, that will

support governance initiatives and the effective implementation of sustainability programmes as a way to strive for inclusive citizenry engagement.

Consequently, the process and procedure of data analysis and interpretations as embraced in the current study are also outlined to provide guidance and to make sense of the decisions arrived at. Likewise, the research results are therefore firstly presented and later synthesised to draw conclusive and coherent outcomes as per the assertions of the research participants. It is worth noting that the presentation of the research results alluded to are based on the data gathered from the individual semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant's observation. In this sense, the focus now turns to the analysis and interpretation of the data for this study.

6.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Analysis of the data for the current study was guided by an interpretive paradigm by means of which the researcher aimed to view the narrative against the context in which it was set and the individual viewpoints of the participants. Data analysis and interpretation is therefore a systematic process guided by the researcher's analytical set of skills to engage and reconfigure the information collected from research participants in order to obtain relevant findings. It is often described as cluttered, ambiguous and time-consuming, but also as a creative and interesting process of ordering information received into workable findings.

Analysis transforms data into findings by bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Patton, 2002, in de Vos *et al.*, 2005). The analytical process does not proceed tidily or in a linear fashion but is more of a spiral process; it entails reducing the volume of the information, sorting out significant from irrelevant facts, identifying patterns and trends, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what was revealed by the data (de Vos *et al.*, 2005:333, in Vosloo, 2014).

Accordingly, data analysis is the central step in this current qualitative research. In this regard, whatever the data are, it is their analysis that, in a decisive way, forms the outcomes of the research. Marshall and Rossman (1999:150, in Vosloo, 2014) describe data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the

mass of collected data. It is the search for general statements about relationships among categories of data and equally it is the search among data to identify content. Qualitative data analysis is distinguished by the activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorising data that signifies a search for general statements among categories of data (Schwandt, 2007:6). Data analysis is done to preserve the uniqueness of each participant's lived experience, while allowing an understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Antonius (2003:2) concisely points out that the word data points to information that is collected in a systematic way and organised and recorded to enable the reader to interpret the information correctly. As such, data are not collected haphazardly, but in response to some questions that the researcher wishes to answer. Schostak and Schostak (2008:10) captured the essences of managing data well when they further add, that data are not given as a fixed, but are open to reconfiguration and thus alternative ways of seeing – therefore, finding answers to questions that one wishes to answer.

In essence, it is wisdom for the current study to understand the fundamental differences between qualitative data analysis and quantitative data analysis as articulated by Kreuger and Neuman (2006:434-5):

o Qualitative data analysis is less standardised with the wide variety in approaches to qualitative research matched by the many approaches to data analysis, while quantitative researchers choose from a specialised, standard set of data analysis techniques

o The results of qualitative data analysis guide subsequent data collection, and analysis is thus a less-distinct final stage of the research process than quantitative analysis, where data analysis does not begin until all data have been collected and condensed into numbers

o Qualitative researchers create new concepts and theory by blending together empirical and abstract concepts, while quantitative researchers manipulate numbers in order to test a hypothesis with variable constructs

o Qualitative data analysis is in the form of words, which are relatively imprecise, diffused and context based, while quantitative researchers use the language of statistical relationships in analysis.

Alongside the contribution of Kreuger and Neuman, Robson (2011:408) also offers an equally important view on analysis and interpretation of data, when he posits that the process and products of analysis provide the bases for interpretation and analysis. It is therefore not an empty ritual, carried out for form's sake, between doing the study, and interpreting it, nor is it a bolt-on feature, which can be safely ignored until the data are collected. The author, further aptly points out that the central requirement in qualitative analysis is clear thinking on the part of the analyst.

There is a devoted connection between data collection and data analysis, which is one of the foremost features that differentiates qualitative research from traditional research (de Vos *et al.*, 2005:335). Accordingly, as the data were being transcribed and translated, the researcher found himself identifying patterns of expressions that alerted him to be aware of similar or divergent themes as more data unfolded. Likewise, data analysis does not in itself provide answers to research questions, as these are found by way of interpretation of the analysed data (Kruger, de Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2005:218).

Interpretation involves explaining and making sense of the data (de Vos *et al.*, 2005; Denzin, 1989). This again involves an ongoing engagement with the process, in that interpretation and analysis are closely intertwined as the researcher automatically interprets as he analyses (Kruger *et al.*, 2005). Hence, it was from this combined process of data collection and analysis that an acceptable and coherent interpretation developed.

The purpose of analysis is to recognise the various constitutive features of one's data, through evaluating the relationships between concepts and identifying any patterns or trends, or to establish themes in the data (Mouton 2001:108). Interpreting means comparing one's results and findings to existing theoretical backgrounds and also showing whether these backgrounds are supported or falsified by the new meanings (Mouton 2001:109). The other tenacity of data analysis is to identify the similarities and differences in the data (Holloway 2005:154).

6.2.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis can be referred to as the process of making sense from research participants' views and opinions of situations, corresponding patterns,

themes, categories and regular similarities (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:461). Nieuwenhuis (2007:99-100) documents the essence of data analysis well, when he provides the following description of qualitative data analysis that serves as a good working definition:

> *"Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not necessarily a successive process".*

In short, as Gibbs (2007:1) so pertinently points out, qualitative data analysis is a process of transformation of collected qualitative data, done by means of analytic procedures, into a clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and even original analysis. In this current study, data analysis began with continual and repeated listening to the participants' verbal descriptions on the tape recorder and the importing of transcripts into computer-based software. According to Holloway and Wheeler (1996:236), the fullest and richest data are gained from transcribing all interviews verbatim.

During the data-analysis phase, the researcher then read, reread, and reviewed the verbatim transcriptions (Holloway 2005:154) and listened to the tape recordings until he became immersed in the data (Burns & Grove 2003:378). The researcher then acknowledged and extracted significant statements. Data saturation was accepted as being reached when no new themes emerged with the support of qualitative data analysis software.

Hilal and Alabri (2013) posit that qualitative data are characterised by its subjectivity, richness, and comprehensive text-based information. Analysing qualitative data is often a muddled, vague and time-consuming process. The authors further articulate that qualitative data analysis is, the pursuing of the relationship between categories and themes of data seeking to increase the understanding of the phenomenon in question. Traditionally, researchers utilised coloured pens to sort and then cut and categorise these data. The innovations in software technology designed for qualitative data analysis significantly diminish complexity and simplify the difficult task. It consequently makes the procedure relatively endurable.

In the current study, computer-based software and manual qualitative data analysis were used as complementary techniques for data analysis and interpretations. For this reason, the adopted computer-based software, *NVivo 11 plus*, is a qualitative data analysis software developed to manage the 'coding' procedures. It is considered the best and appropriate in this regard. For the purpose of the current study, the researcher opted for qualitative data analysis, as the process describes a phenomenon from the point of view of the informants; discovers multiple realities; and develops holistic understanding of the phenomenon within a particular context (Glickman *et al.*, 2007).

Moreover, it has been acknowledged in this study that properly employing the qualitative data gleaned from face to face interviews, focus group interviews, and field observation has led the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the problem than merely analysing data on a large scale (Malakolunthu, 2007).

In a sense, the qualitative data are text-based; the corner stone of analysing these data is the coding process. Codes, according to Miles and Huberman (1994:56 cited in Hilal & Alabri, 2013), are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes often adhere to chunks of words, phrases, sentences or the entire paragraph. In the current study, coding involved pursuing related words or phrases mentioned by the interviewees. These words or phrases were then combined together in order to realise the connection between them.

6.3 MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

It is believed that qualitative researchers in broad-spectrum have collections of methodologies to provide evidence to cope with their inquisitive minds regarding issues pertaining to their interest. In tandem, combining qualitative research data management and data analysis with technology is frowned upon by some qualitative researchers. Ishak and Bakar (2012) concede in this regard that qualitative researchers now have the option to technologise their approach in data management and data analysis to ease the complexity of the research process. This is important, due to the fact that qualitative researchers have to handle huge amounts of data and the chunking process of the data is monotonous.
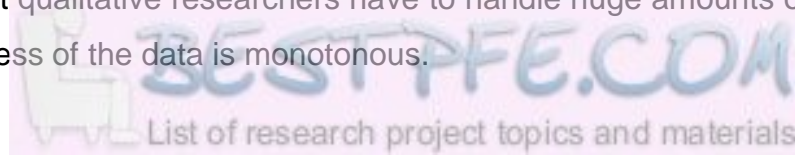
In this regard, the current study descriptively report the researchers' effort in using the qualitative computer-based software known as NVivo and the manual approach in managing and analysing qualitative data that were collected in a study designed to examine strategic communication management for governance and sustainability in the North-West Province, of South Africa.

As a consequence to the current study, data from both interviews (individual and focus groups) were transcribed and cleaned before it was imported to the NVivo 11 *plus* software. Although transcription can be directly done using NVivo, the researcher chose to transcribe it using Microsoft Office Word 2007 for a number of reasons:

a) NVivo accept documents saved under .doc;
b) auto-coding can be done using headings that are available in Microsoft Office; and
c) the researcher acknowledged that NVivo organises and codes the data, however, the researcher's analytical skills are still required for meaningful presentation of the findings.

In light of the afore-mentioned, transcriptions were imported to the NVivo software under free nodes. Ishak and Bakar (2012:99) write that nodes are representations of variables that a researcher is interested in for his or her study. In addition, NVivo allows flexibility for the researcher to identify the nodes which come in different forms of free nodes, tree nodes, case nodes, relationship nodes and matrices. In essence, the researcher, for example, may initially want to use free nodes to develop themes of their interest because it allows him or her a free flow of the thematic process (similar to open coding in constant comparative analysis) and the nodes are developed simultaneously as the researcher read, compare, contrast and analyse the data.

Figure 6.1: Data analysis process in qualitative research
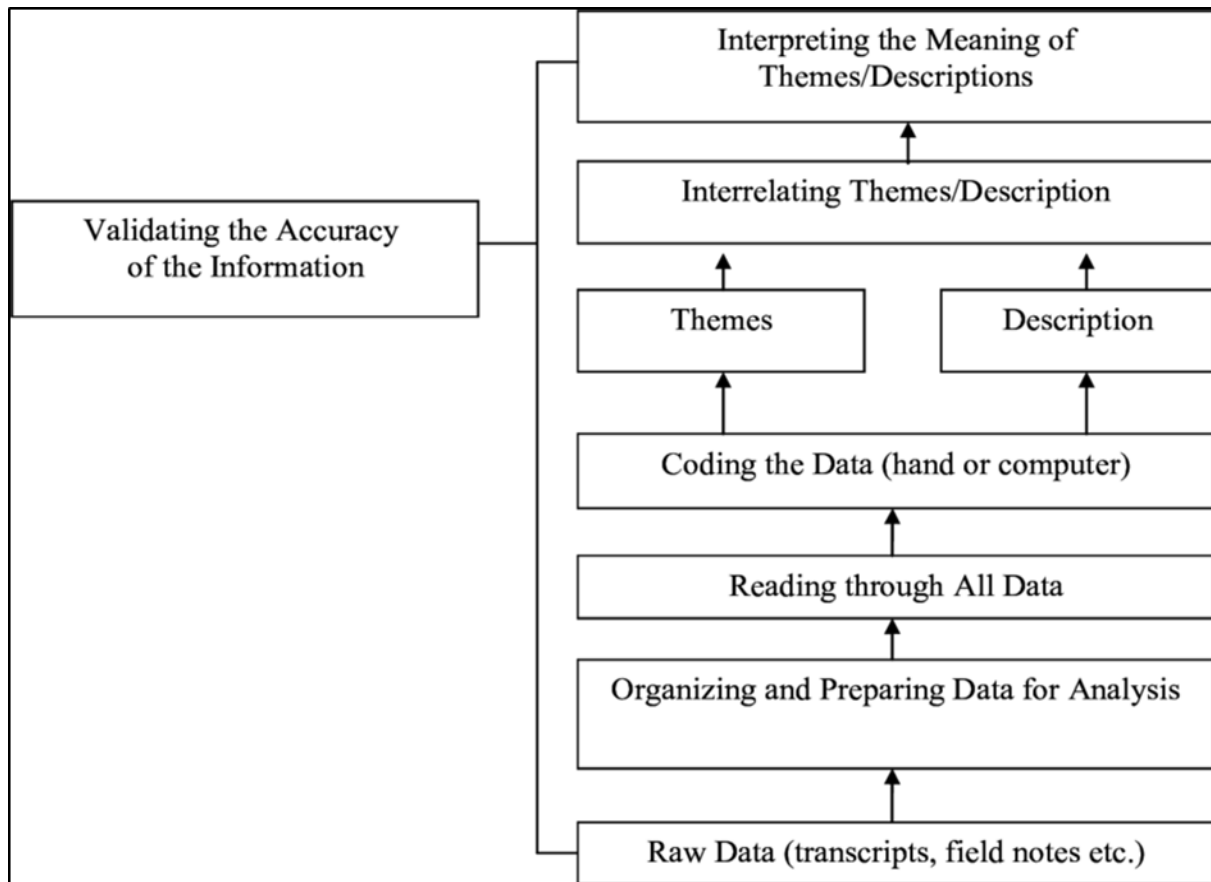
Source: Creswell (2009:185).

The management and analysis process for qualitative research is captured correctly in the model developed by Creswell (2009) as indicated in Figure 6.1. From the said Figure, the process begins with the collection, organising, and preparing of raw data for management and analysis. In this regard, the process involved the transcriptions of interviews and arranging the data into different types, depending on the sources of information (focus group interviews and individual interviews). Additionally, the researcher purposefully read through all the data to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on the overall meaning as articulated under the management of qualitative data.

Furthermore, the coding process was followed with and complemented by computer-based software, *NVivo 11 plus,* for efficiency and manageability. As mentioned earlier, both the manual organising and transcriptions of data and the computer-

based software were deemed complementary and sufficient in the organising of the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to the information. This means that text is gathered into categories which are intentionally labelled.

6.3.1 Field notes and participant observations

Field notes were kept during each interview and form part of the raw data that were analysed. At the end of each interview, a reflective report was kept for the purpose of understanding the context of each of the participants and their respective environments and circumstances. Once the transcriptions had been completed, the data were organised in two files (focus group interviews and individual interviews) in preparation for the data analysis process. All the data were read and coded. Although an interview guide was used to conduct the interviews, a zero-based approach was followed to code the data. This means that the determination of themes, although influenced by the interview guide, was not purely based on the categories from the interview guide.

On the other hand, no significant observations were made with regards to the attitude, behavioural aspects, and appearance of the research participants. Consequently, both complementary and conflictual features were recorded in relation to the observations made of the research participants. It is worth noting that the recorded observations contributed enormously to the understanding and management of data.

Additionally, research participants from focus group discussions were more energised and unreserved in their approach to engage with the interviewer and shared their perceptions generously. This was opposed to the more strategic, calm, sophisticated, and cautious individual interviews with the Provincial Government officials – these approaches distinguished the character and conditions of the two research participants' classes.

6.3.2 Using NVivo in data analysing

Bazeley (2007:6-15) states that given the innovations in software technology, electronic techniques of data coding are gradually being more employed to obtain rigour in dealing with such data. Moreover, using a computer basically "ensures that

the user is working more methodically, more thoroughly, more attentively". Thus, qualitative researchers are encouraged to pursue employing this tool as much as possible in their works. In recognising the significance of software technology, Welsh (2002) posits in this regard that NVivo allows the researcher to bring order to his/her data and to identify commonalities and themes. From this perspective, NVivo was adopted because of the search facility; it provides more rigour, thus strengthening the validity of findings, whilst allowing the researcher the necessary freedom to integrate his/her analytical skills with navigation stages of the software.

Figure 6.2: Word Cloud – Frequent words that emerged from research participants

Source: Author's depiction.

Welsh (2002) further acknowledges that whilst the search facilities can provide more rigour, one should not solely rely on these methods. It is for this reason that the current study also laboured on the manual (*traditional method*) data analysis to complement the search facilities of the software and engage the data with more rigour and firm understanding of the meaning(s) contained.

Indeed, Welsh concedes also that NVivo does not analyse data, it is the researcher(s) that analyses and interprets the available data. Consequently, the researcher was more interested in gaining a better understanding of the philosophies

that inform the strategic nature of communication for governance and sustainability, whilst in pursuit of an inclusive citizenry engagement – within respective communities of the North-West Province, thus the complementary approaches espoused.

Figure 6.3: Word classification according to frequency hits
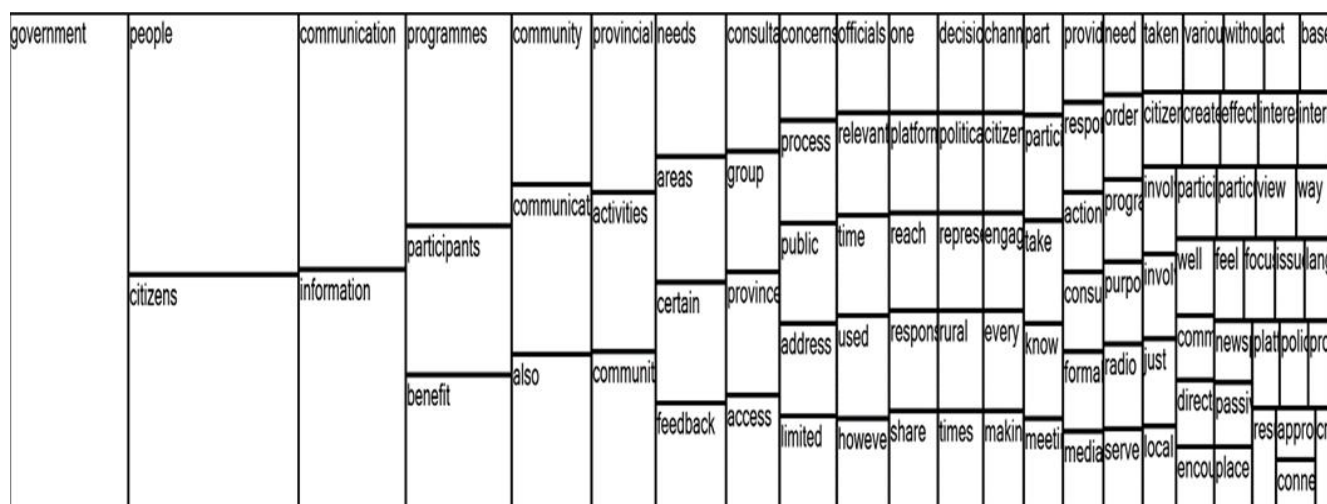
Source: Authors depiction.

After reading the transcripts generated from both focus groups and personal interviews thoroughly, the researcher noticed certain themes emerging. For example, one could find that certain words/phrases were utilised by certain members of the community, such as policy propositions or strategic thinking, to describe components of governance. It is these aspects which were coded in NVivo. NVivo is an excellent data management tool, but over reliance on it can result in the 'wrong' kind of analysis taking place. In order to achieve the best outcome it is important that researchers combine the use of NVivo with manual analysis as Welsh (2002) eloquently deliberated.

Nevertheless, the researcher exploited the facilities offered by the software, in terms of writing and developing nodes, memos and annotations, producing code booklets and making links between various sources, as the process indicated in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4: Procedure Followed in Applying NVivo Software
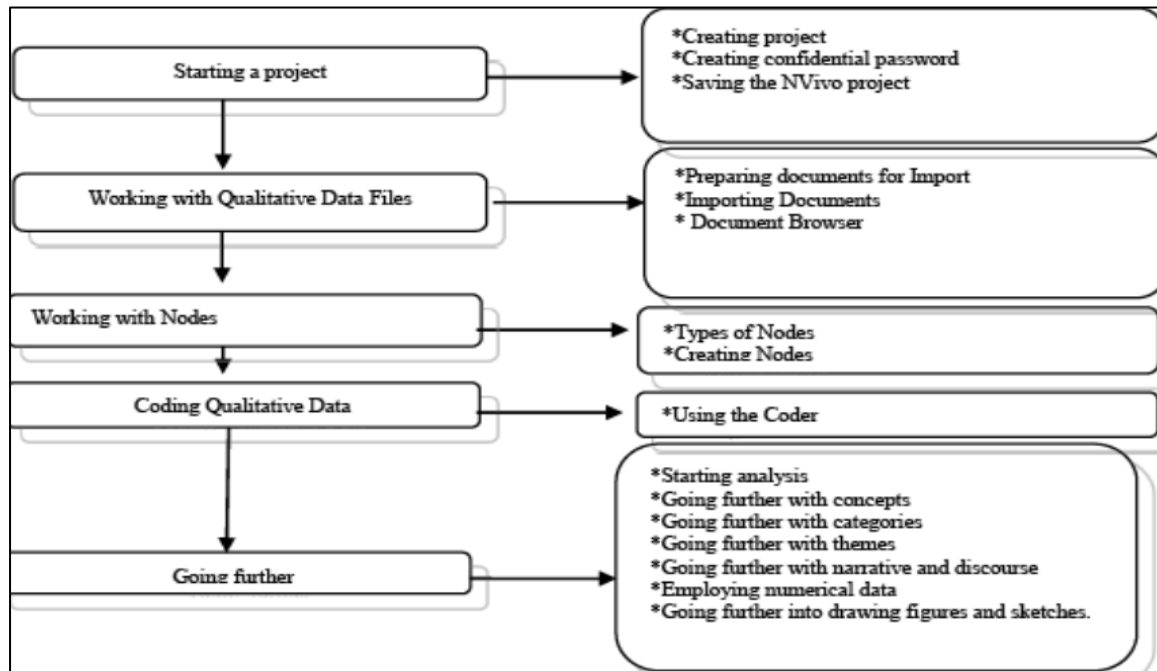
Source: Adopted from Bazeley (2007).

As indicated earlier, to complement the manual data analysis process, as adopted from Creswell, the researcher also adopted Bazeley's (2007) approach of applying the NVivo software for qualitative data analysis and interpretations. The author mentions five important tasks in which NVivo eases analysis of qualitative data. These tasks include:

o Managing data: by organising a number of muddled data documents. This includes interview transcripts, surveys, notes of observations and published documents. The current study systematically organised and managed interview transcripts (focus group and individual interviews) and notes of observations for analysis purposes.

o Managing ideas: in order to understand the conceptual and theoretical issues generated in the course of the study.

o Querying data: by posing several questions of the data and utilising the software in answering these queries. "Results of queries are saved to allow further interrogation and so querying or searching becomes part of an ongoing

enquiry process" (Bazeley, 2007:6-15). This approach was adapted to the latter, and thus enabled the study to engage with the data from different perspectives.

- o Modelling visually: by creating graphs to demonstrate the relationships between the conceptual and theoretical data. The current study demonstrates the relationship between conceptual and theoretical data by connecting themes, sub-themes and a participant's responses to the theoretical approaches adopted and presented in Chapter three and four respectively.

Figure 6.5: NVivo 11 plus – Nodes clustered by coding similarity

Nodes clustered by coding similarity

- Societal expectations of the provincial government's activities
- Understanding the provincial governments' five concretes and strategy for citizenry engagement
- Co-governance through communication to enhance citizenry participation
- Communication for representative governance and efficiency of programmes
- Inclusive and collaborative government programmes
- Information transparency and governance

Source: Author's depiction.

- o Reporting: by utilising the data collected, and the results found, to formulate transcript reports about the study conducted. In this study, the report of the data transcripts is therefore interpreted and presented as research results indicative of the views of the research participants.

6.3.3 Thematic analysis

To support and complement the computer-based software adopted in this study for both data management and analysis, Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that thematic analysis can be divided into six phases:

- o Organise the data – in the current study, raw data were collected, organised and prepared according to the approaches outlined in both Creswell (2009) and Bazeley (2007) for qualitative data management and analysis.

- o Generate categories or themes – both themes and sub-themes emerged from the management and organisation of raw data into meaningful information.

- o Code the data – as indicated earlier on, the process of coding was undertaken with the assistance of NVivo computer-based software and manual coding.

- o Test emergent understandings of the data – the researcher had to go back and forth reading through the data to make connections and associations of emerging texts for better understanding of the data.

- o Search for alternative explanations of the data – after carefully reading through the data several times, the process of coding the data, and categorising and searching for themes and sub-themes was repeated both manually and with the assistance of the afore-mentioned computer-based software in order to search for alternative explanations of the data, saturation was reached at the end.

- o Write-up the data analysis – in this qualitative research study, the process of gathering raw data, transcribing the data, continuously reading through the data, making sense of the emerging texts and categorising various texts into themes and sub-themes was undertaken with the purpose of presenting the research results. As a result, the write-up process is necessary as a way to present the consolidated viewpoints of the research participants in a systematic manner.

6.3.4 Emerging themes: accuracies, simplifications and concentration

In this study, after carefully reading through the transcripts in order to gain an overall understanding of each session with the objective to uncover the associated insights and meanings of each text, the researcher begun to notice recurring patterns. The importance of this stage lies in immersing one-self in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts (Agar, 1980, in de Vos *et al.*, 2005:337).

In the data set, the researcher identified trends or recurring patterns that reflected what the participants felt most strongly about; what expressed the strongest emotional content which moved them; and that was typical of their common life (Isazi-Diaz, 1993, in Johnson-Hill, 1998:33). Identifying leading themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link the participants is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavour (de Vos *et al.*, 2005:338). As interview sessions progressed, the researcher clustered recurring patterns and commonalities repeated by participants into emerging themes.

Falmagne (2006:171) contends that a tension arises between preserving and representing each participant's particular form of expression, whilst, at the same time, deriving broader meanings, interpretations and significances in the form of general themes common to all participants. This is because the outcome of research cannot merely be a collection of particularised events. Furthermore, histories as such might be presented in discrete themes or discrete participant characteristics.

Instead, Falmagne (2006:172) advocates a notion of simplification that preserves the richly described, socially constituted nature of concrete individuals while enabling social interpretations that transcend the particular event. This statement justifies the interpretive paradigm of the current study, as far as emergent themes were concerned, and guided the interpretation process.

Evaluating emergent themes with an awareness of participant accuracies and simplifications, the researcher found that the meaning expressed by one participant helped to understand and make sense of what came next from another participant, particularly during the focus group interviews. This justified one of the goals of analysis, which is to produce meaningful concentrations that make it possible to gain from one participant an understanding that can enhance one's knowledge of another participant as well (Falmagne, 2006:181).

In the main, theme analysis also involved noticing how one participant's expressions fitted into a chosen theme, while another might have indicated a divergence from the theme. Accordingly, emergent themes and sub-themes are therefore presented in the next section exploring the research results.

6.4. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

This study was undertaken with the intention and the strategic focus of presenting the experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of the identified research participants on the topic of strategic communication management for governance and sustainability programmes. Whilst employing a participatory communication perspective to attain inclusive citizenry engagement in four districts of the North-West Province, of South Africa.

To achieve this intention and strategic focus, various methods and techniques were adopted in order to collect the necessary data from the research participants as indicated from chapter five. After gathering the raw data, complementary techniques were adopted to engage with and understand the collected data. Continuous reading and re-reading of the data were done with the purpose of preparing the data for the coding process; for categorisation; identifying and classifying the data into themes and sub-themes for systematic data analysis and presentation.

Against this backdrop, the presentation of the research results herein outlines the central themes and sub-themes associated with various perspectives of the research participants on the phenomena of interest to the current study. The presentation of the research results is therefore structured according to the discussion of central-themes and subsequent sub-themes. To begin, results from the focus group interviews in four districts of the North-West Province are presented first, then secondly, follows the results from the individual interviews, and lastly, a synthesis of the results is presented to offer a holistic perspective of the research results.

Accordingly, it is important to note that central-themes are connected to various sub-themes and thus presented systematically for better understanding of the research results. Additionally, the presentation begins with the discussion of central-themes, after which the sub-themes are presented in Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7. In this regard, the tables outline the sub-themes, responses and theory in three side-by-side columns. In a block below the three side-by-side columns, a discussion of the theme's responses in relation to the theory is presented.

6.4.1 Research results – focus group discussions

As indicated earlier on, the presentation of the research results is two-fold: Firstly, results from the focus group interviews are presented. Secondly, results from the individual interviews, are presented and interpreted. After this process, the results are combined and synthesised to produce a holistic overview of the research results for the current study on the topic of 'strategic communication management for governance and sustainability, with a participatory communication perspective for the attainment of inclusive citizenry engagement' in the North-West Province. The procedure, as outlined earlier, was therefore carried throughout the presentation of the research results.

a) **Inclusive and collaborative Provincial Government programmes – central theme**

Inclusive and collaborative Provincial Government programmes emerged as the overarching central theme that included areas or sub-themes such as 1) access to information and government responsiveness to the challenges and opportunities concerning the welfare of citizens, 2) in addition, dialogic communication and consultations were viewed as the connection to the central theme and discussed accordingly. Under the central theme, research participants advanced numerous perspectives and connotations to better explain their experiences and knowledge of the phenomena of interest to the current study. The majority of the research participants under study were of the view that some of the Provincial Government programmes had an impact on their living conditions and as such propelled a particular desire and expectation to be fulfilled. However, participants indicated that most of their expectations in relation to the significance and flexibility of the programmes left much to be desired.

It emerged that not all identified programmes and activities encouraged inclusivity because the role and involvement of citizens in the planning and implementation of government programmes was deemed unsatisfactory and minimal. Participants further carried a notion that:

"Majority of the Provincial Government programmes are often imposed on us rather than negotiated and discussed for consensus and mutual collaborations, we can't any action on something we don't know".

In this regard, participants also alluded that communications of the programmes benefited selective individuals and communities closer to the Provincial Government headquarters, and consequently, isolated those in secluded areas of the Province. Those in secluded areas of the Province were isolated primarily because of inadequate information shared as a provision to influence citizens' attitude towards the offerings of government.

As the research participants articulated further, another challenge associated with deficiency of inclusivity was the fact that collaborative participation amongst the Provincial Government and ordinary citizens remained restrictive. Five of the participants contended that the relationship was also unhealthy as the viewpoints and suggestions often offered by citizens were not incorporated into the broader strategic plan of the Provincial Government. Moreover, it also emerged that:

"Political patronage is extended to politicians and other affiliated cronies to gain and maintain political mileage instead of inclusive representation in our communities".

This exercise was cited as an element of maintaining political power, whilst entrenching selective hegemony in government activities. Likewise, two other participants attributed that the development agenda and future direction of the Province was influenced and decided without the consent and inputs of the majority of citizens. As a result, participants postulated further that many community unrests and dissatisfactions were at times premised on the inability of the Provincial Government to prioritise the legitimate demands of citizens, as well as, to adequately address their expectations. Accordingly, research participants made reference to several other challenges that contributed enormously to the ineffectiveness of government to inculcate a responsive and an inclusive culture. Such includes:

o Communication campaigns and efforts dedicated to encourage citizenry inclusivity remained less effective as some citizens resembled high levels of apathy towards initiated government activities;

- Identified Provincial Government programmes for citizens were viewed as abstract and less practical to effect a degree of change either in attitude or behaviour;
- Messaging and planning had no durable effect and essentially are not tailored to resemble communicative action on the part of citizens; and
- Governance initiatives and sustainability (developmental) programmes were not citizenry-oriented, thus citizens often struggled to recognise inclusivity and co-governance in most government operations.

From the afore-mentioned, it is relatively evident that research participants held numerous perceptions of what their relationship with the Provincial Government suggests. Regrettably, the majority of the views expressed resembled a negative impact on the Provincial Government activities to engage with citizens.

> *"Inadequate information and ineffective communication processes are part of the main challenges embedded in our understanding of the provision of various programmes".*

This often hindered a healthier and dialogic relationship among citizens and the Provincial Government. For the same reasons, two other supportive sub-themes seemed ideal to complement and embrace inclusive and collaborative government programmes as the operational theme. Consequently, the sub-theme(s) serve as the detailed exploration of the central theme. A discussion of the responses from the research participants linked with the relevant theory is therefore presented in separate columns as outlined from Table 6.1.

Central theme – Inclusive and collaborative Provincial Government programmes		
Sub-theme 1	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Access to information and government responsiveness	This sub-theme emerged directly from the viewpoints of the research participants. For citizenry engagement and inclusivity to be realised, it is imperative to work on the gains of positive mutual relationships, and thus it is also significant to evaluate and understand the management of relationships as a strategic management process. Subsequently, research participants articulated various perspectives on the said theme as follows: • The majority of the research participants were of the view that some of the Provincial Government programmes were not inclusive and transparent to all citizens to enable a long-term positive effect due to inadequate information shared with citizens. • Participants further acknowledged that some of the programmes "*are not responsive to our immediate needs and interests because such programmes often miscarried our aspirations and participative desires*". • It emerged that communication channels and platforms used to communicate government programmes and initiatives unsuccessfully reached all citizens. Because of the political personification in some programmes (i.e. local radio stations) local newspapers, and government websites were mostly used for political grandstanding instead of sharing relevant information with citizens. • At times, "*information communicated to me appeared to be more abstract to comprehend and to take the necessary required action as part of my public participation*". • Those in remote areas of the Province were not empowered to access information disseminated through digital channels due to their secluded conditions, such as the digital divide and lack of integrative platforms (they are more reliant on	○ Haider *et al*. (2011) affirm that access to information is critical for enabling citizens to exercise their voice, to effectively monitor and hold government to account, and to enter into informed dialogue about decisions which affect their lives. It is seen as vital for empowering all citizens, including vulnerable and excluded people, to claim their broader rights and entitlements. ○ Consequently, Sjoberg *et al*. (2015) write that the literature on efficacy has suggested that the extent to which citizens feel that government is responsive to them affects their participation. In this regard, literature has frequently assumed that levels of participation are intrinsically linked to system responsiveness: the more responsive government is the more likely citizens are to participate. ○ As Haider *et al*. (2011) further articulate, many commentators caution that access to information does not necessarily lead to greater citizen participation, state accountability and state responsiveness. In many developing countries, there are real structural and political barriers which hinder both the capacity and incentives of governments to produce information, and the ability of citizens to claim their right to information and to use it to demand better governance and public services. ○ Likewise, the King III Report (2009) argue that strategic management of communication is the ability to utilise resources significantly in positioning the needs and

one-way traditional methods without feedback opportunities).

- Participants further confirmed that those in the capital city and other developed towns had the privilege of more access to information about programmes because of technological advancements and improved basic living conditions in those areas of the Province.
- Essentially, planned activities and programmes did not encourage inclusivity as citizens did not understand their own role(s) in the advancement of planned programmes.
- Some of the research participants further advanced that citizens who enjoyed the attention of government programmes were viewed as politically connected and party-affiliates – those with political relations and dominance to the sitting Provincial Government were regarded as better served and included in all productive activities.
- Participants alluded that: "*the nature of our relationship with the Provincial Government is mostly one-way and imbalanced".* The relationship only benefited the government rather than citizens at large – more often than not, citizenry aspirations were not cherished and were mostly neglected.
- In the main, it also emerged that the relationship had no durable effect as citizens were only engaged and taken into confidence when the Provincial Government championed a particular programme of interest to itself, instead of all citizens.
- Some of the research participants further indicated that the relationship became stronger and fulfilling during the 'election period' as some of the Provincial Government officials sought to solicit their 'votes' and confirmation – during this period, adequate mechanisms to engage citizens were optimal.
- One of the participants strongly believed that *"information about programmes is made available to us through political campaigns"* – the engagement process was selective and

interests of stakeholders (in this case citizens) at the forefront. In doing so, organisations are able to manage strategic relationships together with citizens' expectations for social change and cohesion.

○ The Report also indicates that these can further be achieved when complete, timely, relevant, accurate, honest and accessible information is provided by the organisation to its stakeholders, whilst having regard to legal and strategic considerations (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011).

○ Consequently, Julies (2006) posits that citizens and their representatives need goal-oriented information to make informed choices and open channels of communication operating in two directions – from Government to the citizenry, and from the citizenry to Government.

○ In addition, Hallahan *et al.* (2007) point out that the use of strategic communication is more than disseminating information it is also the active solicitation of stakeholders' perspectives. It ensures a two-way flow of communication, addresses human factors such as sociology, psychology, culture, behaviour, and politics, and helps to build consensus and partnerships regarding the development agenda.

○ Agunga (1997) argues that rather than information transmission, communication should be looked at as a process aimed at creating and stimulating an understanding that forms the basis of development.

○ On the other hand, GSDRC (2010) states that improved communication between citizens and states has also been credited with encouraging Government

	thus did not include those with conflictual viewpoints. • Three of the research participants suggested that planned programmes and capacity-building activities were diverted to serve political strong-holds of certain government officials, while citizens had no sound relationship with the Provincial Government. • Moreover, the majority of the research participants articulated that allocation of resources was based on political patronage. It was also mentioned that some government officials tend to focus more on communities of their origin to gain more popularity and community loyalty, for their future ambitions. • Contrary to other views, a number of research participants strongly believed that the Provincial Government do communicate and disseminate relevant information to citizens via local radio stations and local newspapers. To share the vision of government on a weekly basis, they further advanced that some citizens failed to differentiate government activities from political campaigns, thus remained doubtful of legitimate government programmes.	responsiveness to citizens' demands and resulting in better public services. More often than not, however, this communication between citizen and state cannot be realised directly and must be facilitated by intermediary actors – strategic communicators. ○ Panagiotopoulos *et al.* (2013) argue that a complementary view of responsiveness emphasises the capacity to listen, facilitating an understanding of the audience and promoting new ways of engaging. Commitment to listening not only improves the government's ability to react but also enhances its role to create public value. ○ This marks what Vigoda (2002) describes as a shift from administrative to collaborative responsiveness. Collaboration not only in terms of increasing direct interactions but also in terms of the government's ability to change behaviours and engage proactively.

Discussion – *Access to information and government responsiveness*

It is borne in mind that a government that prioritise the provision to adequate information is more responsive to the needs, interests and expectations of citizens as the literature indicates. The views articulated by the research participants consequently resembled an unsatisfactory and linear relationship with the government of the North-West Province. It was evident from the assertions carried by the research participants that communication is not practiced and viewed as a strategic function with the potential and capacity to positively leverage government programmes for efficient citizenry participation and contribution. Moreover, emphasis is placed on information transmission rather than communication looked at as a strategic process aimed at creating and stimulating understanding as the theory captured. Consequently, it remains unclear how some government programmes capacitated and enhanced social cohesion through structured, tailored, and citizenry-oriented messages to address public apathy and encourage inclusive collaborations. A couple of the participants further highlighted that social media platforms and other digital channels utilised to inform citizens disadvantaged those in rural areas. Information communicated on government websites, and the use of Facebook pages and Twitter handles could not reach every citizen, especially those without access to an internet connection, a smart and portable devices. In addition, participants argued that some of the citizens were illiterate, and solely relied on local radio stations for information, which were often used as political battle fields. Likewise, the enthusiasm for incorporating a role for citizens into democratic decision-making is not limited to South African governance structures, as many other countries have extensive initiatives in place that involve citizens in the governing process (for example, Nylen 2002; Trenam, 2000; Buchy and Race, 2001; OECD, 2001). To this end, it emerged that some of the

research participants believed that the Provincial Government was dedicated to creating awareness campaigns as a strategy to capacitate citizens with information on various programmes. Subsequently, participants held that communication offered an opportunity for the Provincial Government to deliberate on how citizens can benefit socially and economically from numerous programmes. On the contrary, a number of the research participants did advocate that political patronage was entrenched for individual interests at the expense of the majority – as discussed, the extension of patronage was aimed at soliciting political authority and populism rather than the promotion of an inclusive environment where everyone was empowered to advance shared objectives.

Sub-theme 2	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Dialogic communication and consultations	To address the needs, interests and expectations of various citizens, the Provincial Government should have mechanisms in place to constructively engage citizens. Citizenry involvement in dialogic communication and sufficient consultations emerged directly as a sub-theme from the research participants, and they related the following attributes: • The Provincial Government did not provide citizens with information as expected; consultations were selective and mostly occurred when the government stands to benefit out of the process. *"Consultations are only compulsory during community toitoi (protest)", and a matter of formality.* • Several participants held that citizens were partially involved in activities organised and planned by the Provincial Government simply because some had no interest and others felt not included in the initial stages; the process was thus believed to be not dialogic. • Participants further exclaimed that *"those who often get involved in the activities of our government are those citizens benefiting directly or indirectly from the offerings of the Provincial Government"* – some were more active and others more passive. • Moreover, one of the participants indicated that *"communication and engagement processes are not properly planned to encourage inclusivity and ultimately involve us"* – as a result, citizens were just passive receivers without substantial influence.	○ Deliberation can also influence public opinion – a recent study showed that informed public deliberation can improve civic engagement and electoral support for good governance (Wantchekon, 2009). It is often argued that public dialogue and deliberation in decision-making increases public understanding and ownership of reform and therefore its long-term sustainability (Haider *et al.*, 2011). ○ The dialogic perspective is a form of communication that can construct positive realities that enable participants to effectively manage and learn from their differences and diversity. Herzig and Chasin (2006:139-140) conceptualise the dialogic approach as being the opposite of argumentative debate – whereas in argumentation participants compete and try to win, in dialogue they collaborate and mutually try to understand each other. ○ Nevertheless, Panos (2007) contends that in order to impact on governance outcomes, public officials need to be willing to be influenced by public opinion. In practice, the line between sophisticated communication which seeks to 'manufacture' consent, and genuine consultation, which shows a willingness to engage people and possibly change plans based on their input, can often be blurred.

	• On the other hand, a couple of other participants suggested that the Provincial Government did consult citizens to better understand and mitigate their concerns and expectations. However, the latter statement was contested by other participants, as they believed that the Provincial Government strategically provided for areas near the capital city and their home towns. • Remote areas and other undeveloped townships were excluded from the Provincial Government activities as articulated by the research participants. • Interestingly, some of the participants articulated that general consultations were initiated to gain political mileage and as such, consultations were viewed as unidirectional processes with no feedback mechanisms. • Consequently, beneficial information was restricted as the intended communication process had a one-way outlook.	o Importantly, the dialogic approach requires a mutual, symmetrical relationship in which the participants are turned toward each other in the tension of holding their own grounds while being open to the other (Herzig & Chasin, 2006:140). o According to Kaplan (1969), deliberations require mutual implication and communion because dialogue focuses on discovering shared concerns between the participants and surfacing differences when they are not obvious, it can result in original insights and perspectives. o So pertinently, Argenti *et al.* (2005) argued that strategic communication conveys deliberate messages through the most suitable media to the designated audiences at the appropriate time to contribute to and achieve the desired long-term effect.

Discussion – *Dialogic communication and consultations*

Literature on dialogic communication points out that deliberate communication is essential in building and maintaining strategic relationships with citizens. Through dialogue, communication acts as the transfer-belt of information dissemination and incorporates the legitimate concerns of parties involved so as to mitigate challenges and offer consensus through mutual consultations. It was for this reason that some of the research participants positioned that citizenry consultations were often worrisome as some officials disregarded the legitimate interests and expectations of some citizens. As captured from the responses of the research participants, intended communication programmes seemingly had no durable effect to strategically communicate the message and vision of the Provincial Government. Accordingly, other communication campaigns and efforts to involve citizens were seen as the extension of political patronage – a system that benefited fewer political cronies rather than the majority of citizens. As a result of the political patronage lineage, communication as the lifeblood of human interactions failed to manifest positive and healthier strategic relationships. Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic communication requires *mutuality* in the reciprocal exchange and a display of *empathy* regarding the recipient's contribution to the dialogue. It is also necessary to make a *commitment* to identifying the benefits afforded by dialogue to publics, not just to the organisation. It also emerged that the transmission of information through various channels remained unidirectional and consultations were regarded as restrictive. Masango and Mfene (2012:74) believe that citizen empowerment is one of the critical factors that could contribute towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of goods and services. For instance, when citizens are well-provided with knowledge relating to their rights, as well as the obligations and the roles of public officials as service providers, they could participate meaningfully in the processes of service delivery, since, in such cases, they could demand their rights and hold the government accountable. More often than not, consultation processes were also viewed as fragmented opportunities solely established to benefit the

carrier(s) of the message instead of the receiver. Nonetheless, a couple of other research participants did postulate that important and goal-directed messages were continuously shared with citizens, to effect, a particular degree of action. Moreover, it was also mentioned that a hospitable environment and other opportunities on how citizens can support and engage the Provincial Government were limited to political affiliates as a way to maintain party-loyalty and popularity within government and political circles by some public officials. From the view of Singh (2008), it is without a doubt that democratic deliberation offers citizens and public officials an opportunity to come together to find solutions to problems. Dialogic communication may be especially helpful for resource-constrained governments in designing public policy measures that find broad acceptance. Consequently, political analysis must guide development actors' use of communication strategies.

Table 6.1 – Inclusive and collaborative Provincial Government programmes

b) Co-governance through deliberate communication to enhance citizenry participation – central theme

It is widely argued that increased community consultations and public participation in government decision-making produce many important benefits. Through this process, deliberate communication is shared and interpreted amongst parties to produce favourable outcomes. In this regard, consensus is maintained on a consistent basis, and public participation becomes a pre-requisite for co-governance initiatives and the overarching strategic plan. Co-governance through deliberate communication as a priority to enhance citizenry participation emerged indirectly from several research participants, focused at how purposeful communication can stimulate legitimate interests in advocating for people-centred governance initiatives.

In this sense, some of the research participants believed that espoused communication programmes inadequately pursued sufficient citizenry participation. It emerged that both channels and techniques adopted to enhance citizenry participation were not optimal in embracing a highly engaged and active citizenry. Public apathy remained the primary challenge in leveraging citizenry participation to produce co-governance and an informed citizenry, as participants articulated.

For all intents and purposes, a number of the research participants cited that a great deal of time and effort is not invested in understanding the main concerns advocated by communities – one further held that:

> "……..*Bureaucratic constraints on the part of the Provincial Government often disadvantaged every opportunity to communicate effectively with us*".

In addition, four of the research participants were of the view that restrained communicative programmes were often a manifestation of poorly planned and managed communication objectives, and as such, failed to incorporate the 'choices and inputs' of ordinary citizens into the dominant coalition of governance initiatives.

"…….I can say that our views are not important on the agenda of the government, their operations don't include our thinking".

As the research participants further postulated, the realisation of inclusive citizenry participation in shaping and contributing to the development of policies, influencing governance decisions, and mutually reaching solutions to problems associated with communication was observed as an implausible objective. Consequently, communication messages and campaigns were viewed as a mere formality, elements of publicity stunt at times, and most importantly, a process of informing communities about different imposed government initiatives as participants confirmed.

Surprisingly, eight of the research participants alluded that sufficient opportunities were provided to encourage public dialogue and balanced participation as a vehicle to achieve common-goals. In essence, communication channels were sensibly and purposefully selected to adequately address the intentions of the Provincial Government, as the participants suggested. Furthermore, it was argued that government programmes to some degree empowered citizens to necessarily seek more information and productively engage in achieving social, economic and environmental benefits for a sustainable future.

Subsequently, participants validated that not all citizens were passive in understanding the vision of the Provincial Government – more so, citizens also continuously sought opportunities to learn and emancipate themselves with the relevant information shared and, which was often available at their disposal. Citizen participation defines the societal context in which policies are formulated. Policies are designed to address certain social issues that stand out as problems in society. If citizens participate, a great deal of information that defines the social context in which a particular policy can be made, can be placed on the agenda.

Central theme – Co-governance through deliberate communication to enhance citizenry participation		
Sub-theme 3	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Citizenry-participation in governance initiatives	This sub-theme emerged indirectly from the research participants as an attempt to conceptualise the contribution and role of ordinary citizens in pursuit of common governance initiatives pioneered by the Provincial Government. The following remarks represent the views of the participants: • It emerged from the participants that their contribution and role in most governance initiatives was often minimal because such initiatives were not communicated adequately and purposefully to enable the required action or influence. *"Nothing is communicated to us on time or effectively, we are almost in the dark about most activities".* • Two of the research participants indicated that it remained unclear how they were expected to contribute to the governance of the Province, as the necessary and empowering information was not forthcoming. • A couple of other participants suggested that citizenry participation in some areas of governance only involved fewer citizens. Those citizens were believed to be well informed of various initiatives and at times, close allies to public representatives. • Moreover, a number of other research participants strongly argued that some of the citizens were passive and apathetic of governance initiatives, and as a result, their participation was not guaranteed, which led to a deficiency in engagement and citizenry participation as a whole. *"People want things to follow them, they sit and do nothing".* • One of the participants alluded to the fact that, some of	○ Heaselgrave and Simmons (2016) contend that governments at all levels are required to engage with communities and enable participation in decision-making. There are many indicators that citizens want to engage and participate in government deliberations, albeit selectively, on a range of issues. ○ Taylor and Fransman (2004:1) provide information about the importance of citizen participation and write that citizen participation in governance is regarded by many as having the potential to reduce poverty and social injustice by strengthening citizens' rights and voice, influencing policy making, enhancing local governance, and improving the accountability and responsiveness of institutions. ○ According to Pope (2000:247) an informed citizenry, aware of its rights and asserting them confidently, is a vital foundation for a national integrity system. An apathetic public that does not take part in governance provides a fertile ground for widespread corruption, fraud and maladministration. ○ Moreover, the author argues that participation in Government must empower citizens with information and the vital tools to shape their own destiny. Public participation and communication can never be viewed as a matter of legislative compliance only, but lies at the heart of good governance (Pope, 2000). ○ Nelson and Wright (1995), for example, emphasise the

the governance initiatives and programmes offered no assurance of economic benefits for citizens – available benefits were said to be enjoyed by politically connected individuals and some influential business individuals in the Province. One remarked that…..*"If you're not politically informed or in good terms with the leadership you won't survive in this province"*.

- On the contrary, few of the participants believed that their contribution to governance initiatives was strongly encouraged by the opportunities the Provincial Government created to engage and share the vision of the North-West Province. They further argued that opportunities created were a form of co-governance as they influenced and shaped the direction of the Province – their contribution was thus to hold the Provincial Government accountable to agreed and discussed initiatives.

- However, several other participants felt disadvantaged to contribute to the governance of the Province because of their remote locations. Consequently, secluded areas and disgruntled township members were cited as key factors contributing to high levels of disengagement and uneven-citizenry participation.

- Some of the research participants believed word-of-mouth to be a more reliable source of information rather than formal platforms used – as a result, citizens resembled high levels of apathy towards government programmes and activities.

participation process as a transformative tool for social change. In addition, citizen involvement is intended to produce better decisions and thus more efficiency benefits to the rest of society (Beierle 1999, Thomas 1995).

o The enthusiasm accorded to citizen participation is the belief that citizen involvement in governance will produce more public-preference decision-making on the part of the administrators and a better appreciation of one's larger community on the part of the public (Stivers, 1990; Oldfield, 1990; Box, 1998).

o Indeed, the debate swirling around citizen participation is no longer 'representative Government vs. citizen participation', but what type of citizen participation process is best (e.g., Konisky & Beierle, 2001).

o Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) conquer that participation by local residents and stakeholders changes policy. It also makes policy more likely to be effective. Communication and education techniques can enhance the effectiveness of people or groups seeking to participate. People's participation not only improves the programme and adds credibility, but also strengthens their skills to do similar work in the future. A general increase in 'bargaining power' via communicative, social and political competence is needed.

Discussion – *Citizenry-participation in governance initiatives*

Governance dictates that, as Walsh (2003b:26) concludes – the benefits of participating in public dialogue are far from obvious. Although the format of the programmes has the potential to increase internal and external efficacy, enlarge social identities and lead perceptions of community to be more inclusive, the data are not decisive in these respects. From this perspective, it is recognised that citizenry participation assumes a fundamental role of strengthening public discourse and governance principles. Research participants of the current study postulated that citizenry participation at the grassroots level is not realised because the Provincial Government had no mechanisms to expose citizens to participatory programmes. Participants advocated that the majority of

government initiatives, established 'for' citizens and not 'with' citizens, had no positive effect on perceptions of responsiveness of the government, but possibly a negative effect on individuals' sense of ability to affect policy, influence key decisions and contribute to the success of the Province. On the contrary, a few other participants strongly believed that the Provincial Government should be credited for establishing opportunities to incorporate citizens in the broader governance strategy because their views and understanding remain central to the successful implementation of both governance initiatives and developmental programmes. Additionally, those participants argued that relevant information was shared to expose more citizens to the benefits and value of various programmes – this process intensified citizenry participation in the Province. Citizen participation or engagement in decision-making processes is a requirement for the success of local governments, however, it is particularly challenging for local authorities to incorporate results from public consultations into the decision-making process and show how contributions were used. In a sense, it also emerged that word-of-mouth (WOM) was the main source of information and a reliable communication process shared by friends, relatives, family, and community members about the importance of several activities pioneered by the Provincial Government. Word-of-mouth was therefore regarded as the appropriate method of transmitting the message rather than some channels espoused by the Provincial Government due to reliability and flexibility. As suggested, citizenry participation encapsulated a political manifestation because opportunities to influence strategic processes benefitted political relationships more than the majority of citizens, as the research participants confirmed. Importantly, citizenry participation in Provincial Government activities is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. Such two-way, horizontal approaches to communication include public hearings, debates, deliberations and stakeholder consultations and active participatory forums.

Sub-theme 4	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Organised and intentional communication	For governance to effect a desired action and enact durable outcomes, there is a need for organised and deliberate communication targeted at specific audiences and tailored programmes – as emerged from the research participants. In the main, subsequent responses were recorded directly from the participants as follows: • The majority of the research participants concurred that communication processes were not clearly articulated and not systematically organised to benefit citizens. • A couple of the participants further positioned that communication between citizens and the Provincial Government was a matter of formality; no concrete details were shared to emancipate and liberate citizens – particularly those from disadvantaged areas of the Province. *"Our meetings and discussions have never*	○ Hallahan (2015) contends that, to achieve organisational goals, communication objectives must be planned and implemented in support of the specific organisational strategy and execution plan; such should include the aspirations of all stakeholder groupings. ○ Interestingly, Thomas and Stephens (2015) write that from an organisation's perspective, managing communication is essentially the same as managing any other strategic activity. ○ To achieve organisational value, Hallahan *et al.* (2007) maintain that strategic communication recognises that purposeful influence is the fundamental goal of communications by organisations. Whereas certain disciplines are conceptually grounded merely in providing

reflected positive benefits, it's just meetings for their records"…as one remarked.

- However, three other participants suggested that the Provincial Government had effective structures in place to communicate directly and intentionally with citizens. It was more of a duty for citizens to avail themselves for the information shared in order to benefit.
- On the other hand, a number of other participants indicated that communication from citizens (bottom-up approach) directed at the Provincial Government had no durable effect as the views of citizens were not incorporated into government's planning and decisions. Much of the issues were discussed at the top (vertical) level and imposed at the grassroots (horizontal) level.
- The afore-mentioned statement was therefore supported by four other participants. They exclaimed that communication between citizens and the Provincial Government resembled a top-down approach as communicators decided what was relevant and or not for citizens (filtering of information). One of the participants opined that……"*we never get the opportunity to hold our government accountable, it's always them telling us what to do and how to do it".*
- The top-down approach implied that the Provincial Government communicated to citizens at a particular time while using methods determined by and to serve the interests of government, as participants articulated.
- As a result of the top-down communication approach, participants felt that the Provincial Government should have an oversight committee which will be entrusted with the strategic role of monitoring, evaluating, and providing interventions where communication and information dissemination had shortcomings.

information (e.g., technical communication) or in establishing and maintaining mutually satisfactory relationships (public relations), these foci are only necessary – but not sufficient – conditions for organisations to achieve strategically important goals.

○ Thomas (2009) specifically emphasises that the practice of and importance of communication should be derived from four interlinked terms, namely: strategic, anticipatory, planned, and co-ordinated manner. It is clear from Thomas's assertion that the use of 'strategic' implies actionable communication with a particular goal; and the use of 'anticipatory' simply implies that communication should be viewed as proactive rather than a reactive process.

○ In addition, other unique terms used interchangeably in Thomas's assertion are 'planned, and co-ordinated manner'; for communication to contribute meaningfully, there is a need for maximum planning coupled with directed objectives (Thomas, 2009).

○ Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) therefore suggest that since Aristotle scholars fought over 'vertical' (dominant) and 'horizontal' (democratic) models. Communication by definition incorporates feedback. Information does not - hence, communication is the transmission belt between information dissemination and action planning.

Discussion – *Organised and intentional communication*

Strategic communication is always goal oriented; seeking to achieve a specific desired outcome that the planners determine to be beneficial for them (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). The theoretical background categorically indicates that organised and intentional communication empowers actors to purposefully analyse and understand the value of shared objectives, while communicating with a view to positively influence programme outcomes. In this regard, communication should be looked at and organised as a strategic process with the potential to enhance stakeholder confidence in decision-making; to coherently consolidate divergent perspectives; and to produce mutual relationships. Against this backdrop, participants elucidated that government communication efforts had no durable effect because of the top-down communication approach adopted to engage with citizens. The top-down approach nullified all possible intentions for citizens to meaningfully contribute to the welfare of the Province, as participants remarked. Legitimate concerns and views of citizens remained at the horizontal level without influencing democratic processes – this was one of the reasons that contributed to the creation of passive, apathetic, and uninformed citizens. Thornhill and Hanekom (cited in Masango & Mfene, 2012:83), state that communication is a critical requirement for effective management. This statement explains the need for usage of communication as a strategic tool to achieve the purpose of managing effectively. Furthermore, it was suggested that an oversight committee be established to facilitate planned, co-ordinated, and strategic communication programmes to adequately incorporate the aspirations of citizens and also to ensure that maximum participation coupled with citizenry education materialise. The oversight committee should also be empowered to ensure that equal representation is achieved to enable consensus and continuous dialogic communication with all parties involved. The execution therefore of communication programmes need to be co-ordinated and aligned to the overall organisational strategy for maximum impact – this perspective should be adopted in the North-West Province as part of the broader governance strategy to influence developmental programmes and achieve common objectives. Accordingly, this process in nature simply intensifies and connects to strategic communication in building an inclusive organisational approach.

Table 6.2 – Co-governance through deliberate communication to enhance citizenry participation

c) Communication for adequate representation and participative governance initiatives – central theme

Seemingly, communication is often negatively cited as a barrier in crisis circumstances that many institutions such as governmental departments and other private organisations have to contend with. However, the same communication is never credited in producing economic benefits – whilst, also influencing strategic decisions and shared-goals. In essence, the positive contributions of several communication programmes and campaigns to the success of organisational objectives are often overlooked and mostly neglected. As it materialised, research participants advanced that communication efforts aimed at constructing an inclusive and integrative society was unsuccessful in adequately representing the immediate needs and interests of ordinary citizens.

> ………. *"Our problem is that nothing comes from us – the citizens, most of the activities we are expected to join do not represent us and our expectations".*

Moreover, targeted communication campaigns were also unsuccessful in advocating for citizenry-oriented developmental programmes and governance initiatives – to influence policies, advance ethical leadership, and contribute to the overarching Provincial Governments' Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal strategy.

Consequently, a number of participants asserted that the development of communication messages to influence and encourage a wider societal representation in governance reforms lacked a participative component, thus participation was only limited to fewer 'politically sponsored' individuals and groupings. In this sense, a participative component basically implied the incapacity of communication programmes to resemble collaborative measures for parties involved to work towards accomplishing negotiated goals through consensus. Surprisingly, participants further expounded that mutual collaborations based on legitimate agreements as a participative component did not guarantee a smooth flow of meaningful two-way discussions among actors. In this regard, the consensual participative process would ensure that, information is not restricted or limited to benefit individual interests; and participants are more concerned with ensuring that

the process becomes successful and contribute to capacitating community members at large.

Fundamental to the realisation of adequate representation in governance initiatives and other extended government activities, is the competence and the strategic focus of communicators to comprehensively disseminate explicitly tailored messages to the targeted audience, as the majority of the research positioned. Participants argued that some government officials, as the carriers of information, lacked basic skills to effectively educate citizens on the advantages of several programmes.

……. *"The very same people who must educate us and communicate with us are not well informed, they simply don't know what to do in community platforms".*

Interestingly, it remained unclear how citizens were expected to contribute and influence governance initiatives, especially because communicators were viewed as less competent to transmit strategic messages to the benefit of ordinary citizens.

……. *"Some of the officials are even afraid to face communities, as they know that our hopes are destroyed daily. They can't account or respond to our basic concerns across the province".*

Accordingly, a couple of other participants remarked that other government communicators inspired no confidence when communicating the vision and future prospects of government. More so, a sense of professionalism in articulating and addressing citizenry expectations was one of the missing-ingredients in achieving participative governance in the North-West Province. It is thus imperative that citizens be empowered in terms of information of the services to which they are entitled. To a greater extent, citizenry empowerment as a process, makes power available to citizens in order for them to gain access to resources, maintaining thus that beneficiary empowerment facilitates early and meaningful decision-making at policy and programme/project levels.

For citizenry empowerment to be realised as a two-way governance process, public officials must provide information and support for policy-changes and review through their relevant political principals, who then present these changes at the provincial

cabinet level or legislature for enactment into policy propositions – this process must therefore be citizenry-oriented rather than individualistic or a political personification process. In the view of Cornish *et al.* (2011), at their most basic, effective strategic communication is a two-way process, relaying the reactions and views of the various audiences involved. This audience feedback should inform the periodic adaptation and adjustment of policy and strategy. This means moving away from an approach to communication that focuses disproportionately on domestic media relations, 'sound-bites' and 'photo-opportunities' at the expense of a stronger, but perhaps more subtle, strategic message. More ambitiously still, strategic communication could be understood as going beyond media messaging to help develop a targeted campaign of behavioural or social change informed by close knowledge of the audience.

Central theme – Communication for adequate representation and participative governance initiatives		
Sub-theme 5	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Governance as a two-way communicative process	Communication should always be viewed as a two-way aligned process where participative governance assumes the centre stage for all parties concerned to enjoy similar and agreed benefits. This sub-theme also emerged indirectly from participants in response to understanding the role of deliberate communication in enhancing participative governance. The following articulations represent the views of the research participants: • The majority of the participants argued that much of the Provincial Government's communication efforts were dedicated to reachable or near-by locations, simply because activations and awareness campaigns were carried out often in those locations. This disadvantaged those in remote areas – as such, communication failed to enhance participative governance and restricted the wide-spreading of information across the Province. • Regrettably, a couple of other research participants strongly believed that communication platforms created by the Provincial Government did not encourage citizens to participate in various activities because the information shared was mostly unidirectional – sender vs. receiver without feedback opportunities, especially on matters of policy discussions. • In addition, participants also affirmed that communication channels offered no feedback mechanisms, and as such, citizens often felt disconnected from governance initiatives and their contribution was thus not optimal because of insufficient communication directives. • One of the participants highlighted that *"we often don't realise the value of information and knowledge shared by*	○ Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) write that the concept of governance, in fact, is simple. It is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as social (triple-context) processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. ○ Good governance, as explained by Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:9) is the attainment by Government of its ultimate goal to create good conditions and a satisfactory quality of life for each citizen. Attention has to be drawn to the compatibility of public participation with democracy in general, in accordance with the ethos of representivity. ○ From a South African perspective, Swanepoel (1992:23) states that a broad understanding of political leadership in governance is that of managing the relationship between the government and civil society. If good democratic governance entails working with and listening to the citizenry as individuals, interest groups and society as a whole, active co-operation and on-going engagement in the process of policy formulation and implementation between politicians, public officials and members of communities are required. ○ Plaut and Holden (2012) assert that South Africa is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, wherein those elected by citizens have the political power to influence governance processes. Representative democracy is the will of citizens to accord power to representatives – such power is accorded on the basis of public deliberations and citizenry participation in

	the Provincial Government, because it remained unclear as to what their role is in advancing and articulating governance initiatives".	governance.
	• Consequently, four other participants were of the view that the Provincial Government did empower citizens with information and knowledge of how to contribute to the welfare of the Province. However, such empowerment mechanisms always assumed a top-down approach rather than to be informed by a bottom-up approach to communication.	o So pertinently, Nkuna (2013:139) maintains that it is fallacious to consider the concept of governance as applicable if it is not contextualised to benefit the realities of everyday life within a particular society. In the South African context, governance features as a post-apartheid developmental state. People, as a society, find and manage the state as agents of change and development in the form of structures and organisations as part of the governance process.
	• In addition, two of the participants advanced that the Provincial Government at times communicated programmes and initiatives that were already in action, without the consent/consensus reached with citizens. This restrained components of participative governance.	
	• Research participants also indicated that equal participative governance opportunities were often hindered by gate-keeping of information as a deliberate tactic to disadvantage citizens who were not politically active or held contradictory political sentiments with certain Provincial Government principals.	o Haider *et al.* (2011) are of the opinion that without communication structures and processes which enable the two-way exchange of information between state and citizens, it is difficult to imagine how states can be responsive to public needs and expectations. Crucially, two-way communication allows citizens to monitor the state's activities, to enter into dialogue with the state on issues that matter to them, and to influence political outcomes and governance initiatives.

Discussion – *Governance as a two-way communicative process*

Much of the literature and theory on governance as a participative process suggest that citizens should be considered as the building-blocks in the promotion of efficient governance initiatives, and thus the key to strategic planning, and most importantly, advocates for social cohesion and integration. Consequently, the King IV Report (2016), like its predecessor the King III Report (2009), affirms the importance of stakeholder inclusivity in the governance initiatives of organisations. Stakeholders should be positioned as the life-blood of organisational success and good governance, in which their value is recognised and their needs, interests and expectations are addressed through the dominant coalition. It emerged from the research participants that not much was done to integrate citizens' interests into the participative process. Participants argued that governance initiatives lacked an integrative approach primarily because communication efforts were viewed as a matter of formality, and subsequently, an imbalanced one-way communication was recognised instead of a co-ordinated and planned two-way communication. Accordingly, a number of participants suggested that participative governance indeed plays a crucial role in understanding and strengthening democracy. One of the strategic occupants of governance in South Africa is the realisation of public participation and the added-value that citizens offer in positively influencing government initiatives – however, participative governance was infrequently realised. Furthermore, participants believed that some of the decisions relating to governance were imposed on them without mutual understanding and shared objectives – as a result, a unidirectional top-down approach was adopted. It was suggested that the Provincial Government had a responsibility to co-govern with citizens and avail interventions that would assist in gathering and incorporating citizenry insights into the strategic management framework. To recognise participative governance as a two-way sustainable process, the legitimate aspirations of all actors have to be prioritised, so as to position communication as the strategic engagement tool to obtain and cherish co-governance. In doing so, communication adopted and implemented for strategic purposes and intentions can thus support participative governance initiatives for inclusivity through a two-way process. In addition, participants also suggested that officials should be offered special training on how to communicate governance matters with citizens – this process would enable officials to tailor their messages and consider the interests of citizens at all times. Moreover, four of the participants articulated that some public representatives with the responsibility to communicate with citizens lacked the necessary skills and execution of communication programmes. In the main, awareness was not created to ease citizenry concerns, particularly on governance initiatives and other developmental activities – participants also mentioned that a two-way communicative process need to be adopted. This would promote effective communication as a process leading to public dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and how they can get it. This initiative should be informed by principles of tolerance, self-determination, equity, social justice and active participation for all.

Sub-theme 6	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Public representatives as strategic communicators	Communities are seemingly led by public representatives with the mandate to continuously serve and render basic services to their immediate constituencies across the North-West Province. However, some of the representatives seem not to understand the strategic role of communicating with citizens, as the participants mentioned. This theme articulate the views of the research participants in relation to the influence of public representatives on society in general:	○ It is widely accepted that one or more people communicate on behalf of their organisation (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). In many organisations, communication is managed by specialists because strategic communication is a challenging, complex, and dynamic activity. ○ Holtzhausen (2008) suggests that one way of determining what a strategic communication practitioner should do is to

	• A number of the research participants believed public representatives to be influential individuals with the ability to articulate the vision and strategy of the Provincial Government when properly trained and educated on how to prioritise the transmission of relevant information. • Interestingly, a couple of other research participants advanced that some of the public representatives were not properly equipped to communicate the message of the Provincial Government to citizens in a precise and assertive manner – no coherence in disseminating information. • In this sense, participants were also of the view that some of the public representatives did not possess the necessary professional skills to impart knowledge of government programmes and activities to the benefit of citizens. • The majority of the research participants believed that most of the public representatives were biased in disseminating strategic information. Such strategic information was only shared amongst political associates, rather than with all citizenry. • Accordingly, two of the participants argued that *"community based representatives serve their Provincial Government principals rather than us, their constituencies in various villages and townships"*. Representatives were more occupied with establishing dominance instead of consolidating the views of citizens across the Province. • Likewise, participants argued that some public representatives; frequently adopted a top-down communication approach – which often implied that there was no consensus reached, nor is there a two-way consultative process with communities in place, but rather decisions were imposed on citizens without deliberations. • In essence, it emerged that some of the public representatives effectively communicated with citizens during elections, as a strategy to consolidate power and	originate the strategic communication process with the stakeholder-centred approach once the strategic plan has determined the different stakeholder groups. ○ This means, instead of determining communication activities on the skill set or specific organisational charge of the communicator, strategic communicators should have the ability to communicate equally well with stakeholders who are citizens, consumers, activist groups, communities, other businesses, individual power holders (to mention a few) as well as the media (Holtzhausen, 2008). ○ Consequently, Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) contend that communicators need to be more systematic and assertive in providing empirical evidence on the impact of communication in development initiatives. This would entail a tighter quality control on the overall intervention. ○ Couldry and Hepp (2013:191-7) are of the view that it is also important for strategic communicators to understand and utilise "mediatisation," which "is a concept used to analyse critically the interrelation between changes in media and communication on the one hand, and changes in culture and society on the other". ○ Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) maintain that without these skills a communicator will be just another communicator and, as it is often cited, every person is a communicator, but not every person is a professional communicator. ○ Likewise, the authors assert that a communicator should at least have a comprehensive knowledge of the theoretical and methodological systems in this discipline; have field experience; be knowledgeable about development programmes and project cycles; be culturally sensitive;

loyalty.

- Four of the participants postulated that some Provincial Government officials enjoyed the support and loyalty of community-based representatives because they seemed to serve their individual interests, instead of those of the majority.
- Efforts to engage citizens were viewed as a formality, but not as a necessity. Two of the participants added that some communities had no confidence in the operations of public representatives. ....*we can say that "public representatives are mostly clueless and not courageous to propel an engaged society here".*
- It also emerged that gate-keeping was a form of strategy adopted by certain representatives to deal with rebellious/divergent views from citizens – communication was used to suppress views rather than encouraging dialogue.
- Moreover, five of the research participants suggested that some of the representatives were used to induce citizens with 'free-bees' as frontiers of Government campaigns and activities to increase public participation levels.

have a humble and open attitude towards people and change; and, most importantly, be willing and able to listen actively (Mefalopulos & Genna, 2004).

o More importantly, Cornish *et al.* (2011) articulate that the strategic communication environment must be seen to have a strong and credible leadership operating within a framework of responsibility and accountability without seeking to exert complete control over either the 'message' or the 'medium'. Within this environment people at all levels must be empowered, trusted and taught to be effective strategic communicators.

Discussion – *Public representatives as strategic communicators*

Hallahan *et al.* (2007:12) posit that strategic communication implies intentional communication of an organisation and therefore theoretically requires a purposeful actor, rational and deliberate decision-making, and the implementation and evaluation of a strategic communication programme. It is for this reason that a number of research participants argued that public representatives failed to purposefully constitute genuine methods solely dedicated to stimulate community understanding on various programmes and government activities. Subsequently, it emerged that a sense of professionalism and the theoretical drive/willingness to rationally advance communication objectives were mainly the challenges facing modern day public representatives. Likewise, public representatives were not equipped with the necessary skills to deliver tailored and relevant messages to facilitate sufficient public participation on the part of ordinary citizens. Interestingly, some of the participants indicated that the majority of the public representatives were elected on a condition of popularity rather than merits or their capacity to pursue strategic communication programmes in favour of an inclusive and communicative society. In the main, public representatives did not inspire any form of confidence or contribute to the empowerment of citizens through the manifestation of deliberate communication, but rather served certain political principals in order to maintain legitimacy and control at the expense of ordinary citizens. In this regard, public representatives were viewed as individuals that do not represent the needs and interests of citizens. They do not advocate for the whole community and are often not capacitated to carry the concerns of citizens to their principals – except under circumstances where they stand to economically benefit.

Additionally, most of the community representatives were therefore regarded as selective in their quest to disseminate information, and often failed to advance community based programmes and solutions, which often led to most community unrests. It is further recorded that public representatives in their communicator-capacity were selective and biased in their approach to informing general citizens about government programmes – communication was unstructured and informal in most instances, as the research participants advanced. Accordingly, it also emerged that gate-keeping was exercised to manage conflictual viewpoints and rebellious attitudes, and subsequently to promote the ideas of a particular political clique' over the views of societal members at large. Importantly, research participants strongly believed that public representatives were not coherent and strategic when communicating participative governance initiatives, simply because most of them were elected based on popularity more than their capacity to connect citizens with the Provincial Government.

Table 6.3 – Communication for adequate representation and participative governance initiatives

d) Evaluation of the Provincial Government's five concretes to enhance community communication – central theme

Intensified community campaigns and communication were mostly cited as the strategy and process to solicit equity and to actively harness opportunities to understand and evaluate the influence of the Provincial Governments' concretes or any sustainability programmes on citizens and their communities respectively. From such considerations, an integrated approach to community communication for citizenry empowerment and sustainable reforms was viewed as useful and a possible solution which could pragmatically overcome deficiencies of both, purely vertical and purely horizontal approaches to communication, while building on their strengths. The majority of the research participants advanced that communication at a community level exclusively neglected genuine preferences of citizens and more often was influenced through the vertical-oriented level.

> ……. *"Nothing seems to work at community level, we are not given any information to empower us and change our situations. Our people have little hope on how our leaders handle the affairs of communities."*

Regrettably, a number of the research participants advocated that a horizontal method of communication enjoyed less attention in most community communication efforts – the process greatly involved the aspirations and interests of the Provincial Government, instead of those of community members across the Province.

Indeed, the realisation of productive community engagements and communication as a whole depends on the ability of community members to own and direct communicative processes, to influence and understand democratic practices in a horizontally-negotiated manner. It emerged from the participants that community communication as espoused in the horizontal approach employed citizens to rationally evaluate the identified five concretes and their intended benefits on various communities for sustainable development – this process was anticipated to ensure that citizens understand in detail how and where to contribute and inform community discussions.

However, a couple of other participants articulated that the community communication process often embraced the vertical approach status quo. In this regard, the Provincial Government was observed as being more powerful and resourced to influence public representatives (so-called communicators) and ultimately decision-makers.

> One participants opined that …… "It's a problem with our communities, those we elect don't report back to us and our leaders have forgotten about us, the people of power".

It was further argued that most of community communication opportunities were marred with greed, opportunism, and propaganda at the behest of certain political masters, and as a consequence, disadvantaged the majority of citizens with active voices. Consequently, the process failed to benefit ordinary citizens and negatively hindered most of the community developmental programmes and other participatory projects aimed at empowering citizens both socially and in economic terms. In a sense, several participants were assertive in examining how community communication as a process of horizontal and vertical social interaction and networking through media regularly produced, managed and controlled by or in a close cooperation between people, lacked the desire to promote sustainable interventions in order to leverage definitive social, economic, and environmental benefits for all actors. This process would require actors to educate each other and to thoughtfully explore government programmes, and more so, to exploit them for the benefit of the society as a whole.

Moreover, it was elucidated that at the community level and at other levels of society, communication was viewed as more unproductively, unstructured and mostly informal to encourage public participation and also to assist with active information transmission. Accordingly, community communication as an interactive and integrative process was also ineffective in facilitating dialogue and consensus between people who share socio-political commitments towards a democratic Province. Nonetheless, the majority of the research participants advanced that sustainability programmes had no durable effect on them because, at most, such programmes, including the identified five concretes, were not informed by the interests of citizens and often not citizenry-oriented.

Central theme – Evaluation of the Provincial Government's five concretes to enhance community communication		
Sub-theme 7	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Governments' approach to programmes	The North-West Province's 5th Administration has identified five key concretes anchored through the RRR strategy as their vehicle for the realisation of the NDP 2030 targets. In this regard, it becomes imperative therefore to understand how these programmes are communicated to empower and facilitate equal citizenry engagement. The following attributes represent the views of the research participants in relation to the communicative aspect of programmes/concretes: • It emerged directly from the majority of the research participants that government programmes were not adequately presented to effect and guarantee some form of action as expected from citizens. • Participants elaborated that detailed information on the practicality of those programmes was constrained, and thus citizens did not have access to the modalities of various programmes and activities and remained apathetic in most instances. • A number of the research participants believed that some of the officials mandated with sharing detailed information on various programmes were not equipped to impart knowledge and information about programmes to citizens in general. • However, six other participants located that relevant and informative information was shared via social media channels, local radio stations and community newspapers. Other forums such as 'Lekgotla/Imbizos, business-society, and the academic fraternity were used to inform and consult about the feasibility and the social, economic, and environmental impact of the identified programmes. • Interestingly, a couple of other research participants	o According to Raga and Taylor (2005:42), open, transparent and accountable government is an imperative prerequisite for community-oriented public service. Based on positive communication with citizens, government gathers information on needs, opinions, values and perspectives from the broadest spectrum of the public, enabling it to make better and more informed decisions – this approach should be factored into all government processes. o Thomas (2009) further posits that, planning for, structuring, conducting, and coordinating communications in a wide range of specialised and complicated policy environments; across numerous departments and agencies; in an era of evolving digital technologies; at a time when there is growing insistence on greater transparency; proactive disclosure, and accountability; and when the public trust and confidence in governments is all low – all combine to give rise to a challenging new era in public sector communication. o On the other hand, Maloba (2015) writes that the government is not a unique political actor on the national, regional or local scale – as a matter of fact the state, civil society and the bureaucracy make up the whole government. These three must work in a relationship based on norms given by governance to insure good governance. This is only possible through the institutional development and capacity-building that will bring about effective, efficient and expected delivery of services at the local level in a manner that improves the lives of communities.

	argued that the approach was to identify influential individuals and groups, which were accorded opportunities to both influence and provide counsel to the executives about the programmes were not ordinary citizens. • Consequently, several other research participants were therefore concerned about their role and contribution in the acceleration and implementation of various programmes, as they were considered influential. It remained unclear how citizens were expected to take the vision and strategy of the Province forward, and as a result, most citizens remain disengaged and isolated. • Another concern highlighted was the fact that gate-keeping was predominantly in pursuit by some public representatives with the view of retuning information to the advantage of selected individuals – this was viewed as an approach to maintain allegiance and authority over other members of society and to censor public commentaries in relation to government programmes. • Surprisingly, three of the participants situated that some of the programmes established by the Provincial Government were good on paper, however, little was known about the execution processes and the expected outcomes. In addition, only three of the five concretes were increasingly conversed, whilst others seemed less strategic. • Two of the research participants articulated that some of the information printed on brochures and pamphlets remained abstract to comprehend. Most of the information was not simplified to accommodate everyone, particularly with the language of their choice.	○ As a consequence, illiteracy remains one of the most disempowering factors faced by the large majority of citizens of this country, and in particular rural Provinces. This affects democratic participation and hinders human development. An illiterate citizen cannot have access to one of the important channels of communication, namely access to the media (both print and electronic) (South African Parliament, 2013). ○ GCIS (2014) advances that the South African government therefore considers communication to be a strategic element of service delivery. As a result, communication promotes an informed and appropriate response to people's needs in order to enable all South Africans to become active and conscious participants in social transformation. It ensures that Government is sensitive to the needs of the people. ○ In addition, Rensburg and De Beer (2011) opine that the inclusion of all stakeholders in corporate issues has taken centre stage in corporate governance. In any given communication situation, a stakeholder could play many roles in an internal or external organisational environment. ○ Van der Molen *et al*. (2001:63 cited in Mothepu, 2013) record that citizen participation can increase but cannot guarantee the chances that programmes and projects will be acceptable. In the past, governments imposed programmes on citizens without considering how the citizens might feel about the programme. However, through citizen participation, citizens can gain information about the programmes and such programmes will be acceptable since people will have taken part in their formulation or would have understood their rationale. This means citizen participation can increase the chances of a project being

Discussion – *Governments' approach to programmes*

Literature and theory acknowledge that communication at a community level should capacitate and strengthen accords among active participants. It is for this reason that communication as a strategic process should be aimed at empowering and stimulating adequate understanding of situations, pragmatic programmes, and to enhance relationships. As the research participants argued, communication efforts at the community level failed to foster and facilitate consensus, negotiations, and importantly, dialogue to benefit society as a whole. Fundamentally, it also emerged that a conflictual relationship emanated from purely vertical and purely horizontal approaches to both governance initiatives and communication campaigns. Moreover, the vertical approach, as espoused by the Provincial Government, pursued activities that neglected the aspirations of grassroots citizens. More often than not, public representatives enormously influenced and directed discussions at a horizontal level without due regard to citizens' concerns. In support of the latter assertion, research participants firmly believed that the Provincial Government had no proper mechanisms and sufficient techniques in place to structure and coordinate powerful communication messages with resonance. Accordingly, participants further emphasised that embraced communication techniques and methods were not interactive and inclusive in general, and to some extent, communication challenges can also be attributed to the top-down approach adopted to communicate with citizens. The lack of freedom to receive and interpret information about government programmes was hugely attributed to the inability of public representatives to cooperate, co-govern, and to systematically rearrange communication messages and objectives in favour of the majority. In some instances, information about the economic benefits and financial empowerment was not availed to the satisfaction of citizens. The structuring of the messages also proved to be a challenge to many citizens – messages were not properly tailored and suitable for various mediums and audiences in accordance to their specifications. Against this backdrop, it is prudent for the Provincial Government in collaboration with citizens to recognise that access to information and communicating appropriately is crucial to economic and social empowerment in all spheres of society – this process positively contributes to the achievement of shared-programme goals. As the people participate in this process as planners, producers and performers, the media become informing, educating, and an entertaining tool, not an exercise in persuasion or power. In such a process, the entry points for communication interventions should be sought in the community knowledge systems, cultural awareness and media practices. Accordingly, total participant involvement (engagement) is crucial and could have positive implications for governmental practices, community communication efforts, and overall governance values. Citizen participation has many goals. It is important that it be encouraged because through it, changes can take place that can improve the lives of people and the relationship between citizens and government. In order for citizen participation to have value, there are certain standards or qualities that it has to meet. The next section deals with the standards needed for citizen participation. These standards are important in that they can be used as a yardstick to determine the effectiveness of citizen participation.

Sub-theme 8	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives

Strategy: the added-value of strategic thinking	The RRR (Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal) strategy remains a key pillar anchoring the five concretes in the North-West Province as identified by the Provincial Government for effective governance. It is through strategic thinking that proper methods and ideas are collated to develop an inclusive strategic plan for all. Participants articulated that strategic thinking has the potential to deliver strategic actions and sound outcomes. Subsequently, various responses were recorded in this manner: • A number of the participants registered that they had no knowledge of any plan or strategy developed by the Provincial Government in collaboration with the people – they maintained that the choice to develop strategies and decide the 'terms of reference' solely belonged to the Provincial Government as the precedence dictated. • In support of the latter, three of the participants advanced that the objectives of both awareness creation and stimulation of peoples' understanding of government strategies and policies remained not recognised by some citizens across the Province. • Additionally, four of the participants also maintained that the Provincial Government strategies were only known and developed by the Provincial Government officials. This process excluded the influence of citizens because no information was shared in detail. • One of the participants believed that *"justice is not served in providing us with education about government strategies and other activities"* – as a result, this limited their understanding and level of participation in the wellness of the Province. • Several other participants concurred that Government strategies did not incorporate their inputs and thoughts – such strategies were developed by the Provincial Government and only cascaded to citizens without	○ Strategic communication is a central organising concept for this study as it describes the organisation's efforts, through communication, to adapt and respond to its social commitment (Everett, 2001). So pertinently, Weick (2001) emphasises the idea of strategy as a means by which organisations seek to manage their relationship with the environment (see Steyn 2002, 2003). ○ Austin and Pinkleton (cited by Lestari *et al.*, 2017) write that there is a specific difference between strategy and tactics. Both terms refer to an effort in achieve a target. Strategy requires a wider set of identification to achieve the goals and it occurs for a long-term period. Meanwhile, tactics are used to apply specific effort to reach goals; and a responsive orientation is preferred. ○ Consequently, Argenti *et al.* (2005) are of the opinion that communication strategies are planned actions regarding communication about a particular problem; events related to the successful implementation of organisational goals; and the presentation of the organisational nature to the groups of stakeholders with which the organisation maintains relationships. Communication strategies are directly linked to corporate strategies. ○ In this sense, Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) postulate that in planning government strategies and the delivery of policy, activities should be considered and undertaken as much for their communicative value as for their physical impact. But messaging and narrative alone will do little without constructive and credible actions to reinforce the message and address audiences. Consistency should be sought between spoken and practical means of communication, or more simply between words and actions.

consensus or through two-way discussions.

- It also emerged from the participants that government strategies were not practically explained for citizens to take communicative action and contribute to the planning and implementation of those programmes associated with specific strategies.
- Consequently, two of the participants were of the firm view that inadequate education in most government strategies discouraged citizens from taking advantage of opportunities created by the Provincial Government. Lack of proper and co-ordinated communication mechanisms were cited as the main challenge in the Province.
- A number of the research participants strongly believed that it was difficult to realise the benefits of various programmes and strategies because of high levels of public apathy and little interest at times on the part of citizens.
- In addition, a couple of other participants advocated that, in some instances, the Provincial Government was hard at work trying to share and inform citizens of various opportunities and how they can benefit, however, some of the citizens had no confidence in the Provincial Government activities at all.

o In fact, Oepen and Willner (2006) write that an effective strategy requires a people-centred approach, ensuring long-term beneficial impacts on disadvantaged and marginalised groups, such as the poor. In short, strategies should seek to integrate, where possible, economic, social and environmental objectives. But where integration cannot be achieved, trade-offs need to be negotiated. The entitlements and possible needs of future generations must be factored into this process.

o According to White (2004:5-7), organisational strategy combines the articulation of goals and the organisation of activities to achieve those goals. He states that strategy and a strategic orientation consider the future, aim for balance between stability and flexibility, ask new questions rather than answer old ones, are holistic and integrative, are complex, are rooted in historical experiences, and are interactive with the strategies of all other stakeholders.

Discussion – *Strategy: the added-value of strategic thinking*

So pertinently, literature and theory on strategic management, strategy development, and strategic planning offer some insights into how a strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget process to ensure that plans have the financial resources to achieve their objectives, and do not only represent wish lists. Increasingly, the strategy development and planning process require some special level of consciousness and the ability of initiators to confidently integrate citizenry perspectives into the overall strategic policy formulation, particularly at public organisations. Cohen and Eimicke (1995:196) contend that a strategy attempts to delineate the resources that will be used to pay for specific activities designed to accomplish specific objectives. Strategy formulation begins with the identification of objectives and the determination of methods for reaching objectives. These objectives and activities are then scaled to fit within resource constraints to enable effective communication. As it emerged from the research participants, strategy as an added-value to government operations is not coherently communicated and inclusively co-ordinated to respond to the aspirations of the North-West Province citizens. The Provincial Governments' strategy to accelerate and achieve strategic objectives on the execution of sustainability programmes was viewed not as a citizens-centred approach – the

decision-making process excluded the views, knowledge and experiences of the majority, whom are community members and the society at large. Conversely, the formulation of strategic activities and plans must be informed by a clear identification of priorities and inclusive strategic thinking across all domains of the Province. From this perspective, Argenti *et al.* (2005:83) argue that strategic communication is communication aligned with the organisation's overall strategy to enhance its strategic positioning. Importantly, each element of a strategy (objectives, activities and resources) is often constrained by political, social, economic and environmental variables. The objectives and activities of public organisations are constrained by the formal authority provided by inadequate planning and lack of strategic thinking. Interestingly, participants argued that awareness campaigns and programme stimulation were diverted to benefit fewer individuals; capacity constraints and time limitations had an impact on the extent to which the intended outcomes are to be achieved. For strategic outcomes and objectives to be achieved, targets need to be challenging, and agreed upon for consensus - but realistic in relation to constraints. Subsequently, the political, social, economic, and environmental variables need to be factored into the inclusive strategic planning for maximum communication impact, with consideration of all active actors. The roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different key participants in the strategy processes must be clarified early on – the will of the minority must not neglect the legitimate concerns of the majority. Likewise, the strategic thinking and planning initiatives should be distinguished by free institutions, representative government, freedom of speech and political oppression. In the main, strategic communication programmes should be co-developed to support and enable convergence, complementarity and coherence between different planning frameworks and policies. This requires good management to ensure co-ordination of mechanisms and processes, and to identify and resolve potential communication conflicts and disputes with the confidence of all citizens.

Table 6.4 – Understanding of the Provincial Government's five concretes and RRR strategy for sustainability

e) Societal expectations on the Provincial Government's activities and strategic decisions – central theme

Universally, it is agreed that the existence of organisations (both public and private) as societal components largely depend on internal and external influence to legitimise their operations and activities. As such, the public therefore develop some form of expectation in relation to the operations of an organisation(s). Consequently, citizens in this regard labour on some expectations developed over time in relation to the Provincial Government's sustainability programmes and governance related initiatives. Research participants unanimously agreed that they held various expectations with regard to Provincial Government operations and activities. More often than not, government operations influenced and shaped their sense of understanding, decision-making, and ultimately their views towards either legitimate material change or a cosmetic one.

As articulated, participants believed therefore that the Provincial Government had a responsibility to establish mechanisms to mitigate expectation-conflicts among citizens themselves (Citizens vs. Citizens), and between the government and citizens (Government vs. Citizens). In doing so, citizenry expectations and holistic societal expectations should dominate the strategic planning process of the Provincial Government as a mitigating factor, and subsequently, inform the implementation of broad governance initiatives and inclusive sustainability programmes.

> ………"It is their responsibility to create engagement opportunities for us all because we get nothing when we demand answers from them. They must talk to us, when we talk they don't respond".

It is evident that economic benefits related to government programmes create a deeper desire and a sense of entitlement. These opportunities further create higher expectations on the part of citizens. Interestingly, a number of the research participants postulated that, at times, lack of perceived benefits and tangible material change associated with the Provincial Government activities contributed enormously to public apathy and are often determinants for various community unrests. Surprisingly, all Provincial Government programmes and activities did create social,

environmental and economic expectations for individuals and their respective societies.

Consequently, a couple of the research participants added that Provincial Government programmes should resonate with the resolve of the people – their expectations should also be the basis and motivation for the strategic communication management process. In this regard, there is a need for the Provincial Government to adequately address and fulfil citizenry expectations. Moreover, the resolve for citizens to participate and to actively engage in essential and systematic initiatives should be informed by the fact that the Provincial Government operates in a service oriented industry – such an industry requires of government to therefore create, fulfil and manage broader expectations through inclusive communication platforms.

It is without a doubt that when citizens continually participate, they are more exposed to information the government may need from them; likewise, they also make their needs and expectations of services known to government. Therefore, civil society organisations will be strong because each and every association will strive to make its voice heard by the government. For example, through participation of people in government, pertinent issues are made visible as a result of the influence of community activists. This means citizenry issues are now prominent as a result of participation.

Central theme – Societal expectations on the Provincial Government's activities and strategic decisions		
Sub-theme 9	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Citizenry-responsibilities in policies and crucial decisions	Ideally, citizens across all spheres of Government in South Africa hold a particular view about their future and ultimate destiny. They do so because of various expectations and interests in the operations of government – this theme emerged directly from the views of the research participants and was recorded as follows: • The majority of the research participants postulated that their role and significant contribution to the operations of the Provincial Government was minimal and not well recognised – equally citizens often failed to influence policies and contribute to decision-making processes. …. "*We can't influence what we don't know, so decisions are taken without our contributions*". • Additionally, research participants also alluded that their role in the policy decisions and governance of the Province is always minimal primarily because the Provincial Government was not interested in their views and concerns – no efforts were undertaken to understand the preferences of citizens. • Participants further argued that their value and strategic thinking was neglected as the Provincial Government only sought views from prominent figures in society – the group of influential people acting on behalf of all citizens and often without the necessary research. • A couple of other participants positioned that policies were planned and drafted without the consent of the majority and as such, a consolidated policy position can never be realised – policies were created 'for' the citizens, but not 'with' them. • Five of the participants were of the view that their opinions	○ Conventionally, Oepen and Willner (2006) posit that governments have been resistant to opening up policy and decision-making to enable participation by stakeholders at all levels. But the many failed top-down planning decisions testify to the need for a judicious balance of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. ○ Irvin and Stansbury (2012) write that dissent is rare: It is difficult to envision anything but positive outcomes from citizens joining the policy process, collaborating with others, and reaching consensus to bring about positive social and environmental change. Citizen participation in public affairs seems to hold a sacrosanct role across the global political culture (Day, 1997:1). ○ In addition, Van der Molen *et al.* (2001:63 cited in Mothepu, 2013) point out that citizen participation improves the public policy process. If citizens have participated in the public policy process, it means the government will have a responsive policy which really addresses the needs of the citizens involved. Citizens are stakeholders in the policy process and as such they can play a pivotal role in making the public policy process a success. For example, if the government aims to make a policy concerning poverty in communities, if citizens participate, that policy will be realistic as it will include the feelings of the people, hence improving the process of public policy. ○ Oepen and Willner (2006) in turn, contend that communication serves as information exchange,

and perceptions as active citizens were often excluded to discourage descending views. Those participants in the main strongly believed that 'discussion platforms' were just a mere 'formality' or a PR exercise because productive feedback and the way-forward on the said community discussions is yet to materialise, even to date. • Interestingly, one of the participants further articulated that, at times, *"we are expected to provide input on policy proposals via the Provincial Government website and this poses a challenge to us because of the lack of skills or adequate resources to access the internet"*. • Moreover, the majority of the research participants believed that the Provincial Government should adopt strategies to effectively share information and empower citizens to participate fully in the governance of the Province – policies should be citizenry-centred to sufficiently address the practical needs of the majority. • Accordingly, two of the participants further suggested that citizens should be regarded as the point of contact or departure for key government decisions – in this way, citizenry contributions should be incorporated into the strategy development of the Province.	establishing consensus among divergent opinions and interests, and facilitating the building of know-how, decision-making and action capacities at the heart of the delicate cooperation between Government, civil society groups and the private sector. ○ In a sense, Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) write that individuals and communities are best placed to identify local trends, challenges, problems and needs, and to agree their own priorities and preferences and determine what skills and capacities are lacking. ○ Fundamentally, Van der Molen *et al* (2001:63 cited in Mothepu, 2013) affirm that citizen participation provides information to citizens. For example, if a citizen participates in a given governmental process in government, that citizen will have the information concerning the action being taken. If citizens have participated in the planning process in local government, they will have information concerning the plans of the government in terms of what is going to be done, when and by whom, and they will know of the issues involved. This means they will have information concerning their community.

Discussion – *Citizenry-responsibilities in policies and crucial decisions*

It is a popular belief that every government exists with the view of serving their respective constituencies and ultimately governing the state of affairs and regulations. In this regard, the involvement and contribution of citizens on the direction and governance of a particular state of affairs remain sacrosanct. Literature and theory advance that strategic communication in this context is supposed to be a pre-requisite and an instrument for effective policy decision-making and public participation: from formulating a vision; to negotiating and decision-making; developing and implementing plans to monitoring impacts. The idea to achieve strategic goals by careful planning is deeply ingrained in strategic communication literature (Botan, 2006; Steyn, 2003) with few exceptions stressing postmodernist approaches (Holtzhausen, 2002; Ströh, 2007) or complexity theory (Murphy 2006; Nothhaft & Wehmeier, 2007). Adequate and timely citizenry participation is thus imperative to the success of government strategies as the research participants articulated. Due to lack of information and proper details, some of the participants believed that most citizens were passive rather than active. It is advanced that access to programmes, policy drafts, and the strategic planning process remained politically managed, this was done to encourage high levels of political patronage

from some members of society – those whom were deemed influential and part of the opinion leaders' clique. It also emerged that some officials charged with the responsibility of implementing policies and strategic programmes did not consider the views of citizens in both the planning and execution process. Several other participants held that no prior consultations occurred to understand the needs and expectations of citizens on related government activities. In support of the latter assertion, a couple of the participants alluded that the Provincial Government solely formulated policies and programmes without due consideration to the aspirations of the majority in society. Nonetheless, citizens were still expected to adopt and understand the strategic vision of the Provincial Government and to accelerate economic growth and meet the NDP targets without regard for their viewpoints. The majority of the participants concurred that it was an oversight for the Provincial Government not to include the 'voice' of citizens; as a consequence, citizenry participation was limited to those with relevant information and understanding. The Rebranding, Repositioning, and Renewal strategy as the vehicle to accelerate the realisation of the five concretes also did not incorporate the 'voices' of citizens – this demonstrated that the Provincial Government did not thoroughly consult nor extensively engage citizens on the way-forward. The practicality of some government programmes was seen as far-fetched as some citizens failed to relate with the proposed programmes. Additionally, some of the participants argued that it remained difficult for them to contribute meaningfully to the success of various programmes because of inadequate knowledge on their part. The rationale is that participants expected the Provincial Government to accord opportunities to both influence the strategic planning and thinking of policies, and so as to adequately shape the vision of the Province positively. To recognise the value of citizens, the Provincial Government must consider citizens' participation as a strategy for reform. It means that through the participation of citizens, the government can change and be improved in terms of satisfying the needs of citizens. For example, if a government uses a top-down approach in planning, citizen participation can change this especially if the issues affect them.

Sub-theme 10	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Stimulation of Citizenry needs, interests, and expectations	To address and manage societal expectations, it is wisdom for the Provincial Government to understand and act on the identified needs and interests of citizens across the North-West Province. Citizenry needs and interests should inform the basis of governance and should be the main focus of the execution of programmes and activities by the Provincial Government, so said the majority of the research participants. The following statements were also articulated: • The majority of the participants held that the Provincial Government never conducted a fact-finding mission to clearly understand the needs and concerns of citizens across the Province – they argued that every administration had its own plans and strategies and they assumed those plans included the views of citizens, while they did not. • Seven of the research participants advanced that	o Maine (1876, as cited in Mansuri & Rao, 2013:22) advocated that when individuals participate in decision-making, they begin to identify themselves with their role of citizens and are more inclined to think in terms of the public good than their private interests. This process also provides them with the skills for collective action and with a sense of agency. o Van der Molen *et al.* (2001:63 cited in Mothepu, 2013) postulate that governments are called to respond to the needs of the citizens but it has been found that centralised state control makes this difficult, hence in modern times governments are moving to local government. This is the result of citizen participation. For example, through citizen participation, after assessing the needs of the citizen, the government can establish a police station or passport office in areas that are mostly

	government activities and programmes were not planned with the people, but planned for the people with complex realities – needs and expectations were often not considered in the development of programmes. • Participants believed that the majority of citizens were isolated and disgruntled because their needs were not prioritised and ultimately not adequately addressed. • It also emerged that the strategic planning and co-ordination of the Provincial Government activities only involved citizens whom were regarded as opinion leaders and who are mostly influential like the business community and selected individuals in the academics fraternity – their views and sentiments were regarded as being more powerful rather than that of citizens, particularly those in secluded areas of the Province. • Participants further concurred that the main challenge with the government was its inability to listen to the views of the people and only to react when communities demonstrated or protested about a particular issue of concern.	affected by crime hence moving away from centralised state control to local governance. o Mefalopulos (2003) maintains in this regard that traditional community fora have been used to air views, discuss problems and reach decisions affecting local people, and have been an important mechanism for local accountability. But many of them have fallen into disuse or have been replaced as governments have introduced formal administrative structures at local levels and as political parties have established local organisational units. o Blomquist and Deegan (2000) postulate that citizens at times are incentive-oriented; their participation is often based on benefits that addresses their needs, interests, and meet their expectations. Such benefits have the potential to render social and environmental issues less important, because perceived economic benefits do fulfil a particular need in citizens.

Discussion – *Stimulation of Citizenry needs, interests, and expectations*

Citizenry needs, interests, and expectations should be regarded as the epitome of both governance and political participation. In this context, participation becomes a step towards citizenry engagement through collaborative governance initiatives and the ability to integrate citizens' confidence in key decision-making processes. In this sense, governance and political participation should not only be recognised as the exercise of political power over societies, nor should it be viewed as the electoral process to gain political mileage. Evidence based research on the identification and understanding of citizenry needs, interests, and expectations should be conducted to gain some insights into the aspirations, experiences and the knowledge of the majority of the people. In this regard, government communication capacity should not just be about efficient and effective information dissemination, but it should be a strategic tool empowered to facilitate mutual relationships and ensure consensus among actors. The ability to "push out" information is necessary, albeit deeply insufficient (DfID 2006:22). The willingness and ability to speak with citizens must be coupled with a willingness and ability to listen to them, incorporate their needs and preferences into the policy process, and engage local patterns of influence adequately to address legitimate concerns and discard unnecessary bureaucratic mechanisms hindering equal participation. To achieve adequate and satisfactory outcomes, strategic communication should therefore be used to benefit every citizen and explicitly offer hope, empowerment, and ultimately encourage inclusive citizenry participation in governance initiatives and developmental programmes. It is thus important to consider an organisation's communication activities from a strategic and integrative perspective. From the concerns of the research participants, deliberate communication, which is gaining more and more significance should be embarked on. It is based on

dialogue, in which listening is as important as talking. Mefalopulos (2003) further suggests that participatory communication that pro-actively uses traditional community fora will put people back in control of monitoring local processes and projects, and the impact the latter have on the communities' lives. The aim is to build trust and consensus in order to investigate perceptions, needs, risks, opportunities and problems, and only then work on the design of strategies leading to change. As a consequence, it was also mentioned that poor communication between the Provincial Government and its citizens was one of the challenges faced on a regular basis because participants felt that some decisions were imposed rather than deliberated upon for consensus – in essence, communication on its own create some form of expectation, and should thus be strategically managed to the benefit of both the Provincial Government and its citizens.

Table 6.5 – Societal expectations of the Provincial Government's activities and strategic decisions

6.4.2 Presentation of research results from individual interviews

As indicated earlier, research results are presented in two-folds, namely the results from the focus group interviews, which were addressed above; and now the presentation of the results of the individual interviews. This is done to understand and appropriately capture the views of both ordinary citizens as key informants, as well as the Provincial Government officials as the authority that establishes strategies to communicate with various constituencies. Against this backdrop, the results from individual interviews are therefore presented similarly to those of the focus groups in terms of central themes, sub-themes, responses and the connection to theory as indicated in both Table 6.6 and 6.7 respectively.

In this sense, Provincial Government officials as public representatives were regarded as authorities because of the influential and strategic positions they occupy in society. This is the group that presided over policies, established programmes, and developed strategic plans aimed at delivering 'quality' services to the people of the North-West Province. For these reasons, personal experiences, gained knowledge, and office competencies are what distinguishes most of the Provincial Government officials from ordinary people in the society. Consequently, their influence and level of authority create or develop some form of unprecedented expectations from those governed in the North-West Province.

(a) Management of citizenry expectations through government communications – central theme

The organisation of citizenry expectations can never be over emphasised in government communications, if managed accordingly. The results therefore can lead to overwhelming consensus, shared vision, adequate representation, and efficient service delivery efforts. It is for this reason that citizenry expectations must be elevated into the dominant coalition and also be integrated into the strategic framework through strategic communication programmes deemed necessary. As it emerged, a number of the research participants held that Provincial Government communication had the capacity to facilitate social change, convert abstract programmes into pragmatic ones, and to act as a capacity-building instrument aimed at balanced relationships to the benefit of all actors involved, particularly citizens.

Subsequently, participants indeed advocated that government communication advanced an inclusive agenda, seemingly dedicated at coaching and promoting independence and strategic thinking from citizens across the Province.

> ……… *"We serve our communities as best as we could, our efforts are directed at ensuring that all citizens forms part of our vision and future".*

In this light, the majority of the research participants registered that it is often at the provincial level that a people-centred approach to sustainable government communication can become truly evident – for at this level, decisions are taken daily by individuals and groups of people that affect their livelihoods, health and often their form of survival. From this perspective, strategic communication should be both a 'centre of government' concern (i.e. an organic and critical part of the policy-making and strategic process at the highest levels) and a tool to unite the whole of government (i.e. a common feature of all activity at all levels of government).

Consequently, research participants further articulated that only refined and purposeful communication can attempt to consolidate citizenry expectations and perceptions of government activities. They maintained that such communication had to be results-oriented and research based in order to reconcile conflictual expectations and interests. Accordingly, Provincial Government communication, and media in particular, has to be regarded as a primary instrument needed to achieve, maintain and strengthen public participation.

> One remarked that …… *"We are continuously hard at work to ensure that communication with our people is improved on a daily basis. We use communication to reach out to various communities and engage with them".*

However, it emerged that Provincial Government communication has been conceived as a one-way process passing messages from one point to many others, usually in a vertical, top-down fashion. Conventionally, participants further postulated that the Provincial Government had been prepared to open up dialogue and decision-making to enable effective participation by citizens at all levels. However, some citizens resemble high levels of disengagement or show less interest in working with the government to ensure inclusive public participation in all avenues of society.

Effective engagement with citizens depends to a great extent on their understanding of the goal and acceptance that involvement in the communication strategy process demands changes in attitudes, behaviour and institutions. Therefore, developing a comprehensive strategy demands two-way communication between policy-makers and the public. This requires much more than government relations initiatives through information campaigns and the media. It needs commitment to long-term social interaction to achieve a shared understanding of sustainable objectives and its implications, and promoting capacity building to find solutions to the challenges. In this sense, participants strongly believed that being strategic was about setting goals and identifying the means of achieving them – this remained the outstanding ingredient in government operations because of the isolation of citizens to some degree.

A broader understanding of strategic communication would allow communication activities to function as one of the executive levers of the provincial strategy, rather than being seen as a mere adjunct. If properly understood and designed, strategic communication is not just about words, explaining intentions or actions, but should also be about achieving the required ends of strategy, not least by exploiting the communicative power of government and non-government deeds (Cornish *et al.*, 2011). In the main, citizenry expectations can often be managed by adopting an approach that is based on good evidence; has an underlying vision; sets priorities, goals and direction; and sets out the main tactics for achieving these as the participants opined.

In addition, dialogic communication has to be fostered in order to adequately and comprehensively establish practical and logical means of understanding various citizenry expectations and interest in the operations of government. It is borne in mind that strategic communication is not best achieved through a fixed and separate structure. It is the fostering of a strategic communication culture, rather than the design of more formal structures, that will promote the necessary changes in current practice. This means creating a self-sustaining and iterative system that allows for an exchange of information and experience involving leaders, communicators, and stakeholders.

Central theme – Management of citizenry expectations through government communications		
Sub-theme 11	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Communication as a strategic tool	To address and consolidate the so-called legitimate interests of citizens in the North-West Province, communication has to be considered as a strategic tool with the potential to harness both governance initiatives and the acceleration of people-based programmes. Under this theme, participants opined the following: • Most of the participants concurred that the Provincial Government had a number of platforms to communicate with communities on the strategic focus of the Province – however, most of the platforms established did not accommodate continuous dialogue amongst citizens and the government. • Participants attributed that, in the main, platforms created in the past and currently to engage with citizens include: monthly interviews on community radio stations, Provincial marketing and branding in local newspapers, sharing of information through SABC television and radio channels, and 'The New Age' breakfast shows (TNA). • In addition, participants also alluded to other communication opportunities used by the Province. …. *"we use opportunities such as departmental and provincial websites, Facebook page(s), and billboards across the Province communicating the message of government either on policy matters and/or related programmes"* – but cited that some of the approaches inevitably disadvantaged those in remote areas with no proper access to information of any kind. • Seven of the participants articulated that the Provincial Government initiated Setsokotsane 24 hour call-centre as a form of gathering and addressing the concerns facing	○ Cornish *et al.* (2011) assert that good communication is both a function and a proof of good governance: in a democracy informative and transparent communication is essential to the maintenance of a productive and enduring relationship between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the electorate. Communication therefore has a constitutional significance, in other words, and the democratic process can be damaged when communication is insincere, inadequate or incomplete. ○ Communication becomes, also, a problem-posing proposition (Diaz-Bordenave, 1976), a research tool (Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 1998), a planning tool (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2003) and a necessary process needed to involve stakeholders in the decision-making of development initiatives. ○ Hallahan *et al.*'s (2007) strategic communication is solely for influencing target groups or for producing mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. It suggests that the linear influencing of target groups is no longer possible (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). ○ Cornish *et al.* (2011) conquer that strategic communication also supports another critical strategic commodity – influence. Strategic influence is wholly dependent on effective co-ordination across and beyond government in order to achieve national strategic goals. Given the centrality of influence to national strategy, a strategic communication framework must be intrinsic to strategic planning and policy preparation and

	citizens in a systematic manner across the Province. The call-centre equally serve as a platform were communities can engage various Provincial Government officials who occasionally visit the call-centre monthly – this initiative was regarded as more productive by officials in dealing with citizenry issues. • Through the Setsokotsane programme, community meetings, imbizos, and Lekgotla(s) were hosted to communicate and sell the vision of Province to the citizens – the vision had already been established and agreed to at the vertical level of government and eventually cascaded to the horizontal level for further discussions. • Likewise, research participants postulated that, at times, the Provincial Government invited national ministers and other relevant officials to engage with citizens and consider their challenges with the view to providing long-term solutions to deepening community barriers. • Participants further asserted that communication messages and other efforts to engage citizens were systematically tailored and organised to encourage high levels of public participation and citizenry awareness. • Several other participants emphasised that the primary focus of the Provincial Government was to impart knowledge and information to all citizens, with particular attention to those in rural villages. They argued that for a number of years, people in villages and townships were often excluded from government programmes and activities – thus the introduction of the VTSD programme as an opportunity to focus on previously disadvantaged areas of the Province.	implementation. o On the other hand, Deetz (2001) records that narrow views on communication do exist, not least because in theories of organisational communication the process of decision-making is seen as a communication process itself, by which meaningful decisions are constructed. o Strategic communication transpires in the public sphere, because institutions must interact with others to achieve goals. The public sphere is what differentiates strategic communication from some forms of communication like interpersonal communication. In the main, what sounds rather easy and straightforward is one of the key problems of strategic communication and management. More and more scholars in strategic management question the ability of actors to act rationally in a contingent environment (Balogun, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2002; Jenkins, Ambrosini, & Collier, 2007; Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington, 2002; Powell, 2002; Pozzebon, 2004).

Discussion – *Communication as strategic tool*

It emerged that communication should be considered exclusively as a process whereby information is transmitted, coded and decoded with concentrated purpose and through understanding. In this regard, communication should therefore support other analytical work by building trust, facilitating the exchange of information and reaching a common understanding of the situations. In this sense, participants advanced that two-way communication as the 'lifeblood'

dedicated to producing dialogue was crucial to the attainment of strategic goals. Interestingly, a couple of the research participants asserted that adequate, open, and transparent communication efforts aimed at promoting dialogic communication were recognised and maximised to the benefit of all active stakeholders, including citizens at the helm. As a component of the strategic process, dialogue becomes a tool to identify relevant stakeholders, probe their perceptions, investigate their needs and problems, share knowledge and identify the causes of the situation that are intended for change. Consequently, a number of the participants conceded that Provincial Government programmes dedicated to empowering citizens required effective co-ordination and implementation strategies. So pertinently, Cornish *et al.* (2011) register that strategic communication should not merely be part of a one-way process where the narrative flows from the core of government to be applied unquestioningly by agents and stakeholders. Rather, they must be responsive and flexible so that they can simultaneously respond and adapt to facts on the ground, and to the reaction of target audiences and adversaries. Similarly, without adequate negotiations and discussions, a strategy will not succeed because cooperation and collaboration among key stakeholders depend on it. Provincial Government programmes such as the Setsokotsane 24 hour call-centre were established with the aim of encouraging public communication, whilst also aimed at addressing immediate concerns of citizens on a daily basis. In the main, public communication campaigns were created and used after objectives have been determined. However, much of this process remained a vertical approach to communication. In addition, it also emerged that the community/local radio stations were seen as reliable and effective methods of communication employed to engage those in rural villages and townships. The main role for communication therefore is to design effective messages persuading the audience to take action leading to change, usually in certain behaviour. Community radio stations were cited as efficient mechanisms for disseminating information because they are relatively inexpensive, have broad coverage, and ensures that the message of the Provincial Government do reach a number of listeners – this was considered one of the strategic and interactive techniques adopted to inclusively share relevant information, particularly for those without modern technologies. No matter what kind of change is sought, strategic communication should play a crucial role in achieving it. The kinds of change sought here can typically be in the field of communication, health, environment or wider economic reforms (Balogun, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2002; Jenkins, Ambrosini, & Collier, 2007; Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington, 2002; Powell, 2002; Pozzebon, 2004).

Sub-theme 12	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Government activities for societal value	It is imperative for government programmes to be sound and to incorporate the aspirations of citizens across societal domains. The presentation of the identified programmes and activities need to be clear, understandable, and ultimately coherent for effective comprehension and action on the part of ordinary citizens as key contributors to the success of government as a whole. In this regard, research participants articulated the following responses: • It emerged from the participants that the office of the Director-General, together with the three deputies, regularly visited communities across the Province to share and discuss government related issues and opportunities	○ Harrison *et al.* (2011) assert that public value, in the most general sense, focuses attention on the collective and societal interests that are served by particular institutional arrangements and actions of government. A public value framework can help to determine the value of government activities and do so from multiple stakeholder perspectives, not just a generalised, and thus ambiguous, *citizen* viewpoint. ○ In understanding societal value, Jordaan (2013) is of the view that government operations are those activities involved in the running of a state for the purpose of producing value for the citizens. Communication is a

- with citizens – these opportunities are considered to produce much value for communities across the Province.
- In addition, Provincial Government programmes such as the roll-out of the five concretes were also communicated through academic seminars hosted by the Office of the Premier, through media interviews with various media outlets, and at times, meetings with the business forum as some of the key stakeholders of the Province.
- The majority of the participants suggested that the five concretes were implemented and presented via the 10 by 10 Setsokotsane campaign which briefly, among others, included:
  - o Community cleaning programme (community mobilisation);
  - o VTSD entrepreneurship (deals with youth unemployment);
  - o Healthy lifestyle programme (to increase life expectancy in the Province); and
  - o VTSD chamber of commerce (mobilisation of community members to benefit from economic initiatives).
- Research participants contended that electronic billboards around ports of entry into the Province were utilised to communicate, among others, the five concretes as identified by the 5th Administration of the North-West Province.
- One of the research participants asserted that *"all government identified programmes are shared with all public representatives (political representatives) at the legislature (Provincial assembly). It is therefore, the role of those representatives to also share the information and available opportunities with their respective constituencies".*
- Accordingly, public representatives were also regarded as the strategic connection between the Provincial

vehicle for expressing the values and preferences of citizens, communities and society as a whole. Some of these values and preferences are constant, others change as societies evolve. Periodically, one set of values comes to the fore, and its energy transforms the role of government and the practice of public communication.

- o In this light, Servaes (2015) writes that government normally involves citizens in areas in which they know they will get a positive response. There is generally a problem of apathy in local government, with the result that only a handful of citizens participate. Inflexible recognised arrangements and work procedures designed for efficiency rather than for responsiveness to public participation usually hamper public participation.

- o Consequently, Servaes assertion is that, the participation and empowerment of people cannot be achieved without a kind of communication, based on a horizontal model, open to any outcome, ensuring a two-way flow of information, knowledge and experiences. In other words, communication that empowers people (Freire, 1997) and that puts them in the driver's seat throughout the development process.

- o Mefalopulos (2003) suggests that central government must be involved (providing leadership, shaping incentive structures and allocating financial resources) but multi-stakeholder processes are also required involving decentralised authorities, the private sector and civil society, as well as marginalised groups. This requires good communication and information mechanisms with a premium on transparency and accountability.

| | Government and ordinary citizens at large. For this reason, public representatives were understood to be more influential in the communication of government activities in the creation of societal value. | |

Discussion – *Government activities for societal value*

It is relatively evident that the majority of the Provincial Government officials held contrary views from the beliefs and daily experiences related to the welfare of ordinary citizens, as articulated by citizens themselves. For government activities to create and promote sustainable societal value, appropriate participatory methods for appraising needs, dialogue, ranking solutions, forming partnerships, and resolving conflicts are required. As it emerged, Provincial Government officials emphasised that adequate and equitable measures were established to integrate the aspirations of citizens into the governance system; these measures as affirmed by officials created engagement opportunities and often collated all the concerns of stakeholders, such as the business forum, academics, ordinary citizens, and so forth. Moreover, Provincial Government officials postulated that the intended message of government was shared at the provincial legislature and often carried through by public representatives to their respective constituencies. The role, therefore, of public representatives was to ensure that government programmes and related activities were effectively communicated to create societal value and adequate understanding in terms of the vision of the Province. Also, a proper understanding of all those with a legitimate interest in the strategy, policies, government programmes, and a concrete approach to include the more vulnerable and disenfranchised was pursued in order to attain inclusivity. Consequently, the Setsokotsane programme together with the 10 by 10 campaign were viewed as the catalysts for participation – citizens were expected to utilise the 24-hour Setsokotsane call-centre in their respective wards to engage government officials. Additionally, the programme was intended to start participation and link decisions that need to be taken centrally with those appropriate to more local levels. In this sense, the Setsokotsane programme in the main served as the vehicle mandated to accelerate the implementation of other programmes such as the VTSD, Saamtrek-Saamwerk, and so forth. Subsequently, both the literature and theory indicate that broad participation helps to open up debate to new ideas and sources of information; to expose issues that need to be addressed; and to enable problems, needs and preferences to be expressed in order to realise societal value and thus illustrate the positive contribution of government programmes. In this regard, Mefalopulos and Genna (2004) point out that participatory communication can be used in a variety of situations. It is most meaningful when used for assessing the situation and devising solutions through dialogue among representatives of all parties. This should lead to the appropriate and sustainable identification of the project/programme objectives and to the design of the related communication strategy. Accordingly, the broad participation must identify the capabilities required to address societal inefficiencies, and develop a consensus on the need for action that leads to better implementation. On the contrary, mass media approaches are very effective in disseminating information, raising awareness and other similar activities. It is imperative for the Provincial Government to create a capacity-building programme for empowerment and skills distribution – i.e. start modestly, building on existing participation systems, and then deepen and focus participation, adequate resources, skills and time are a must – effective participation requires early investment from active contributors to deepen societal value through all-inclusive Provincial Government activities.

Table 6.6 – Management of citizenry expectations and needs through government communications

(b) Governance initiatives for strategic management by the Provincial Government – central theme

It is relatively important to consider the fact that the existence of the Provincial Government is by and large based on the dictates of the South African constitution, and subsequently, the number of votes earned from the political party system (electorates). It is, therefore, through various political parties that a particular government is arranged, meaning that among others, the victorious political organisation constitutes a governance structure to serve the people. People are therefore governed by the Government irrespective of their initial choice.

Against this backdrop, the Provincial Government assumes the responsibility and mandate from both their political organisations and the society as a whole – the latter, more often than not, becomes more dominant in the operations of the Provincial Government. Consequently, governance initiatives are often derived and established based on political organisations' adopted policies, mandate, and most importantly, their standing resolutions (from conference). From this perspective, it was evident from the research participants that governance initiatives were influenced and developed in accordance with the policies and resolutions of their political organisation(s).

> ……….. *"Our policies are informed by the aspirations of all South Africans, we consult all stakeholders before we adopt any policy that affects the living conditions of our people. We are a government that cares and listen to all".*

Interestingly, these policies were therefore implemented together for citizens, as they were meant for them. This narrative implies that the influence and involvement of citizens in general is minimal, unless in circumstances were the civil society, NGO's and other activists embark on policy amendments, new policy propositions and so forth. However, a couple of the research participants situated that ordinary citizens were consulted via political organisations and that the mandate carried was a manifestation of community engagement. In addition, participants registered that at the Provincial Government level, sufficient opportunities were created to integrate the views of citizens into policy formulation, programmes and decision-making processes. As a matter of fact, one of the research participants strongly advanced

that the policies and all other governance related issues emanated from community meetings, public consultations, and special forums aimed at gathering the views of prominent figures in society – all of these opportunities included ordinary people at the helm of strategic governance processes. This view seemingly contradicted the latter assertion, whereby standing organisational (political) resolutions formed the basis of the Provincial Government mandate.

Accordingly, the majority of the research participants articulated that ordinary citizens in their capacity remained a strategic unity for advancing government programmes through agreed strategies. In this case, the Provincial Government in collaboration with the people and various community representatives had a responsibility of ensuring that governance initiatives are successfully implemented. The collaboration process with all active participants is therefore viewed as a component of strategic management.

> ……. *"Because we are a committed government, our strategic focus in the province depends largely on our people's cooperation to succeed. This is the main reason why our programmes are people-centred and seek to address their needs".*

Furthermore, several research participants alluded that the ability of the Provincial Government to facilitate dialogue, produce people-centred programmes, promote and address legitimate citizenry expectations, and to advance partnerships was a key indicator of effective leadership and strategic management in action. As participants argued, it was through the opportunities and systems created by the Provincial Government that ordinary citizens influenced and informed the majority of government initiatives. Importantly, citizens were also represented by public representatives and political organisations at the Provincial legislature.

Central theme – Governance initiatives for strategic management by the Provincial Government		
Sub-theme 13	**Response**	**Literature and theoretical perspectives**
Citizenry-oriented policies and strategic decisions	For efficient co-governance and collaborations to be realised, both the Provincial Government and citizens have a responsibility to affirm confidence in each other and strategically reach consensus on the direction of the Province. Provincial Government programmes and activities should therefore be citizenry-oriented and policies need to manifest the views of all parties concerned. The following remarks represent the sentiments shared by the research participants: • Four of the research participants affirmed that the Provincial Government had a policy unit which was mandated to consolidate all policy proposals and inputs from all stakeholders – this policy unity works in collaboration with different people across the Province. • Two of the participants further highlighted that, at times, when information is shared with citizens, positive results were not realised because of the passiveness of some citizens in general – some of the citizens resembled less interest in the operations of government. These were often the people who do not consider government as effective and more often the ones to quickly complain without offering solutions. • Participants also argued that *"our identified programmes are citizenry oriented because necessary platforms and opportunities are created to understand and prioritise citizenry expectations, incorporate their concerns and ultimately formulate programmes based on the needs of society and the Provincial strategic direction".* • Research participants emphasised that the Provincial Government has established VTSD forums as one of the initiatives to mitigate citizenry issues, needs, and available	○ According to Hanekom (1987:34), participation is a means of providing those people whose lives will be affected by proposed policies with the opportunity of expressing their views and of attempting to influence public managers as to the desirability of the suggested policies. ○ In essence, participation in government is understood to be involving continuous interaction and communication between local government and citizens in matters of development. In this instance Brynard (1996:2 cited in Mothepu, 2013) writes that to a greater or lesser extent the shaping of public policies is always influenced by public opinion and participation by the public in matters which they believe will affect them directly. This means participation can be beneficial if information on any matter of development is shared by the government and the citizens. ○ On the other hand, The Global Monitoring Report (2006) states that communication can improve communities' ability to identify and articulate their needs and to measure Government's performance. It can improve Government responsiveness by improving citizens' understanding of their rights and building their capacity to engage in public dialogue and public affairs. ○ In this light, Servaes (2013b) opines that participatory communication programmes should assert and reflect goals and objectives of society at large, collectivism and peer-understanding from both authorities and citizens is

	opportunities in relation to programmes that sought to emancipate them and advocate for adequate beneficial mechanisms. • In addition, one of the participants believed that all government activities considered the views of citizens because the five identified concretes and other activities were initiated to improve their conditions and to purely serve their interests. • Consequently, a couple of the research participants advanced that it remained unclear as to why certain citizens disengaged from government operations. Moreover, it was cited that some political organisations as opposition often compelled their constituencies to boycott and rebel against government programmes. Some of the opposition parties championed a contrary agenda to the one proposed by the Provincial Government and the majority of the people. • As part of collaborative action, the Provincial Government adopted the 'learn by doing' strategy to fulfil its mandate as advised by the people of the Province. Similarly, participants advanced that necessary platforms were created to involve citizens in strategic decisions – their inputs were more valuable to the operations and survival of the very same government.	the recipe for good governance, engagement, and inclusivity for all. o Most importantly, Cornish *et al*. (2011) postulate that in order to organise and manage strategic communication there must be an effective culture within which they are acknowledged to be a normal and fully integrated part of the policy and strategic processes. This culture should be guided by a shared and implicit awareness of the role and value of strategic communication. o The Royal Institute of International Affairs (2011) posits that citizens should be given greater status to contribute to the overall message. As a consequence, there is a need for greater recognition of the ability of those outside Government to communicate strategically through local engagement and outreach within and between communities and populations.

Discussion – *Citizenry-oriented policies and strategic decisions*

Literature and theory advance that communication structures and resources available to government should be used to ensure an informed and participative citizenry. It is through organised and co-ordinated communication structures, among others, that inclusivity can be attained and cherished. It emerged that political organisations encouraged citizens to revolt and boycott some government programmes and other governance initiatives – this was done to oppose policies and strategies not in accordance with their mandate. Interestingly, a couple of the research participants postulated that the Provincial Government adopted the 'learn by doing' strategy to ensure that Government decisions and processes were influenced and informed by citizens during service delivery undertakings. As the research participants further argued, the Provincial Government established a policy unit to consolidate the aspirations of various stakeholders in relation to policy proposals. Accordingly, Servaes (2013a) points out that the chemistry to managing citizens and open channels of communication through a strategic enactment lies in a systemic and two-way symmetrical process of information sharing, operationalisation and functionality in championing citizens' aspirations in a development environment. However, it was also cited that more often policies and strategies were derived from the mandate and resolutions carried by political organisations, which in a sense, seem to exclude the contribution of citizens. To a greater extent, the Global

Monitoring Report (2006) asserts that communication can improve government performance by providing citizens with direct information on the performance of government and equipping them with the information required to hold government to account. In this regard, government should communicate policies, programmes, decisions and the implementation of the programme of action and the provision of services to the people in a systematic and effective manner. This information would empower the citizenry to know where to go and what to do to receive assistance from government. Furthermore, this communication, using all communication channels, should be supported by two-way communication between citizens and government. Accordingly, several other research participants also conceded that improvements to better engage and involve citizens, particularly in strategic decisions about policies and programmes, were continuously sought because not all citizens have equal opportunities to influence the planning of government activities. Similarly, research participants argued that the majority of citizens in secluded areas of the Province had no knowledge of government operations and this posed a major challenge to the Provincial Government, hence the intensified VTSD programme which aimed to include them. As a consequence, it was suggested that government strategies were developed and refined regularly to inclusively incorporate the thoughts of most citizens. Surprisingly, participants also opined that some of the ordinary citizens were passive and often resembled less interest in the activities developed to encourage public participation, promote inclusivity, and produce mutual beneficial partnerships across the Province.

Sub-theme 14	Response	Literature and theoretical perspectives
Government's perspective on citizenry inclusivity	One of the strategic goals for any government sphere revolves around rendering quality services to the people and subsequently creating a just and inclusive environment for all. To be accountable, responsive, and up-hold ethical leadership is one of the strategic positive indicators of good governance. It was against this backdrop that participants alluded to the following: • Participants conceded that the Provincial Government is responsive to the challenges of citizens; however, some of the citizens were not patient with the operations of government, particularly service delivery matters. • Consequently, the majority of the research participants advanced that the Provincial Government adopted a principle of '*put the interests of ordinary people at heart*' as a mechanism to effectively respond to the challenges of ordinary citizens and offer better opportunities for survival. This principle compelled all the Provincial Government officials to appreciate, honour, and value societal change while offering adequate economic opportunities to all.	○ A United Nations Survey (2012) notes that inclusive planning with citizens prior to the implementation and delivery of services is critical to the success of most government programmes. Top-down approaches do not always work. Segments of society that are consulted are more likely to use the government services when they are operational. Outreach early on allows governments to take time to communicate with the beneficiaries of the service prior to its development. ○ The Twaweza Governance Brief (2017) points out that democracy is sometimes defined ideally as the government of the people, for the people and by the people; where governments take careful account of citizens' interests, experiences, needs and preferences when making and taking decisions. In practice, there may be no such thing as perfect democracy, but it remains a goal worth striving for. ○ Haider *et al*. (2011) observed that participatory democracy is a very fashionable idea these days.

	- In addition, the '*put the interests of ordinary people at heart*' principle is anchored through the Reconciliation, Healing, and Renewal (RHR) concrete as another tactic to encourage broader engagements with diversified groups across the Province – beneficial opportunities were also shared under this programme as participants contended. - One of the participants alluded that the RHR programme to engage and encourage public participation was complemented by the Saamtrek-Saamwerk programme which sought to empower citizens and encourage mutual collaborations and inclusivity. All these programmes and efforts were intended to unify citizens around shared common goals. - It was also mentioned that government at times do create expectations, however, often some of those expectations were not fulfilled and as a result, citizens would revolt and demonstrate their dissatisfactions through unrests – this posed a challenge for the Provincial Government as some decisions and plans were long-term and not immediate. - Consequently, two of the research participants indicated that programmes such as the VTSD-Lekgotla was a way to deal with community unrests and to establish proper mechanisms to quickly respond to legitimate concerns of citizens. This platform had the potential to inclusively engage citizens around common goals and reach consensus as the participants echoed.	Proponents suggest that greater opportunities for public involvement in government decision-making processes may help to enhance accountability and transparency in governance, contribute to more informed, and thereby improved, results, and foster a greater degree of connection between the governed and the governing (and a blurring of the line between the two) that leads to greater social capital and societal trust. o On the other hand, Wantchekon (2009) suggests that a potentially valuable step in fostering citizen participation in government decision-making processes is to incorporate in these processes features that are important to citizens. Processes that citizens value are likely to be processes that citizens use and that enhance citizen confidence in government, while processes with features that citizens find unsatisfactory are likely to be processes that do not engender meaningful citizen input; they may even operate to undermine citizen confidence. o In order to ensure the centrality of strategic communication to planning and action, Cornish *et al.* (2011) affirm that there must be a much tighter relationship between political leaders, ordinary citizens and communicators. Citizens should be given greater status to contribute to the overall message. There is a need for greater recognition of the ability of those outside government to communicate strategically through local engagement and outreach within and between communities and populations.

Discussion – *Government's perspective on citizenry inclusivity*

In order to maintain quality relationships between the Provincial Government and its stakeholders, it is essential to manage communication strategically. Communication managed strategically has the potential and capacity to facilitate citizenry inclusivity in government processes. Research participants postulated that programmes such as the VTSD-Lekgotla were established to manage and deal with community unrest resulting from dissatisfactions – some

of those citizens often demonstrated because of the expectations held in relation to government activities and personal interests, which were often not fulfilled. It emerged therefore that some of the community unrests emanated because citizens in general were impatient with the processes of government, thus they revolted and boycotted against some government initiatives aimed at promoting consensus, inclusivity, and adequate public participation in developmental programmes – most of the initiatives were long-term visions and goals. Cornish *et al.* (2011) record that strategic communication also offers the opportunity for governments to establish their *competence and credibility*. It can help to encourage *coherence and consistency* within government communications and to ensure that what is declared is not contradicted by what is done. And finally, it might also offer the prize of enhanced *comprehensiveness and cooperation* in the achievement of strategic-level goals within government and for citizens. It is worth noting that the Provincial Government through the adopted RHR programme, mitigated challenges relating to community conflicts, racial slurs, discrimination, and inequalities whilst advocating for inclusivity, collaborations, and equal access to relevant and timely information. In this regard, the literature and theory advance that consensus on decision-making processes may enhance accountability and transparency in governance and effectively contribute to a more informed society. In a sense, communication should be looked at as a strategic process with the capacity to build, maintain, and advance beneficial relationships. Strategic communication management forms the foundation for relationship building with stakeholders. To introduce greater accountability to citizens and to facilitate their participation in decision-making, a decentralised governance structure should be embraced and embedded in the policy position. Governments should take into account language, culture, content, accessibility and alternate delivery methods in communicating with all segments of the population. This affords citizens equal opportunities tailored in accordance to their identified needs, interests and expectations. The process should always be considered as a two-way communicative process. In the main, the top-down approach to both communication and the delivery of services becomes redundant and collapse to make way for an inclusive and integrative approach to communication aimed at promoting sustainable and reciprocal collaborations among actors.

Table 6.7 – Governance initiatives used for strategic management by the Provincial Government

6.5 SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

The research results as confirmed at the beginning of this Chapter narrated and consolidated perceptions, opinions, experiences and the knowledge held by the consulted research participants. In light of the above discussions, the current research results as presented, intend also to offer a broader conception of communication that would take into account other purposes and functions than the usual ones – strategic communication. In this regard, communication looked at as a strategic process is not only about raising awareness, informing, persuading, or changing behaviour. It is also about listening, exploring, understanding, empowering, and building consensus for social capital at the provincial level of government.

It is against this backdrop that the current study endeavoured to understand the extent to which strategic communication management can support or advance governance and sustainability programmes, whilst adopting a participatory communication perspective. To achieve this strategic focus, an empirically-based inquiry was undertaken with the intention to address both the problem statement and to address the research questions as stated in Chapter one. Subsequently, the empirical-based section provided an opportunity to equally understand how inclusive citizenry engagement can be obtained through a strategic process of communication with a participatory perspective.

As the research participants articulated, it is evident that both the Provincial Government officials and ordinary citizens as key informants in the current study traded various viewpoints. As a consequence, some of the opinions and perceptions held appeared to contradict each other. Interestingly, research participants had different thoughts about government operations, communication processes and programmes, the strategic planning process, governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in relation to the identified concretes. In turn, ordinary citizens strongly believed that most governance initiatives resembled a top-down approach to communication instead of a bottom-up approach where citizens are able to inform, motivate and direct their own choices. Moreover officials and citizens contradicted each other on aspects such as level of access to information and the manner in which government respond to the concerns of citizens. The contention is that officials claimed that some citizens were passive and had no interest in the operations of

government, however, they were too quick to complain. Citizens on the other hand held that officials were not responsive to their demands as promised and at times offered less opportunity for inclusive engagements.

In this way, participants advanced that both the planning and implementation occurred at a vertical level and later cascaded to the horizontal level. This process frequently excluded the thinking and inputs of those on the horizontal level – ordinary citizens in particular. Surprisingly, it also appeared that at a community level, communication programmes were often influenced and shaped by public representatives who at times promoted the ideas of government principals rather than advocating for community-based ideas. In this sense, public representatives as societal communicators also failed to recognise the importance of two-way communication, which is used to understand, assess, explore, and facilitate decision-making opportunities related to societal value creation. In the main, two-way communication has been proven to significantly enhance results and to promote the sustainability of governance initiatives, if adopted and implemented to attain inclusivity.

It was also argued that the composition of government administrations is based on a political party system, which formulated policies and mandated those elected as representatives to implement them. Consequently, Provincial Government strategies were also informed by policies discussed at a political party level – this process often included the views of party affiliates and at times appeared to exclude aspirations of ordinary citizens who were not party affiliates. To a greater extent, elected representatives owed much allegiance to their political organisations and principals rather than society as a whole. For this reason, it remained difficult for citizens to influence some of the Provincial Government processes pertinent to their immediate survival.

Essentially, research participants elucidated that some of the public representatives as societal communicators were not well equipped with professional skills or appear to possess any formal education and training to engage with citizens and facilitate continuous collaborative dialogue. Instead, it emerged that some communicators extended political patronage to their principals in order to maintain loyalty and exercise a degree of authority on certain communities – and thus to gain political

mileage. This process was cited as one of the reasons ordinary citizens often opted to be more passive, apathetic and disengaged from some government activities – some boycotted and rebelled against credible government opportunities because of the unidirectional governance system.

On the other hand, research participants postulated that programmes such as the VTSD-Lekgotla, RHR, Setsokotsane and Saamtrek-Saamwerk were adopted to deal with community unrests, mitigate challenges and conflicts between diversified societal groups, and to encourage active citizenry participation. However, it was acknowledged that the top-down approach to communication often perpetuated some of the communication challenges that citizens were confronted with. As a result, some programmes and governance initiatives were believed to be less effective because communication efforts often failed to facilitate and promote social cohesion, inclusivity, adequate public participation opportunities and coherence. For these reasons, strategic communication efforts were not frequently realised and championed to support both governance and sustainability programmes.

From the afore-mentioned, strategic communication creates an environment where communication is no longer restricted to informing or persuading audiences – but is a process involving two or more parties within which situations are assessed; knowledge and experiences shared, problems analysed, solutions identified, and finally strategies designed and agreed upon. The systematic and professional use of communication goes far beyond the common notion of being a communicator; it requires a sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives, models and methodologies, as well as familiarity with the implications of strategic application of communication approaches.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter one outlined the strategic aim of the current study, which was to be achieved through the collection of the empirical evidence. For this purpose, Chapter six was therefore devoted to the presentation of the research results in order to achieve the strategic aim, to answer the posed research questions and the defined problem statement. To achieve this goal, techniques and methods on how the gathered data have been organised, managed and analysed were clearly described

to enable the interpretation and presentation of the research results. In this sense, this Chapter also indicated that both the computer software called *NVivo 11 plus* and the manual analysis were adopted as complementary methods to enable a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data. Likewise, responses from the research participants' were categorised according to different themes and sub-themes which were connected to the theoretical underpinnings, and thus presented for clarity.

Consequently, the presentation of the research results revealed both complementary and contradictory perspectives as advanced by various participants. As captured by participants, it was evident that some of the ordinary citizens often held negative perceptions about the operations of the Provincial Government, including developmental programmes. Nonetheless, some positive experiences, perspectives and attributes were also recorded from both ordinary citizens and the Provincial Government officials. In this regard, some participants confirmed that the Provincial Government has to ensure that all its structures enable the public to exercise a meaningful say. Governance as a process of facilitating and ensuring the delivery of goods and services through the management of social power and power relations therefore represents a means of social stability and the well-being of citizens through deepening participative democracy.

Moreover, a collaborative mission and vision between ordinary citizens and the Provincial Government must be negotiated and embarked upon. To ensure the successful execution of the people-centred mission and people-centred vision, government departments with its activities must therefore develop an inclusive strategic plan. In turn, a collaborative strategy in this regard can then be translated into objectives at the departmental and regional levels, which in turn can be translated into operational tactics that ultimately drive the execution of sustainability programmes.

The stakeholder perspective is arguably the most important one for the Provincial Government to recognise because achieving a mission and vision does not necessarily equate to fiscal responsibilities. In the main, the Provincial Government must determine whom it serves and how their requirements can best be addressed as a service-oriented industry. This perspective captures the ability of the Provincial

Government in collaboration with the people to provide quality goods and services, effective delivery, and overall citizenry and/or stakeholder satisfaction.

Importantly, two-way communication, when used from the onset of governance initiatives, is not only a useful but also a necessary ingredient to enhance development initiatives and could assist in avoiding the failures of the past. In addition, two-way communication should be applied professionally by specialists familiar with the rich body of knowledge (communication management discipline) and the diverse range of methods, techniques, and tools of communication in order to facilitate and promote inclusivity. Subsequently, the Provincial Government must prioritise the use and implications of community radio stations as reliable and relevant channels of communication to even reach those in secluded areas of the Province.

Arguably, community radio stations and other relevant sources of information can be efficient mechanisms for disseminating government information because they are relatively inexpensive, have broad coverage (depending on the transmitter and topography), and are accessible to even the most illiterates – including those in secluded areas of the Province. In Chapter Seven, informed by the findings from the empirical section, a strategic communication management framework for the North-West Province is presented and guidelines for effective implementation of communication programmes for provincial communicators are proposed in accordance with the diverse needs of ordinary citizens and other Provincial Government stakeholders.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this Chapter is to present the conclusion and recommendations of this research study. A conclusive discussion on the research findings in accordance with the research aim had to be considered. In this light, the Chapter further presents the proposed *Strategic Communication Framework for Inclusive Citizenry Engagement* as the contribution to the discipline of communication management linked to the research data discussed under the research themes. A review of the research questions in accordance with the research findings is considered in this Chapter. The problem statement outlined in Chapter One is also reviewed. The subsequent conclusion derived is followed by future research imperatives that have been recommended, culminating in the finalisation of the research study.

As a means of assisting the North-West Provincial Government officials (who are required to manage communication programmes but often lack the necessary training) to become more effective in implementing government programmes, the researcher provides effective strategic communication guidelines to complement the proposed framework in order to encourage efficient communication among public representatives in their endeavour to engage with ordinary citizens as part of promoting collaborations and inclusivity towards two-way public participation opportunities.

In this Chapter, core competencies required by public representatives often acting as sporadic communicators to manage both governance initiatives and sustainability programmes according to the diverse needs, interests, and expectations of the North-West Province citizens also had to be determined. In this context, strategic communication management is understood as a deliberate, intentional and collaborative decision-making process. Likewise, Raupp and Hoffjann (2012) affirm that strategic decisions in communication management are part of both retrospective

and prospective sense-making processes in organisations. In accordance with this view, Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five were presented as a conceptual and theoretical framework, which, together with the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, guide the empirical research regarding the core competencies required by public representatives to manage communication campaigns effectively.

To a greater extent, the previous chapters indicated that the North-West Province's communication environment is exceptionally varied, diverse, often politicised and complex and as a result hereof the public representatives and designated government communicators require a wide variety of competencies to manage and implement government programmes in accordance with the needs, interests and expectations of the North-West Province stakeholders, and in the main, ordinary citizens. Accordingly, communication professionals' knowledge on managing strategic communication programmes to support the Provincial Government's vision and objectives through the development of a collaborative and inclusive strategy needs to be expanded.

7.2 INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

As already mentioned, the purpose of the current study was to evaluate how strategic communication management can support governance initiatives and sustainability programmes through a participatory communication perspective. To achieve this purpose, the current research study developed research questions to be addressed, provided research methods and techniques to collect and analyse data, and presented the research results as the evidence gathered from research participants in the preceding Chapter(s). In this sense, Bradford (2017) contends that empirical evidence includes measurements or data collected through direct observation or experimentation in order to satisfy a particular objective.

As mentioned in Chapters Five and Six, both focus groups and individual interviews schedules were administered as instruments for the collection of the empirical evidence. These processes justified the observations embarked on to understand the social reality as articulated by the research participants.

From the afore-mentioned background, together with the presentation of the research results in Chapter Six, it became evident that the current study espoused a number of approaches and techniques to measure the support of strategic communication management in advancing governance and sustainability programmes. In this case, the presentation of the research results sought to ascertain how the phenomenon of strategic communication management was among others, understood as a strategic process with the capacity to elevate participatory projects/programmes at the North-West Province.

Subsequently, the research results also aimed to ascertain how the realisation of strategic communication management efforts often encouraged and promoted inclusive citizenry engagement through collaborative governance initiatives and people-centred programmes. In short, the empirical evidence herein demonstrates how the research participants related to the phenomena of strategic communication management and ultimately the process of communication management at the Provincial Government level.

A reflection on the findings of the current study indicated that both the Provincial Government officials and ordinary citizens held conflicting or contradictory perspectives on the strategic processes of communication, public participation, citizenry engagement, inclusivity and people-centred programmes through governance initiatives, in particular. Surprisingly, only a small number of citizens were in agreement with some of the operations of the Provincial Government. This group of citizens, together with the Provincial Government officials, strongly believed that the sharing of adequate information and awareness creation on government programmes were initiated to promote public participation and to encourage inclusivity across the Province.

Research participants further maintained that it was through sustainable communication and engagement platforms created for (*not with*) citizens that more information was shared. In this regard, aspects such as community radio stations, local newspapers, VTSD-Lekgotla and related programmes, and the Setsokotsane 10 by 10 campaigns with its ward-based projects, among others, were adopted to facilitate access to relevant information, as a means to reach consensus on programmes and to ensure adequate citizenry participation.

In support of the afore-mentioned, the Comtask Report of 1996 cited in Chaka (2011) indicates that a fundamental need of government communication is to reach the minority of the population, especially the disadvantaged. Inadequate public infrastructure in broadcasting and telecommunications is an obstacle to this, and with the exception of radio communication, fails to reach the majority. A closely co-ordinated strategy to extend this infrastructure is required within government. Simplicity of language and easy access is needed to overcome barriers of illiteracy in the society. New technology can also assist in the distribution of information and the use of multi-purpose information centres known as the Thusong centres is a good way to facilitate.

On the contrary, a significant majority of the citizens remained disengaged from government operations. A number of reasons were advanced by the research participants – they postulated that communication had no durable effect because the government was unable to fulfil their expectations. Provincial Government programmes were not aimed at increasing inclusivity because public representatives extend patronage to their political principals. In light of these assertions, the planning and execution of governance initiatives and the exercise of strategic management often excluded the aspirations of the majority.

Similarly, those in secluded areas of the Province were cited as more disadvantaged and extremely passive on government operations. In this case, communication to citizens was only concerned with information transfer and remains one-sided, one-way communication at best. As a result, both citizenry-passiveness and public apathy continued to characterise the unsuccessfulness of government initiatives in reaching and positively influencing collaborative governance measures, particularly in rural communities.

Interestingly, Provincial Government officials unanimously contended that a number of measures were adopted to integrate and address communication backlogs with rural communities – the Setsokotsane call-centres across the municipalities and wards in the Province and other projects such as the VTSD initiative, Reconciliation, Healing and Renewal were solely dedicated to empower and economically integrate rural communities. However, it was also recorded that in many instances government activities were unresponsive and offered less opportunities for citizens

to actively contribute to the development of the North-West Province. Essentially, it was advanced that political patronage and the inability of some public representatives as hemispheric communicators to confidently initiate unrestricted two-way communication with citizens was among the main factors leading to high levels of disengagement and continuous apathy in the North-West Province.

Consequently, Liu and Horsley (2010) advocate that a democratic government is best served by a free two-way flow of ideas and accurate information so that citizens and their government can make informed choices. A democratic government must report and be accountable to the citizenry it serves. Citizens, as taxpayers, must have the right to access government information, but with some exceptions (Chaka, 2011).

From this perspective, Chaka (2014:2) posits that during the 20th century there was a growing concern articulated by governments that effective governance necessitates two-way communication between government and the people; that government needs to listen to the people to obtain information regarding their needs; and that the government needs to be people-centred and put the people first.

Notably, Provincial Government officials further suggested that a two-way communication atmosphere existed with the purpose of allowing citizens to influence and contribute to the vision of the Province and ultimately to encourage diversified views on government programmes. On the contrary, a number of ordinary citizens believed that two-way communication was utilised as a mechanism to benefit politically inclined individuals and continued to serve the interests of selective minorities instead of the majority.

Accordingly, communication at the Provincial Government level was observed as unidirectional, with no durable effect on the living conditions of the ordinary majority. In this view, participants further argued that a top-down approach to communication characterised the relationship between citizens and government. As a result, officials often planned and executed programmes which were not people-centred; and they were often used to influence through political organisations or the party system – the mandate carried by some government representatives was often not informed by the diverse needs, interests and expectations of ordinary citizens.

Chaka (2011:168) writes that it is also important to note that a successful democratic government maintains responsive relationships with stakeholders or constituents based on mutual understanding and two-way communication. One of the most important tasks of government is to provide clear, truthful and factual information to citizens. The accurate and impartial communication of information about government policies, activities and services is critical to the democratic process. Government communications should embrace two separate but complementary areas of activity, namely government communication with the media, and government communication directly with the public.

As a consequence, the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) is thus mandated to strategically manage and co-ordinate government communication and also to facilitate the interactive process between the South African public and the state. Surprisingly, none of the Provincial Government officials referred to the importance of GCIS in facilitating the interactive process between citizens and the government – even though GCIS exists in the North-West Province, its role is unclear in this regard.

However, Provincial Government officials and a number of ordinary citizens acknowledged that the majority of government initiatives focused more on information dissemination rather than the actual involvement and the establishment of a dialogic relationship 'with' citizens. To this end, it remained unclear as to how the Provincial Government fostered a more focused and deliberate relationship management programme 'with' citizens and not 'for' citizens as frequently articulated in most government communication programmes. According to Caywood (2007) the term 'government communication' varies dramatically from author to author, ranging from its association with all forms of political activity to a very specific focus on one limited type of activity, like political advertising.

Needless to say, the consequences of the definition adopted, greatly affect the conclusions reached pertaining to the growth and spread of communication activity and its impact. Communication is vital to democratic politics in general and to government, in particular (Chaka, 2011). From this perspective, communication (as a strategic tool) with citizens at the Provincial level becomes imperative in facilitating

dialogue, promoting unity, fostering strategic relationships and encouraging both collaboration and inclusivity through co-governance initiatives.

On the other hand, the majority of the research participants advanced that adequate and timely government communication often occurred during elections. During this period, a number of officials often conducted political campaigns under the disguise of government programmes and activities. This strategy was cited as one of the efforts by the incumbents to retain government power and at the same time increase political mileage through publicity stunts. In addition, several other participants registered that community communication programmes were also manipulated to serve political interests rather than to focus on prevailing community issues and continuous unrests, often as a result of inadequate communication on the part of the Provincial Government.

Consequently, some of government's genuine programmes were often diverted to political organisation(s) which had a negative impact on the supposed recipients – the ordinary citizens. Public representatives were also referenced as incompetent in articulating the aspirations of citizens to senior officials and vice versa. In this context, public representatives were viewed as less strategic in advancing government programmes, communication campaigns and coordinating citizenry engagements at the community level.

Likewise, some public representatives had no significant bearing on the living conditions of community citizens. It was argued that public representatives were less equipped and skilled to manage community communication programmes. At this level, communication had no durable impact because citizens were unable to influence a number of government activities and thus opted to remain passive and apathetic towards even genuine projects. In a sense, participatory communication as a two-way process was also neglected simply because citizens failed to realise the 'participative' nature of various projects/programmes.

Consequently, the term participative governance remained a wishful thinking process without positive outcomes. This process ultimately proved that communication programmes were often adopted only to benefit the Provincial Government and not all citizens.

Accordingly, the majority of the participants cited that media invites were often extended as a form of publicity stunt and not an authentic media relations process. Community events and programmes were publicised to gain political mileage and relevance within communities because under normal circumstances, media houses/outlets were often excluded amid the fear that community members would advance their challenges, which would eventually be published.

In this light, issues relating to citizenry interests, needs and expectations were often postponed to other meetings or community forums to be discussed, consolidated and therefore channelled to senior officials for action at a later stage. This process also proved that communication was unidirectional and offered no comprehensive feedback to citizens, except when the Provincial Government stands to benefit.

Moreover, the findings reflected that participative governance and the contribution of strategic communication as an enabler for good governance were not adequately recognised in the North-West Province. In tandem, Singh (2014) posits that strategic communication within the public sector is a direct determinant of the quality of service delivery provided to the constituency of the current regime. As a critical tool of good governance, the effectiveness of the communication strategy is directly dependent on the quality of the communication policy. From this perspective, appropriate communication in the most easily understood format and language creates dialogue, comprehension and curiosity to know more, as well as creating the circumstances for further transmission.

Ideally, effective strategic communication must take place from the outset of the Provincial Government engagement process to create the momentum to carry citizenry interests and their involvement forward. As discussed earlier on, both the Provincial Government strategy and communication programmes were often decided and implemented without prior consideration of the interests of those governed (ordinary citizens). The influence and contribution of ordinary citizens to the organisational strategy and developmental projects or programmes continued to be minimal and in favour of a selected minority who were politically inclined. Consequently, the format and language used to communicate with citizens was not ideal in facilitating increased public participation and to encourage an inclusive culture in sustainability programmes.

Interestingly, empirical literature provides numerous definitions of governance. Whilst some authors refer to governance as a phenomenon related to structures created by government to undertake service-delivery tasks, others refer to governance as the outcomes and processes of government action. Against this backdrop, Provincial Government officials appeared to understand the importance of governance and governing stakeholder relationships differently as compared to ordinary citizens. It was argued that governance at the Provincial Government level was viewed as a one-way process with a top-heavy approach to communication, rather than a process that resembles a two-way participative approach to communication. In this view, the findings revealed that governance uses persuasion patterns in one-way communication in order to change people's attitude and their behaviour via the top-down communication approach.

Consequently, the bottom-up (horizontal level) approach, as advocated by ordinary citizens, appeared to enjoy less expression in the operations of government. It was for these reasons that a number of citizens recorded that government communication programmes and governance initiatives were not integrative; failed to respond to genuine concerns at the community level; and are often characterised by political patronage and gate-keeping.

So pertinently, Chaka (2014) argues that government communication can be more symmetrical in some cases than is generally accepted. Clear and precise communication leads to accountability and transparency. In dialogue between government, local authorities and stakeholders (all citizens), the more information is shared, the more participation and dialogue are encouraged, the more accountable those in power become and the more transparent their actions must be.

As a context, citizens must receive, through various channels of communication, not only the messages of the Provincial Government content and the invitation to engage in dialogue, but also the underlying message that their participation is essential to the process. The outcome of any community activity should be perceived by the population as the result of a Provincial effort in promoting a responsive government and inclusive environment for ordinary citizens to be empowered through strategic communication as an enabler for good governance.

It is implicit that, for communication to be construed strategic, it has to be the result of a planned process, and in this context the citizenry engagement will be a product of public collaboration and an inclusive process (Macnamara, 2016). As reflected in the discussions, it remained difficult for the Provincial Government to maintain two-way communication because the information shared and communicated with citizens often appeared to be abstract. This analysis recognises arguments that information transmission and persuasion were used as legitimate practices in some circumstances in order to ensure that the message of government reaches citizens – this also demonstrated a linear process towards strategic communication because the outcomes of interactions with the citizens were not examined nor evaluated in order to refine the message communicated to different stakeholders and to ultimately provide an opportunity for feedback.

The concept of communication was often viewed simplistically as a process of dissemination of information rather than a strategic process. Accordingly, efforts to engage with citizens were often decided and agreed to without involving the supposed recipients – the ordinary citizens. Van der Waldt *et al.* (1995:165 cited in Singh, 2014) maintain that "if the community is not informed in relation to government actions, it cannot evaluate them in terms of ethics and morality". Such access to information by citizens is enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa as adopted in 1996. More often than not, communication policies and guidelines exist to ensure that the highest standards of fairness, equity, probity and public responsibility are front of mind when planning any type of government communication.

These afore-mentioned elements assist in achieving the most effective result possible. This is why it is so important for all Provincial Government departments, bodies and entities to comply with the relevant policies/guidelines and processes that relate to specific campaigns or communication activities. The Provincial Government communication needs to be effective, co-ordinated, well managed and most importantly, responsive to the aspirations of the North-West communities.

On the other hand, Grunig and Grunig's (1992 cited in Chaka, 2011) two-way symmetrical model uses communication to foster the relationship between an organisation, and in this instance government, and its publics, based on negotiation, trust and mutual respect – a collaborative strategic relationship must be forged.
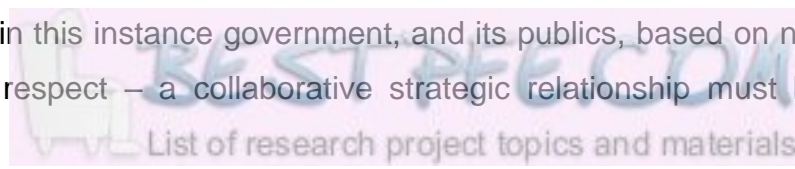
Provincial Government programmes would be more effective if a strategic communication approach is adopted and focused on establishing and managing relationships, increasing participation, and encouraging co-operation between the government and its people.

7.3 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After a reflection on the empirical evidence, coupled with the discussions in the preceding chapters, it now becomes pertinent for the current study to revisit the research questions as posed in Chapter One, with the purpose of examining whether or not the research adequately addressed the questions in accordance with the research aim. In line with the research aim, it was found that strategic communication is much more than merely disseminating information to people to inform them about Provincial Government activities. This includes the active solicitation of their perspectives to help consider options to shape the formulation of policy, ensuring that the mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information and to build consensus among citizens about the development agenda. Throughout this strategic process, participatory development communication planning requires that a strategic communication assessment be conducted in order to adequately respond to citizenry needs, interests and expectations.

Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) indicate that it is increasingly recognised that what makes a theory interesting and influential is that it challenges our assumptions in some significant way. However, established ways for arriving at research questions mean spotting or constructing gaps in existing theories. In line with this view, it was required for the current study to establish goal-oriented research questions in accordance with the aim and rationale adopted.

Subsequently, the design of clear and precise research questions enabled the researcher to adequately investigate the influence and contribution of strategic communication in advancing or enhancing governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. In actual fact, understanding the contribution of strategic communication in facilitating participatory programmes also required to align the established research questions with the research design. Thus, the adopted

methodology informed a complementary relationship among the concepts and paradigms advanced in this study.

7.3.1 Primary research question

For the purpose of the current discussion, a primary research question was established as a vehicle to investigate the phenomenon of strategic communication management in enhancing governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. This was done with the aim of understanding how inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of communication as a strategic tool or process at the North-West Provincial Government. To begin, the empirical evidence discussed in Chapter Six and a reflection in the current Chapter provided the foundation for a detailed discussion on the established primary research question. The question was therefore posed in this manner:

> **Primary research question:**
>
> *How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of strategic communication management for governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province?*

It was the intention of the current study to investigate how inclusive citizenry engagement can be achieved from a participatory communication perspective, through the use of strategic communication management. This was done in order to understand the implications, influence and contribution of strategic communication management to governance initiatives and sustainability programmes in the North-West Province. It was found that the North-West Provincial Government had a number of programmes to encourage citizenry engagement from a participatory perspective; however, the programmes initiated were often not inclusive and responsive to the aspirations of all citizens owing to several factors.

Accordingly, it also appeared that the Province had no definitive mechanisms to facilitate co-governance, co-creation and cooperation because of the top-down communication approach espoused to engage with citizens. This process often

seemed to represent the interests of public representatives more, compared to those of ordinary citizens.

One of the dominant factors is that communication in every sense possible was practised as a procedural and operational tool rather than as a strategic process. In this sense, the purpose and intention of communication emphasised an information transmission approach instead of using communication to achieve a particular desired outcome – integrative and deliberate communication. In this regard, Singh (2014) is of the view that the use of communication within the organisation is varied, incorporating aspects such as strategic communication and operational communication.

In support of this view, Holtz (2004:206) states that "communication is not an end; it is a *means* to an end". It is this interpretation that defines communication as a strategic tool to be used gainfully to achieve a particular purpose. Another factor highly articulated was that public participation opportunities or platforms were unidirectional in a sense that two-way participative communication was infrequently realised, particularly at community level.

Consequently, the inability of the Provincial Government to foster an inclusive, open and transparent communication culture often led to high levels of disengagement and continuous public apathy on the part of ordinary citizens. As a result of the deepening levels of public apathy, communication or strategic communication efforts to empower citizens with clear and precise information appeared to be inconsistently practised and adopted. Another major factor aligned with empowering citizens with adequate information and opportunities was that operational communication had no durable influence on citizens, and as such no communicative action materialised.

Some citizens in the main appeared to be more passive instead of active participants in the co-ordination of governance initiatives and participatory developmental programmes aimed at addressing their needs and expectations. Subsequently, for long-term inclusive citizenry engagement to be recognised as a meaningful and purposeful component of the Provincial Government, strategic communication must ensure that transparency promotes accountability and provides information for citizens about what their government is doing. In essence, the Provincial

Government officials can also test the public's likely reaction to a policy proposal. But the most important reason for genuine engagement with citizens' remains that of *legitimising* – in the strong sense articulated by Habermas, it encompasses the decisions and policies that governments finally settle upon.

Holmes (2011) points out that Habermas contended that citizens will regard democratic governments – and thus the laws, policies and interventions which issue from them – as legitimate only 'insofar as the democratic process, as it is institutionally organised and conducted, warrants the presumption that outcomes are reasonable products of a sufficiently inclusive deliberative process'.

As the findings further reveal, communication at the North-West is crucial for the development of the Province and as a means to achieve and coordinate the objectives of the five identified concretes. However, it should be recognised that the value and contribution of communication is dependent on the strategic planning and execution of communication objectives aligned to the overall government's engagement strategy. For this to be realised, citizenry-oriented programmes and co-governance initiatives should therefore be driven by strategic communication programmes in order to manifest long-term inclusive citizenry engagement. In this regard, strategic communication should be thought of as a leader of open public participation forums; a connector for transparency, negotiation and deliberation; as well as responsive policy systems.

It is indicative that during the last few decades of the 20th century, the debate on citizens' participation in their own governance tended to move away from the strictures towards exploring and applying more fluid and nuanced approaches. Holmes (2011) is of the view that the German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas proved a seminal influence on the debate, arguing for what he termed 'communicative rationality', whereby competent and knowledgeable citizens engage with one another in good faith, and through the giving (or assuming) of reasons they arrive at a shared understanding about a situation.

A significant consideration for governments' engaging with citizens – and an unsurprising one – is that modern democratic states are highly complex affairs, inextricably connected to market economics, and charged with the governance of

societies that are increasingly pluralistic in terms of ethnic and racial mix, religious and cultural variety, to say nothing of the array of individual personal and political values that such diversity implies. This makes involving citizens in deliberation about governance and the design of policies and services no simple task.

Participatory communication aligned to strategic communication programmes at the North-West Provincial Government should enhance collective understanding about critical societal issues, integrate diverse constituent groups into governance systems, and enhance the acceptance of collective decisions. This process requires that the bottom-up approach to communication be adopted rather than the top-down approach as reflected in the findings of the current study. For this reason, long-term inclusive citizenry engagement can therefore be achieved at the North-West Province from a participatory communication perspective aligned to strategic communication objectives.

In actual fact, Moran (2010) warns that the engagement of citizens is 'not only the right thing to do but will provide a rich new source of ideas to government – the ideas can therefore be integrated into the strategic management of communication to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement. From this perspective, it is evident that the practice of strategic communication management can do more than just to *aid* and *support* both governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. In fact, strategic communication, if adopted correctly, has the transformative capacity to be an enabler for good governance and to leverage people-centred programmes into meaningful collaborative partnerships among actors – without a doubt, strategic communication leads to inclusivity and deliberative engagements with identified desired outcomes.

7.3.2 Secondary research questions

Three specific and aligned secondary research questions expand on the primary question as supporting branches or building-blocks in order to achieve the purpose of the current study. In a sense, a sound and complimentary alignment exists between the main research question and the investigative secondary questions. These secondary questions support the overarching purpose of this research study

as already indicated from Chapter One. In the main, the questions were therefore posed in the following manner:

> **Secondary research question 1:**
>
> *How can inclusive citizenry engagement be achieved from a participatory perspective?*

The study found that inclusive citizenry engagement can only be achieved through collaborative participation mechanisms among the Provincial Government officials and citizens at the helm. Importantly, a participatory philosophy should be adopted in order to elevate the role and value of citizens in society as they are facilitating ways for the Provincial Government to be more responsive to public needs from the bottom-up level. The bottom-up (as an outflow of the horizontal) approach should be more active in consolidating the identified citizenry needs, interests and expectations to ensure effective co-ordination particularly at community communication level.

Haywood and Besley (2014) contend that even still, the most deliberative engagement processes do not guarantee that participation will increase the relevancy and responsiveness of government for individual participants or the efficacy of subsequent policy implications that may emerge from such efforts.

From the afore-mentioned perspective, the ability to constitute sustainable citizenry engagement platforms largely depends on the Provincial Government to increase and expose citizens to relevant opportunities in a responsive manner. As a result, the narrative should move from identifying stakeholders as mere 'publics', to them acting as active citizens in the participatory process. Holmes (2011) articulates that over the past decade, this view has been reframed to regard the public as 'citizens', whose agency matters and whose right to participate directly or indirectly in decisions that affect them should be actively facilitated. Such an approach honours the fundamental principle of an inclusive and democratic process – that power is to be exercised through, and resides in, its citizens.

Fundamentally, at the centre of attaining a long-term inclusive and active citizenry engagement process lies the capacity to empower role players with the necessary information and knowledge on how, when and why they should be involved in any participatory endeavour as reflected in the findings of the current study. As

considered in the previous chapters, social welfare, political/environmental stability and economic benefits are key determinants of effective public participation programmes which requires a high level of implementation and a sense of willingness on the part of the Provincial Government to enact collaborative and inclusive participatory acumen to benefit citizens. Subsequently, citizens involved in the participatory process should be authorised to take ownership of the engagement endeavour, from the beginning to the end – communication as a strategic process should facilitate the realisation of such an objective throughout.

Another contention is that the practice of strategic communication, as infrequently realised by the North-West Provincial Government, would enhance participatory communication projects in line with the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal strategy as the anchor for both participative development and the advancement of socio-economic transformation. In this case, two-way symmetrical communication in policy decisions, co-production of beneficial programmes and tailored strategic messages aimed at encouraging inclusivity should be part of the 'popular discourse' at the Provincial level of government.

Aligned to the afore-mentioned view, Holmes (2011) writes that in many democracies, citizen participation in policymaking and service design has been debated or attempted, but too infrequently realised. There have been some notable achievements, in both advanced and developing countries, and there is abundant public policy literature advocating thoroughgoing collaboration. But genuine engagement in the 'co-production' of policy and services requires major shifts in the culture and operations of government agencies.

On the other hand, a participatory perspective offers influence, transparency and representativeness because communication in nature is a participative process aimed at effecting a particular change, either in behaviour or attitude of role players (citizens vs. government). For this imperative reason, the accomplishment of inclusive citizenry engagement demands of public representatives to acquire new skills as enablers, negotiators and collaborators.

Subsequently, it also demands of citizens an orientation to the public good, a willingness to actively engage, and the capabilities needed to participate and

deliberate well. These are elevated orders, especially if citizens are disengaged and certain groups within the population are marginalised as revealed in the research results of the current study. Public representatives as strategic communicators should be thoroughly schooled in the nature and importance of effectively co-ordinating people-centred programmes and the participatory process, in particular.

So pertinently, Biegelbauer and Hansen (2011) note three areas that should be considered to assess the effectiveness of participatory processes, including the degree of 'inclusion' in the process. From this perspective, it is thus imperative for the North-West Provincial Government to strive for 'adequate and equal inclusion' in the facilitation of participatory development communication programmes as a prerequisite for good governance and a key indicator for transparency, responsiveness and intentional communication aimed at promoting an inclusive and engaged societal environment.

As observed in the findings, for inclusive citizenry engagement to be achieved, simply providing the citizens with more information (education) will not necessarily lead to enhanced understanding of participatory endeavours – there is no willingness to acquire and utilise the information. Instead, issues of trust, confidence, and fairness in the participatory process are purported to play a significant role in citizens' perceptions of and engagement in strategic processes aimed at producing significant benefits – in the social, environmental and economical dimensions.

In essence, by engaging with citizens, the Provincial Government can benefit from expert knowledge beyond their immediate realm of information, expertise and advice, while creating at the same time opportunities to educate people about policy alternatives and the need to participate as a democratic requirement. Subsequently, through engagement, the Provincial Government cannot only develop a better appreciation of public opinion, but might also seize the occasion to challenge it, to inform and shape people's preferences as a phenomenon leading to the attainment of an inclusive and engaged society.

> ### Secondary research question 2:
>
> *How can strategic communication management for sustainability programmes support inclusive citizenry engagement?*

It is understood that strategic communication management is not a panacea, nor a one-size fits all situational expectation, however, the practice as a mantra is dependent on a set of objectives and the overall organisational communication strategy to deliver desirable and strategic outcomes. Based on the literature and theoretical discourse, strategic communication embraces an array of organisational activities that refer to building, nurturing and maintaining organisation-public relationships. In this case, it is imperative to recognise that *operational communication* as cited by the majority of the research participants at the North-West Provincial Government level enjoys much attention, rather than *strategic communication*, which is infrequently realised both in policy articulation and application.

More often than not, the comprehensive application of strategic communication management programmes aimed at organised communication occurred only for operational purposes. The ability to create a conducive environment to ensure that dialogic communication increases citizenry engagement with intent and a particular end goal in mind, occurred for operational means. This is because reference was made solely to the information transmission process without compelling opportunities that can lead to the realisation of an inclusive and a highly engaged citizenry.

In actual fact, operational communication was mainly used to advance both internal and external communication opportunities and often espoused a top-heavy approach. In this sense, the purpose of strategic communication management (understood as to facilitate, drive and promote the achievement of the Provincial Governments' plan and its strategic objectives through the effective, appropriate and systematic identification and communication of sustainability programmes) remains unclear. Essentially, strategic communication efforts must be derived from the RRR government strategy for meaningful contribution in the Province.

The above with the intention to align programmes to the core government strategy in pursuit of an inclusive and a highly engaged society. The measurement, development, and recognition of strategic communication efforts in facilitating credible and people-centred sustainability programmes are of benefit to the North-West Province communities. In this case, the Provincial Government, in collaboration with citizens, is able to appreciate that strategic communication has a durable impact on the delivery of consistent, deliberate and organised two-way mutually shared programmes.

It is in these afore-mentioned conditions that strategic communication management for sustainability programmes can support inclusive citizenry engagement. One of the fundamental arguments as posited in the research findings was that the extension of patronage was aimed at soliciting political authority and populism rather than the promotion of an inclusive environment, where everyone was empowered to advance shared objectives. It is against this backdrop that strategic communication is advanced and facilitated at the Provincial Government to effectively communicate 'with' citizens the benefits of and their responsibility towards government sustainability programmes.

In this view, Thompson *et al.* (2013) articulate that the use of the word *strategic*, however, is a game changer. Its appearance in front of *communication* shifts the focus from context and the recipient to purpose and the sender. Strategy does not privilege any one quality of the communication exchange; rather, it focuses on achieving the sender's predetermined aim (Lock *et al.*, 2016).

In this light, Camilleri (2015) alludes that more communication and dialogue between stakeholder groups will help to raise awareness of 'creating shared value'. As it appeared, shared value can be sustained only if there is a genuine commitment to government empowerment activities, and if there is a willingness to forge relationships with key stakeholders in accordance with strategic communication objectives. Lock *et al.* (2016) write that societies could not last and prosper without citizen engagement; discourse had to be trusted to produce solid facts, sound reasoning, principled evaluations, responsible and reflective public and private policy, and strong and positive identifications. Enacted well, such strategies could
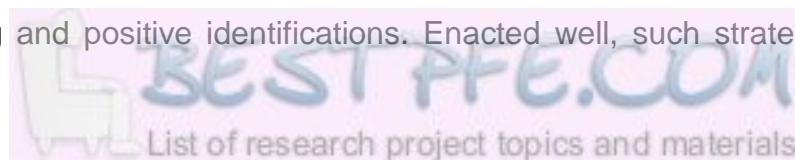
help each society to make collectively enlightened choices and obtain a sense of inclusivity.

A reflection on the empirical evidence indicates that communication as the lifeblood of human interactions often failed to manifest positive and healthier strategic relationships. It also emerged that the transmission of information through various channels remained unidirectional without any form of positive feedback – and consultations were regarded as restrictive. Certainly, consultation processes were also viewed as fragmented opportunities solely established to benefit the carrier(s) of the message instead of achieving the purpose of communication and adequately engaging the receiver. At the heart of all endeavours, a unidirectional or one-way imbalanced communication relationship between the Provincial Government and citizens was often perpetuated by inadequate communication training and the inability to learn, by some incompetent representatives.

Likewise, Provincial Government officials should also be thoroughly acquainted with the purpose of strategic and communicative action; and educate community authorities as well, if possible, through training. The most effective vehicles to reach/train them are workshops, seminars and distance learning, if technology permits. This should be reinforced by printed materials on an accessible level and in the local language to benefit citizens as well, and to create an inclusive, participative and involved society in all governmental programmes.

Consequently, the view to strive for inclusive citizenry engagement at the North-West Province largely depend on how strategic communication is enabled to promote sustainability reporting, openness and transparency of programme planning and implementation. Through shared programmes and transparency, adequate sustainability reporting can also help to make the North-West Provincial Government more accountable in a strategic and instrumental manner. It makes sense to contemplate it as a strategic communication tool that helps the government to be judged as 'legitimate' by citizens in order to survive and prosper.

To a greater extent, citizen's collaboration in policy and service delivery design will also enhance the processes of government and improve the outcomes sought. Collaboration 'with' citizens is to be enabled and encouraged. Inclusive citizenry

engagement is not a single process or set of activities. It is an ongoing process or conversation that builds trust and mutually beneficial relationships as anchored by strategic communication strategies.

It is therefore borne in mind that the practice and application of strategic communication efforts and programmes have the potential to yield positive and continuous benefits for citizens as the governed and for the Provincial Government as the governor. Through strategic communication, the two-way communicative relationship between the citizens and the government must be the manifestation of a dialogic communication approach. In this context, strategic communication programmes should be leveraged by the aspirations of ordinary citizens via the horizontal bottom-up approach to ensure that the vertical top-down approach is adequately influenced and reflecting the views of the majority.

Moreover, direct community engagement is to be used as an umbrella idiom by the North-West Province to include information, consultation, engagement and empowering activities. To this end, the Provincial Government must recognise that citizens are now seeking more direct ways to get involved in public life and decision-making, particularly on issues in which they have a direct interest. Strategic communication is therefore a core element of the Provincial Government – an effective tool to facilitate decision-making, and a way to reach decisions with which the communities feel satisfied. This process ensures that adequate opportunities are established to involve communities in the whole governance process.

As expectations of service delivery by citizens grow and the need for longer-term strategic planning is recognised and embraced, methods of engaging communities are changing. For this reason, strategic communication aligned to the overarching Provincial Government strategy (the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal strategy) must pursue, elevate, promote and increase participatory opportunities to ensure active involvement and direct participation of the public on various levels in the implementation of government programmes; and actively encouraging the participation of marginalised groups in local communities. The strength and potential benefits of this process leads to the realisation of inclusive citizenry engagement through people-centred sustainability programmes underpinned by the focus on strategic communication.

The North-West Provincial Government is involved in an array of governance initiatives aimed at promoting various mechanisms to provide services, information, education and favourable opportunities to its constituencies. In providing favourable opportunities, the Provincial Government needs to communicate more consistently and regularly through the media; as the people need to know what services are being delivered; how, where and by whom; and to be informed through meaningful and regular communication. This assertion emphasises the fact that the communication of information needs to be strategically managed for each audience to receive such communication in as efficient, effective and acceptable manner as possible – there is no 'one-size fits all' situational expectation.

Against this backdrop, it remained unclear as to how the North-West Provincial Government used communication as a strategic tool in advancing governance initiatives across the Province. For this reason, operational communication dominated opportunities created to promote openness, transparency, sustainability reporting and democratic centralism as the foundation phase of participative governance initiatives. Strategic communication as the enabler for deliberative and collaborative citizenry engagement also remained infrequently realised. So appropriately, Morse (2012) argues that while there is not at present a uniform language to describe the more deliberative and collaborative forms of citizen engagement, there is an increasing awareness of the difference between thin, unidirectional forms of participation (e.g., public hearings) and efforts to truly *engage* citizens in the governance process.

Consequently, Morse's assertion eloquently points to the narrative that unidirectional communication appeared to dominate levels of citizenry participation at the North-West Provincial Government. Subsequently, the active involvement of the majority in governance initiatives was often restricted, and adequate engagement aimed at direct empowerment opportunities only benefited a selective number of citizens –

these negatively hindered aspirations to have an inclusive citizenry engagement at the Provincial level.

It is without a doubt that a commitment to strategic communication champions collective engagement – through constructively transparent discourse, by which all parties form shared values in society. Notably, Scherer and Palazzo (2011) believe that democratic deliberation requires open discourse, transparency, participation, and accountability by all actors, as stated in Habermassian political theory. These demands challenge management (in this case senior Provincial Government officials) to use communication as a vehicle for promoting good in society (Heath *et al.*, 2013).

In support of this view, the first and most basic purpose of the Provincial Government officials and community/public representatives is to improve citizens' knowledge of government activities and operations. A knowledgeable citizenry is a consciously informed and active participant – this participation often leads to high levels of dialogue and public engagements in respect of an inclusive and thriving society.

In this regard, government officials should recognise that average citizens have very little knowledge of what their immediate government does and how they do it. Thus, it becomes imperative for citizens and the Provincial Government to engage in collaborative measures to ensure that shared value is created for societal cohesion and communicative action. This can also be done by dismantling the patronage bondage among public elites masquerading as legitimate representatives of the people, whilst preserving their own interests at the expense of ordinary citizens, particularly at the community level. In actual fact, community communication programmes should be informed and be directed by ordinary citizens. This horizontal process is a substantive manifestation of the knowledge-building goal as envisaged in programmes that go beyond simply familiarising citizens with the structure, functions, and activities of the Provincial Government.

Accordingly, communication at the horizontal level, includes discussions of current issues the community is grappling with. From this perspective, an inclusive culture is birthed through deliberative and collaborative discussions at the horizontal level.

Similarly, citizens will engage in dialogue, which suggests the goal of encouraging mutual learning on issues in addition to more traditional one-way learning.

There is a misnomer that communication, strategic or otherwise, is restricted to a particular component tasked with that function, simply because no appreciation is placed on the knowledge, complexity and nature of the management function. This perception is shared by Holtz (2004:66) who is of the view that most professional communicators enter the business because they are skilled at producing communication tools, such as words, publications, videos, or websites. Often it is this focus on their craft that leads organisational leaders to believe that communication is not strategic, and that it has little to do with the promotion of governance initiatives and empowerment of ordinary people.

This misconception often leads to some senior government officials and ordinary citizens undermining the use of communication as a strategic tool to give effect to their deliberations and decisions. It is through strategic communication that participative governance can accelerate or deepen democratic citizenry engagement through the participation of citizens in decision-making and as co-governors or agents of social cohesion. Accordingly, for government this entails a change from delivering specific services to initiating collective processes which involve a wide range of players in meeting community needs, addressing their aspirations and providing a favourable environment for the attainment of an inclusive society through an informed or highly engaged citizenry (Pillora & McKinley, 2011).

So, pertinently, Morse (2012) further opines that the increasing emphasis on collaborative governance and citizen engagement in local government points to an underlying issue of how communities can build capacity for collaboration and engagement. From this perspective, Provincial Government leaders may possibly have a strong commitment to inclusive citizenry engagement goals and collaboration, but success, ultimately, is dependent upon the capability and willingness of citizens, stakeholder groups, and community organisations to be engaged partners in the governance process.

As reflected in the research findings, dozens of ordinary citizens remain apathetic and less engaged because of a variety of reasons, which includes, high illiteracy

levels for some rural villagers, insufficient participatory opportunities and inadequate collaborative programmes, among others. Notably, Woolum (2011:98) finds practitioners involved with citizen-based performance measurement agreeing that "citizens are interested in learning more about their government and how their government impacts community conditions".

In actual fact, reference was made to the fact that some public representatives also contributed to the increasing citizenry passiveness and disengagement because of their often demonstrated ineffectiveness and incompetency in handling communication activities. Culturally, the ability and willingness of the citizens to engage in social, economic and political life alongside the quality of public communication play an important part in strengthening the link between those in power and the citizenry. For this reason, ordinary citizens get to know and improve lines of communication with public officials. As a consequence, citizens engage in dialogue among themselves and with Provincial Government officials in order to ensure that community-anchored initiatives materialise.

Interestingly, Barnes and Mann (2011) advance that there is also a perception among government officials that those citizens who become engaged in local decision-making processes are often too ill-informed about how things work to meaningfully participate. In other words, while it may be admirable that citizens want to be involved, their involvement may be of little use if it is not informed; and if it is not purposive involvement as recorded in the research findings.

In a sense, community or public representatives, therefore, are seen, at the most basic level, as a way to create more informed citizens and participants. Thus, it is imperative to recognise and underscore the added-value that comes from being an informed and better equipped public representative focusing on place-based participatory strategies, prompting people-centred innovations and the adoption of two-way strategic public communication to activate long-term inclusivity in shared programmes (see Leino & Laine 2012; Wood 2012). Likewise, Morse (2012) further reminds us that in the 1990s, many voices in public administration coming from this broad stream of thought began to call for a transformed view of the relationship between citizens and the government. Rather than thinking of citizens as 'clients' or

'customers', these scholars argued for a view of citizens as "owners" of government (Schachter, 1997), or as partners or collaborators with it (Vigoda, 2002).

One of the inherent determinations of strategic communication management for governance initiatives is to obtain feedback from citizens regarding governmental programmes and services. Feedback is the ultimate goal towards participative governance and an inclusive society. However, the current research participants exclaimed that Provincial Government activities often neglected a two-way feedback mechanism and pursued a top-heavy approach as a result of some unresponsive and unidirectional activities. In this light, community communication forums with a rooted vertical top-down influence, negatively disadvantaged ordinary citizens and often contributed to high levels of public apathy, disengagement from genuine programmes and insufficient knowledge of governmental communications.

To this end, Mathews (2002) argues that one might see the most substantive or advanced version of the knowledge goal to be the formation of public knowledge as a product of deliberative dialogue on complex public problems. From this perspective, another purpose of strategic communication for governance initiatives is to increase citizen involvement in local government. Accordingly, an informed community is empowered and impactful in determining efforts aimed at promoting an inclusive environment with innovative knowledge dissemination mechanisms for participative governance.

At times, government programme materials often mention that citizens will 'learn how to be more involved with their government' or that citizens will leave 'better' able to be involved. However, adequate opportunities are often not positioned to encourage citizen involvement and surprisingly, strategic communication management is not incorporated into the broader Provincial Government strategy for goal alignment and coherence.

At the most basic level, then, the goal is to generate more involvement, and implicitly this means that those involved will be better equipped to be involved (connecting this goal with the first goal of developing knowledge). Through strategic communication management efforts, citizen involvement is therefore one of the strategic determinants of collaborative governance with the aim of promoting deliberative,

intentional and a purposeful communication culture. It is for these reasons, among others, that strategic communication for governance initiatives is positioned at the heart of citizen involvement and engagement.

In practising strategic communication, citizens must be able to gather and analyse information, develop informed opinions, and share these perspectives with others through organised forums. These efforts stand to make significant contributions to community communication – and as such the promotion of an inclusive, impactful and information empowered citizenry. Likewise, the organisation of political movements, the creation of new political practices and processes, and the institution of new legislative policies should be advanced through the strategic management of communication. In turn, citizens will see themselves as agents of social cohesion.

7.4 GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Effective strategic communication requires an enabling environment to thrive and to be impactful. In this context, role-players also require adequate training and thorough education on the strategic approach to communication management – this process often leads to shared value. Similarly, effective strategic communication also prepares citizens for engaged, inclusive, and participatory lifestyles, which necessarily include their ability to navigate mutual activities that offer them space for expression, participation, collaboration, and engagement in society.

To this end, effective strategic communication offers an opportunity for role-players to decide what they choose to share, where they choose to share, and how they express and collectively build a dynamic public sphere for knowledge creation and information dissemination. To be relevant, effective strategic communication efforts in the Provincial Government require a clear and accurate outcome-based vision and strategy development.

It is borne in mind that the practice of strategic communication has enormous potential to leverage organisational objectives whilst creating long-term social capital, sustained communication value and participative opportunities for an inclusive and integrative society. In actual fact, by focusing on the creation, dissemination, and reception of individual expression, citizens can reflect on the

content of their voice, and also on the power they have to be part of a larger public dialogue in collaboration with the Provincial Government.

In support of the afore-mentioned view, Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) write that while there may be no single metric or normative position for a good citizen, it seems that in an increasingly mediated world, citizens with the capacities to participate, collaborate, and express themselves often stand a better chance to become critical thinkers, creators and communicators, and agents of social change. Consequently, effective strategic communication additionally helps to empower community expressions for the future of sustainable, tolerant, and participatory consensus in governance initiatives.

It is without a doubt that effective strategic communication is an important tool to have when representing citizens of the North-West Province, particularly in pursuit of an inclusive and a participatory environment. Subsequently, public representatives and designated provincial communicators should possess higher competencies and skills to ensure success in a variety of endeavours, which include: identifying public communication problems, organising, and collectively handling participative mechanisms to benefit the majority of citizens, among others.

It is for these reasons that the current study ultimately endeavoured to provide specific effective strategic communication guidelines in accordance with the identified research aim. Essentially, Frost and Michelsen (2017) argue that effective strategic communication is an action that necessarily takes place within, and draws its efficacy from, ethical architectures that are settled constitutive features of international practices.

In accordance with the identified research aim stated in Chapter One, a strategic communication framework is proposed and anchored by the adoption of specific effective strategic communication guidelines. The espoused guidelines therefore, reaffirm the position of strategic communication management at the heart of governance initiatives and at the helm of facilitating sustainability programmes through a participatory communication perspective, as a measure to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement.

Arguably, Okigbo and Onoja (2017:68) are of the view that although there are no universal indexes for strategic communication effectiveness, it is commonly believed that ethical, socially responsible and professional uses of communication correlate positively with openness and transparency in governmental affairs. In this light, effective strategic communication requires impactful, informed and competent communicators with integrative skills aligned to a set of guidelines. In this context, such guidelines in the main are therefore proposed in the following manner:

1. Effective strategic communication requires effective listening – to practise active listening and then ask questions for clarification

2. Strategic communication is about insight – to be assertive in your tone, in your message and to always end on a positive note

3. For effective strategic communication, your message must be accessible and be conveyed honestly and clearly – to be specific, direct and empathise with your audience

4. Always communicate with your mind – not with your emotions and offer a response instead of reaction – be a credible and ethical communicator

5. Understand that effective strategic communication is always a two-way thoroughfare – to prepare for distractions and communication barriers, and to learn to work around them

6. The goal is to use effective strategic communication to address your stakeholder groupings, attain consensus and build solidarity with the public.

The afore-mentioned effective strategic communication guidelines not only prepare role-players to satisfactorily comprehend the prevailing dynamics surrounding communication as a strategic management function, but also to empower them to fulfil organisational obligations and strategic purposes, whilst inducing public interests. As a matter of interest, such effective strategic communication guidelines associated with a set of skills can develop in citizens; a culture of participation as default action can emerge, and alongside it the notions of responsible, aware, and purposeful contributions to local, national, and global communities.

It is without a doubt that communication alone can create the Great Community, as John Dewey (1927; 1954:142) contemplated. Interestingly, Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) are also of the view that today, the arrival of the society of which Dewey dreamed is still much anticipated, but for that dream to be realised, the public must recognise its role in this end, and the potential for critical, creative use of effective strategic communication to achieve it. The route towards a vibrant participatory environment is now dependent on engagement with the people and the media to facilitate participation in public efforts. It is within this context that media education, as the core undertaking to develop inclusive, active, and engaged public lifestyles, becomes inherent.

In today's contemporary world, the engaged citizen must be made to understand the relationship between personal and social identity; and media as a sense of place, community, and democracy, in which strategic communication is well positioned to accelerate the value of information subsidy – either through media relations or organised societal forums. This necessarily includes both strong critical and analytic approaches to communication opportunities, but also core understanding of media education as a collaborative and participatory movement that aims to empower individuals to have a voice and to use it in a strategic manner.

Against this backdrop, deliberative communication (that is, the strategic underpinning) is elevated effectively to harness citizenry relationships with the Provincial Government to ensure mutual understanding and a benefiting participatory environment, in particular. Effective strategic communication (that is, purposeful communication) offers citizens a sense of involvement, belonging, ownership and above all, a voice to the often marginalised constituencies in society.

7.5 CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

Tench *et al.* (2013) opine that what is clear from the studies of skills, knowledge and personal attributes is that they overlap in terminology and that there is a pattern forming about how skills, knowledge and personal attributes lead to broader competencies. Competencies are therefore viewed as the combination of skills, knowledge and personal attributes in the current study. Likewise, Gregory (2008:216 cited in Tench *et al.*, 2013) uses the following definition of competencies in a study of

senior communication managers – competencies are behavioural sets or sets of behaviours that support the attainment of organisational objectives. This definition entails how knowledge and skills are used in performance. Consequently, this is probably the most appropriate definition for use in this study as it effectively distinguishes competencies from skills, knowledge and personal attributes.

In short, Jeffrey and Brunton (2011:60) highlight the advantage of studying competencies over roles; roles outline tasks and responsibilities in the job description, and in today's dynamic workplace these same roles are likely to change frequently. In contrast, competencies are the underlying foundational abilities that are integral to successfully carrying out the tasks and responsibilities, and thus remain a stable blueprint for practice over time.

From the afore-mentioned perspectives, understanding the strategic communication environment requires adequate competencies from strategic communicators and/or public representatives. Core competencies require a need for a comprehensive analytical *strategic communication framework* within which ethical puzzles that arise from the strategic process can be posed and thus attended to by practitioners in their professional conduct. It is therefore required of strategic communicators or public representatives, as architects of communication, to align acquired core competencies with the adopted specific effective strategic communication guidelines for better outcomes.

To a greater extent, top-management and entrusted communication officials must see a need to educate the people generally about the public value produced by consultative measures. In turn, citizens will appreciate deliberative and purposive communication as one way to obtain accurate information and adequate education. The ability to impart information to parties concerned remains a crucial competency for practitioners dealing with information dissemination, particularly at the Provincial level of government. This process forms part of the envisioned participatory governance goal where adequate and timely information on how citizens can contribute to the development of the Province is provided without reservations or gate-keeping.

Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) write that the path towards a vibrant participatory democracy is now dependent on engagement with the media to facilitate participation in public life. It is within this context that the current research study isolates media literacy as the core movement to develop inclusive, active, and engaged public lifestyles. In today's hypermedia age, the engaged citizen must be made to understand the relationship between societal characteristics, and the media as a sense of place, community, and democracy.

This necessarily includes both strong critical and analytic approaches to media literacy, but also a core understanding of media literacy as a collaborative and participatory movement that aims to empower individuals to have a voice and to use it. This process unreservedly requires a sound and solid relationship between communicators and the media – through media relations activities.

It is borne in mind that collaborative competencies are essential for communicators dealing with local communities or performing local government communication. Thus communicators have a duty to resemble collaborative measures. Collaborative competencies extend both bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) to help situate the engaged citizen in environments where they recognise the capacity they have to form connections and extend their communication to a large group of interested peers. Collaborative competencies also lower the barriers for peers to join the dialogue or collaborate on a common cause (Shirky, 2008 as cited in Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

Figure 7.1: A framework for media literacy as a core competency for engaged citizenship
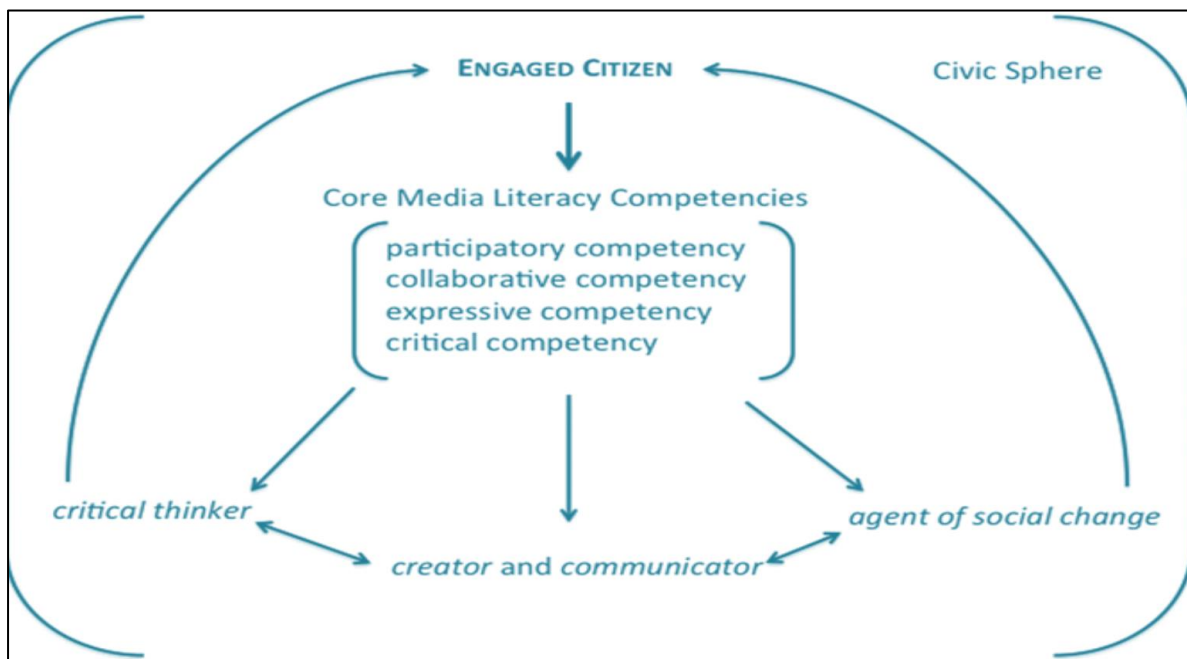
Source: Mihailidis & Thevenin (2013).

Media education and training is intrinsic to the success of planning, executing and co-ordinating effective strategic communication approaches, programmes and objectives. A collaborative competency for the engaged citizen builds on Jenkins's participatory culture to outline how 'generative learning communities' (Lewis, Pea & Rosen, 2010:352) can lead to a co-creation of meaning that moves toward engagement as depicted from Figure 7.1.

7.6 PROPOSED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT

It should be understood that strategic communication, in its nature, is not only limited to its strategic occupation and functioning, but also serves as a supportive instrument in the realisation of quasi-organisational strategies. In actual fact, Frost and Michelsen (2017) advance that strategic communication(s) has been viewed as an essential component of an effective response to campaigns by hostile state and non-state actors seeking to shape public opinion and attitudes in pursuit of their own strategic objectives. This statement unambiguously proves that strategic

communication is a dynamic investment that goes beyond the bottom line and adds social capital as a relationship management function.

It is in this context that the current research endeavoured to develop a strategic communication framework in response to communication needs, acquiring inclusive engagements and participatory challenges reflected by the empirical evidence and as set out in Chapter One, the research aim. To a greater extent, Tatham (2015) reminds us that strategic communication does not mean that it is simply the communication of strategy nor should it imply that it is communication that takes place only at strategic levels. What it means is that communication must be part of strategy. In this regard, Tatham's assertion in today's information environment argues that understanding audiences and their (likely) behaviours and knowing when and how to use all means of communication – from the softest, soft power to the hardest, kinetic power – is the key to solving future complex problems.

Certainly, strategic communication is all that we do and all that we don't. For this purpose, strategic communication is the presence of words, deeds and images; and it is their absence and knowing when each is appropriate and to which audiences. These components combined, necessitate the development of a strategic communication framework to broaden the horizon of communicators at the Provincial level of government; and as proposed earlier in the current study, to assist the North-West Government in communicating effectively with citizens.

So, pertinently, Johnston (2015) advocates that strategic communication is operationalised as deliberate communication practices on behalf of the organisation and aims to encapsulate the intentional activities of its leaders, staff, and communication practitioners to respond to environmental change. Importantly, this conceptualisation is founded on descriptions of strategic communication as a goal focused or purposeful communication effort, combining knowledge based decision-making and action. To this end, strategic communication is held to be a key process by which organisations respond to environmental ambiguity. This process, in line with established effective strategic communication guidelines, outcome-based strategy and a communication policy, necessitates a framework that is responsive to the aspirations of the marginalised, whilst fulfilling organisations' communication obligations as depicted in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: A Strategic Communication Framework for Inclusive Citizenry Engagement
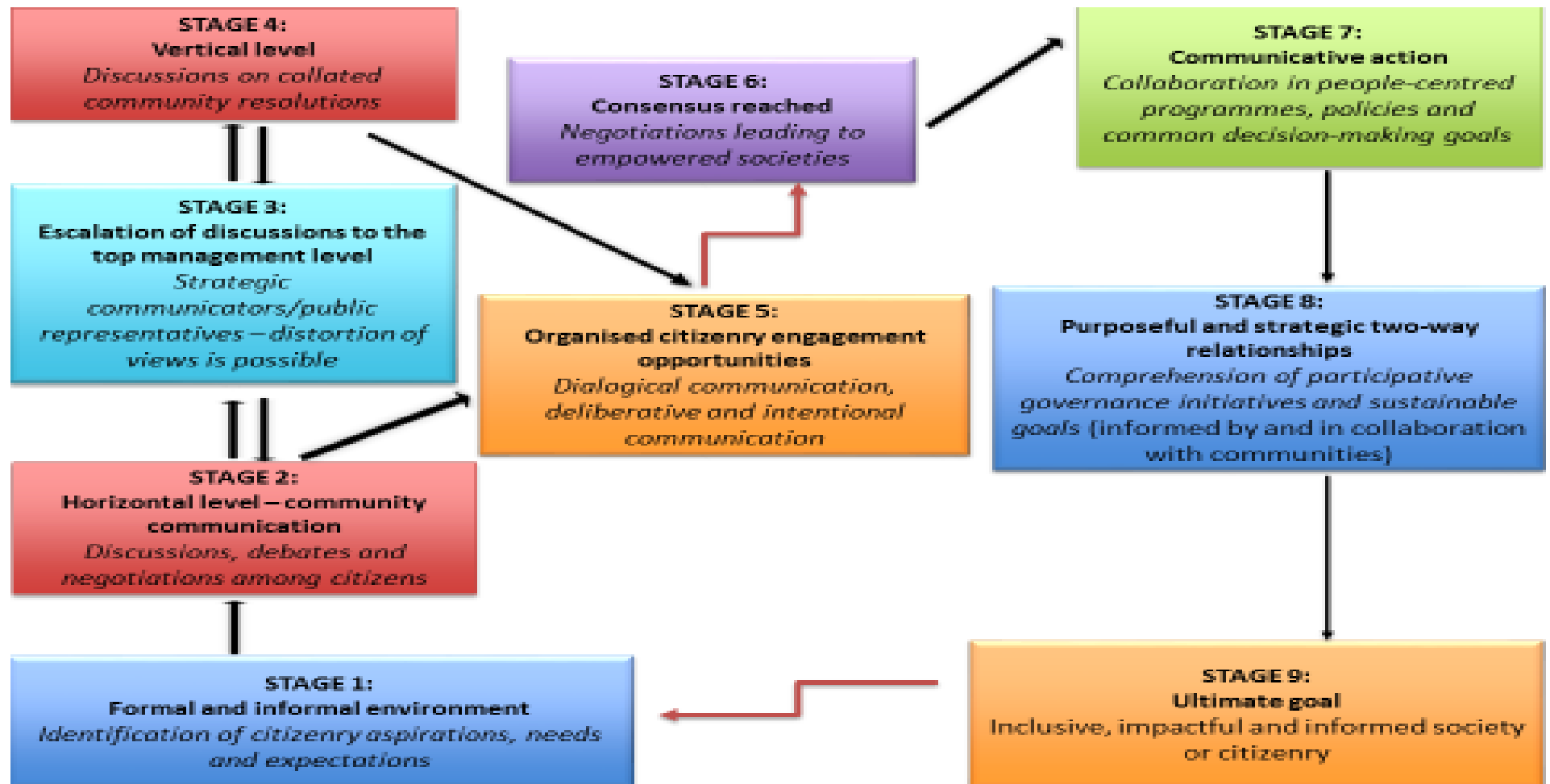
Source: Author's own depiction.

From the afore-mentioned view, the strategic application of communication as a responsive tool is imperative in minimising community unrests/service delivery protest as highlighted in the findings. As a consequence, major parts of community concerns or public unrests can also be attributed to inadequate communication with or among the involved parties. This, at times, often leads to complex communication problems – misinterpretations or distortions is also a leading contributor, and a negative indicator towards disengagement. More often, strategic communication results from collaborative efforts by organisational adherents to create shared understanding about environmental uncertainty (Johnston, 2015) and, as a result of this collective understanding, formulates appropriate communication responses.

Singh (2014) alludes that strategic communication is 'people-centred'. The concept is based on information-provision intended to achieve shared meaning based on organisational values. Principles such as trust, honesty, timeliness and empathy form the core of strategic communication. In actual fact, communication is a strategic tool to achieve the particular outcome desired by the initiator of the communication from the recipient of that communication.

As such, the strategic communication framework embodies the *modus operandi* of communication directed to achieve the vision of the North-West Provincial Government – whilst efficiently addressing public interests and needs. The proposed strategic communication framework has a commitment to ensure that external social, economic, political and environmental components are taken into account.

Central to the proposed Strategic Communication Framework for Inclusive Citizenry Engagement, is the application of nine important stages aimed at accomplishing inclusive citizenry engagement through the strategic management of communication aligned to and informed by an organisational strategy, communication policy and effective communication techniques. The proposed framework opens a new window to how the practice of strategic communication can support the execution of community communication opportunities from a horizontal level, and to ultimately contribute and influence decisions at the vertical level through collaborative means.

The goal of the proposed framework is therefore to ensure that 'organised citizenry engagement opportunities' forms an on-going chain of command to achieve an

inclusive, impactful and highly informed society or citizenry. To this end, the nine stages are discussed below and linked to various themes from the empirical data. They are outlined in the following manner:

1. **Stage 1: Formal and informal environment** – at the heart of the proposed framework is the ability of community members (ordinary citizens) to informally and formally identify complex societal issues, such as their collective aspirations, needs and expectations in relation to unfolding government activities. The primary aim herein is to collectively agree on issues impacting a particular society, and to thus form an inclusive approach with the view of advocating for people-centred programmes. Moreover, this stage forms part of participatory endeavours towards establishing community communication prospects where all material needs and interests are identified and agreed upon.

Sub-theme 10: Stimulation of Citizenry needs, interests, and expectations

As the empirical data reflected, stimulation of citizenry needs, interests and expectations is indicative that ordinary citizens have the power to identify and advocate for complex societal issues through community communication forums, among themselves. Stage 1 of the Strategic Communication Framework support this resolve by ensuring that community communication is at the centre of strategic engagements. Likewise, formal and informal engagements arise as a result of on-going discussions, debates and negotiations aimed at formulating an inclusive as well as a co-ordinated approach to participative governance.

PROPOSITION 1:

Formal and informal identification of material needs and interests lead to community communication at a horizontal level that result in and support mutual discussions, debates and negotiations (based on Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Framework).

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2. **Stage 2: Horizontal level** – the second stage serves as a direct connection to the first stage. Herein, community communication becomes an opportunity where citizens hold discussions, debates and negotiations among themselves under the directive of strategic communicators or identified and

legitimate public representatives. In this stage, community resolutions are escalated to the upper societal structures to enable more and focused engagements. This stage is based on a two-way symmetrical communication process with the hope of ensuring timely and impactful feedback mechanisms. Essential to the goals of this stage is the capacity of community members to forward their collective views directly to the fifth stage of the Framework. This is done with the aim that, at times, some strategic communicators or public representatives might distort the resolutions undertaken at the horizontal bottom-up level and thus misrepresent the aspirations of ordinary citizens at the vertical top-down level.

Theme: Societal expectations on the Provincial Government's activities and strategic decisions

Based on the empirical data, the horizontal bottom-up approach should enable ordinary citizens to inform and influence the Provincial Government activities and strategic decisions as part of mitigating societal expectations. The empirical data further indicated that ordinary citizens have diverse viewpoints on how government activities should be co-ordinated at a provincial level for maximum communication impact.

As a result of maximising communication at a societal level, Stage 2 of the Strategic Communication Framework for Inclusive Citizenry Engagement advocates for structured dialogue, more debates and planned negotiations to be escalated to senior governmental officials. In this regard, public representatives have a responsibility of ensuring that senior government officials respond to societal issues from an informed citizenry perspective as indicated in Stage 2 of the Strategic Communication Framework.

PROPOSITION 2:

To avoid possible distortions by public representatives at community communication forums, ordinary citizens escalate their resolutions directly to top management level to ensure that organised citizenry engagement opportunities are realised (based on Stage 2 and Stage 5 of the Framework).

Sub-theme 9: Citizenry-responsibilities in policies and crucial decisions

Stage 2 of the Strategic Communication Framework postulates further that ordinary citizens at a community engagement level have the capacity to escalate their collective resolutions directly to upper structures. This is done because citizens have a responsibility to ensure that policies and crucial decisions pertinent to them are directed and influenced from the horizontal bottom-up approach. The empirical data affirm that the collective responsibility of ordinary citizens is to ensure that organised and adequate engagement opportunities are created to influence policy matters and to ultimately decide on complex issues confronting them, while seeking sustainable communication solutions. Additionally, collective responsibilities on the part of ordinary citizens necessitate adequate access to information and formalised collaborative opportunities to ensure inclusivity on governance initiatives.

PROPOSITION 3:

Through community communication, resolutions undertaken at the horizontal level based on formalised debates and negotiations are escalated and supported by top-management for further deliberations and feedback, and leads to collaboration (based on Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the Framework).

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3. **Stage 3: Escalation of discussions** – the third stage is where strategic communicators or public representatives are equipped and empowered to escalate the collective views of community members to the top-management structure or vertical level for further deliberations. It should be indicated that this stage requires communicators to be schooled and competent in the delivery, comprehension and execution of effective strategic communication programmes. Herein, communication is used as a vehicle to transport and expedite the collective views and resolutions of ordinary citizens from the horizontal level. This approach is further informed by a two-way balanced and systematic endeavour towards information dissemination. However, an inherent manipulative culture of information distortion is highly possible with some communicators – more often, these are communicators with allegiance to particular individuals rather than a collective – they are hemispheric communicators.

Theme: Communication for adequate representation and participative governance initiatives

This theme postulates that ordinary citizens should be adequately represented by informed and competent public representatives or potential strategic communicators to ensure that material needs, interests and expectations are advanced. Moreover, the strategic role of public representatives is also to ensure that inclusive engagement opportunities are created to understand and advocate solely for societal issues at top-management level, as well as to provide timely feedback. Similarly, Stage 3 of the Strategic Communication Framework entrust public representatives with the responsibility of consolidating complex societal issues and thereafter escalating them to relevant authorities for maximum communication impact and on-going dialogue as is supported by and indicative of **Sub-theme 6:** Public representatives as strategic communicators.

Sub-theme 1: Access to information and government responsiveness

For public representatives or strategic communicators to be more efficient in the execution of community communication resolutions, there is a need for adequate information to be provided to ordinary citizens. Information is key in determining the level of community engagements and the extent to which ordinary citizens can participate in governance initiatives from an informed, educated and empowered position. Likewise, Stage 3 of the Strategic Communication Framework affirms the power of public representatives in managing and disseminating relevant information to ordinary citizens and ultimately representing their collective resolve at upper structures without distortion.

PROPOSITION 4:

Public representatives in community communication forums are information-empowered to deliver and expedite collective resolutions of ordinary citizens to the vertical level for strategic deliberations through feedback (based on Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the Framework).

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4. **Stage 4: Vertical level** – the fourth stage, upon discussions on the collated community resolutions and views, offers an opportunity for feedback and more inclusive discussions through organised citizenry engagement

opportunities. The vertical level is composed of senior officials with the ability to create public participation forums in line with the resolutions of ordinary community members. Nonetheless, some senior officials might decide to lobby communicators to influence resolutions undertaken at the horizontal level based on their discretion and level of authority. Accordingly, an intensified top-down communication approach can result in more and unnecessary community unrest because of the neglect of collective views of the majority, whom are ordinary citizens. Thus, strategic communication efforts should be advanced to create adequate engagement opportunities aligned to the material interests of the majority of citizens, rather than the minority.

Theme: Governance initiatives for strategic management by the Provincial Government

The empirical data indicated that an intensified top-down communication approach is entrenched by the majority of government officials in determining governance initiatives without the resolve from ordinary citizens. As a consequence, the majority of citizens were generally passive and apathetic because some governance initiatives were not strategically managed to necessitate a degree of change. On the other hand, Stage 4 of the Strategic Communication Framework empowers officials at a vertical level to collaborate with ordinary citizens and to provide mechanisms in which organised citizenry engagements are realised. The stage encourages an inclusive approach to identified material needs and interests, while ensuring that broader community expectations are consolidated and responded to without unnecessary protests or unrests. So, pertinently, Stage 4 further supports the resolve of a dialogic communication (**Sub-theme 2:** Dialogic communication and consultations) among actors as a result of collaborations (Sub-theme 13: Citizenry-oriented policies and strategic decisions).

PROPOSITION 5:

At the vertical level, collated citizenry discussions and resolutions undertaken lead to inclusive dialogue through organised citizenry engagement opportunities for ratification (based on Stage 4 and Stage 5 of the Framework).

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5. **Stage 5: Organised citizenry engagement opportunities** – the fifth stage is where top-management, in collaboration 'with' communities are expected to create organised citizenry engagement opportunities to officially learn and understand the collective views of ordinary citizens. These platforms vary in nature as the aim is to establish dialogic communication – where all parties have an equal opportunity to advocate for a range of issues pertinent to them. Likewise, these opportunities afford participants the necessity to learn, inform and motivate governmental activities in line with their collective and individual interests. It is borne in mind that discussions in this stage reflect deliberative and intentional communication outcomes aimed at conclusive consensus as a reward for organised engagements. Of importance is the ability and capacity of actors to use communication as a strategic tool to reach compromises and ultimately advance on common goals.

Theme: Co-governance through deliberate communication to enhance citizenry participation

The empirical data reflect that the majority of citizens were not involved or engaged through deliberate communication efforts, as such co-governance as a participative process to enhance citizenry participation was not realised. In this regard, dialogic communication and the advancement of common goals were not created – efforts to purposefully engage citizens often failed to materialise (**Sub-theme 4:** Organised and intentional communication). Likewise, organised citizenry engagement opportunities as supported by Stage 5 of the Strategic Communication Framework were not created to benefit the majority, who are ordinary citizens (**Sub-theme 3:** Citizenry-participation in governance initiatives), but the minority. Communication, at most, did not reflect any degree of change in attitude for ordinary citizens to influence governance efforts.

PROPOSITION 6:

Advanced discussions through organised citizenry engagement opportunities and collectively ratified by public representatives and ordinary citizens lead to consensus and mutual relationships (based on Stage 5 and Stage 6 of the Framework).

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6. **Stage 6: Consensus reached** – in line with advancing common goals attained through deliberative and intentional communication outcomes, consensus becomes the manifestation. In this sixth stage, negotiations further occur to empower communities on decisions reached and common tasks ahead. This Stage has the potential to consolidate any outstanding issues in ensuring that participants share similar views and to provide clarity on any objections insofar as dissent is concerned. Agreed objectives are therefore advanced to facilitate communicative action through collaborative people-centred efforts and strategic decision-making processes.

Theme: Inclusive and collaborative Provincial Government programmes

It is said in the Strategic Communication Framework that Stage 6 has the capacity to empower communities through negotiations, debates and on-going deliberations to reach consensus on various issues of concern. These efforts are as a result of inclusive and collaborative programmes as indicated by the empirical data. However, the majority of citizens confirmed under this theme that some of the programmes championed by the Provincial Government did not adequately involve all citizens in strategic decision-making processes (**Sub-theme 7:** Governments' approach to programmes).

Collaborative measures aimed at inclusive engagements were embarked on only with political connected elites, and not with the majority. Moreover, the benefits of some pursued strategies also empowered the minority instead of the majority as indicative in **Sub-theme 8:** Strategy: the added-value of strategic thinking and Stage 6 of the Framework. In this regard, deliberative and intentional communication with ordinary citizens should reflect the added-value of strategic thinking and the manifestation of inclusive citizenry engagement as an outcome of mutual collaborations in programmes.

PROPOSITION 7:

Consensus, reached as a result of collaborative and intentional communication is a manifestation of communicative action undertaken by strategic role-players (based on Stage 6 and Stage 7 of the Framework).

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7. **Stage 7: Communicative action** – Habermas's (1984) communicative action is adopted in the seventh stage because of the cooperative action undertaken by individuals based upon mutual deliberations and argumentation. This Stage is the result of expected collaborative measures embarked on with the aim of ensuring inclusive policy-decisions and equal comprehension of purposive programmes. Importantly, the communicative action stage is all about two-way communication aimed at facilitating purposeful and strategic relationships – actors are no longer individually identified but form a collective unit and sameness. In actual fact, communicative action is birthed out of progressive strategic communication endeavours established to ensure that organised and systematic communication is achieved through an educated and informed citizenry.

Theme: Evaluation of the Provincial Government's five concretes to enhance community communication

Stage 7 of the Strategic Communication Framework necessitates communicative action birthed out of purposive and collaborative programmes through strategic communication endeavours. In this Stage, organised and systematic communication is aimed at ensuring two-way communication is achieved based on inclusive policy-decisions as part of enhanced community communication efforts. Certainly, the empirical data on the other hand reflect communicative action as a product of equal comprehension of deliberate programmes aimed at facilitating strategic relationships. However, the majority of citizens were unable to comprehend and evaluate the identified five concretes due to inadequate information provided. On the other hand, governance as a two-way communicative process (**Sub-theme 5:** Governance as a two-way communicative process) was not the outcome of organised communication, as well as not supported by informed citizens as reflected in the empirical data.

PROPOSITION 8:

Communicative action is the result of purposeful and impactful communication aimed at building strategic relationships that reflect two-way participative communication (based on Stage 7 and Stage 8 of the Framework).

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8. **Stage 8: Purposeful and strategic two-way relationships** – it is without a doubt that communicative action with a deliberative purpose leads to a particular relationship amongst participants. Herein, a positive and fulfilling relationship is solicited through comprehension of participative communication, realisation of governance initiatives and the roll-out of sustainability programmes to create an informed, impactful and empowered citizenry in communities. After all, purposeful and strategic two-way relationships are the rewards of continuous and effortless campaigns which encapsulate views from senior officials or top management and ordinary citizens. This process is informed by and takes place in collaboration with communities – this explicitly implies that the collective views established from informal and formal opportunities enjoy much attention and is a sense of strong advocacy.

Sub-theme 14: Government's perspective on citizenry inclusivity

The empirical data indicated that the majority of government officials held different perspectives from ordinary citizens in relation to inclusivity on both governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. It was advanced that communication as a strategic tool was espoused from the officials' perspective, while ordinary citizens believed that no measures were in place to encourage participative governance and citizenry engagement, in particular. Moreover, citizens in their majority also believed that governmental activities did not create societal value as they benefited the minority (**Sub-theme 12:** Government activities for societal value), instead of addressing the collective aspirations of the majority.

As a consequence, Stage 8 of the Strategic Communication Framework advances a more inclusive and participative approach to managing citizenry needs, interests and collective expectations by ensuring that sustainability programmes create an impactful, informed and motivated society. In this view, informal and formal opportunities are established to ensure that communication as a strategic tool is used as vehicle championing strategic two-way relationships (**Sub-theme 11:** Communication as a strategic tool). Through strategic communication programmes, citizens are further empowered and encouraged to collaborate with the Provincial

Government in determining effective engagement mechanisms, while positively impacting policy matters and strategic decisions pertinent to their communities.

PROPOSITION 9:

Maximum communication impact birthed from strategic two-way relationships indicate that effective strategic communication efforts lead to ultimate engagement goals (based on Stage 8 and Stage 9 of the Framework).

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9. **Stage 9: Ultimate goal** – communication, whether strategic or otherwise, is intended to fulfil a particular need or identified objective. The ninth stage is similar to the first phase of the strategic communication framework because of the evolving chain of command. It is through this Stage that direct feedback is transferred back to the 'organised citizenry engagement opportunities' phase to ensure, monitor and evaluate whether identified collective goals are ultimately reached. The primary goal is to ensure that people-centred programmes, mutual decision-making processes and a collaborative culture manifest in an inclusive, impactful and empowered society where participants benefit socially, economically and politically from their deliberations. This Stage further records that differences might occur in pursuit of an inclusive communication culture. Such differences are therefore referred back to the formal and informal environment for an updated mandate and ultimately drawn back to the scheme of discussions at the horizontal level to enable continuous debates and a new approach to obtain inclusive citizenry engagement.

Theme: Management of citizenry expectations through government communications

It is without a doubt that government communication should be used to manage citizenry expectations and promote more inclusive public engagement platforms aimed at facilitating an organised and informed society. However, the empirical data recorded that government communication remained ineffective in creating an active citizenry; who is highly engaged; and determined to assist government in achieving its identified objectives through strategic communication programmes. To some extent, government communication also failed to support and influence the strategic direction that governmental programmes should take.

As a consequence, the management of citizenry expectations through government communication often failed to establish an informed, responsive and impactful society. In this regard, Stage 9 of the Strategic Communication Framework advocates for a revolutionary approach to government communication as a way of ensuring that an inclusive communication culture is birthed from collaborative and participative people-centred programmes as the ultimate engagement goal. Through this Stage, the management of citizenry expectations occurs with a deliberate purpose, as well as the provision of timely feedback as a result of the identified aspirations and collective resolutions from Stage 1 (community communication forums).

PROPOSITION 10:

An educated and informed citizenry supports strategic communication programmes to ensure an inclusive, purposeful and impactful society, as well as the identification of collective needs, interests and aspirations (based on Stage 9 and Stage 1 of the Framework).

To a greater extent, this proposed framework is provided with the belief that it provides a methodological approach to the strategic management of communication in advancing governance initiatives and the realisation of sustainability programmes through collaborative efforts. Likewise, a deeper contemplation on the participatory ability of communication to deliver sound, inclusive and integrative opportunities must be emphasised in the Framework.

On the other hand, Miskimmon *et al*. (2016) write that one consequence of communication has been that communities now necessitate speaking directly to their governments, and require projecting narratives locally in the knowledge that official messages are rapidly disseminated and reprocessed through new media platforms. To this end, governments now ordinarily attempt to conduct their endeavours through communication with highly responsive local audiences, whilst targeting non-governmental groups and civil society actors simultaneously – as such, the North-West Province must not be exonerated from adopting this participatory process.

In actual fact, it is widely argued that strategic communication applies to nearly every area of communication. This view led Kellermann (1992:288 cited in Okigbo & Onoja, 2017) to argue that all communication is strategic. In Kellermann's words, all

communication is strategic because communication by its very nature, cannot *not* be strategic. The author(s) goes on to expound the view that strategic communication is explicitly chosen, intentional, thoughtful, and controlled, as well as based on goals, plans, scripts, and understandings. In the main, Kellerman's assertion strengthens the rationale of strategic communication to be a purposeful, deliberative and goal-oriented component of communication management.

To this end, it becomes pertinent for the North-West communication environment to recognise that: (1) all communication is goal directed and constraint-responsive, (2) all communication is adjusted for these goals and constraints, and (3) this constant process of adjustment makes communication inherently strategic (Kellerman, 1992:288). Similarly, Okigbo and Onoja (2017) observe that if we accept that all communication is strategic, it does not follow that all communication must be accorded the same level of priority and significance. Some communication situations must require more astuteness in planning, implementation, and follow-ups. As a matter of importance, it should be the mandate of the North-West Province to regard strategic communication as an essential ingredient in the promotion of good governance and a high level participatory endeavour.

7.7 REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

As outlined in Chapter One, the current study was concerned with the following problem statement:

> *Major parts of governance initiatives (policies, legislation, strategies, and public participation in the administration of provincial governance) and sustainability programmes (triple-context programmes, like social welfare, economic and environmental programmes) do not conform to the needs, interests, and expectations of grassroots' citizens. The public apathy that could result from this can, amongst other challenges, be attributed to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of citizenry about how their needs, interests and expectations are being addressed in government. From a participatory communication perspective, it can therefore be assumed that corporate governance mechanisms and sustainability programmes are often not interpreted and practically translated to inform citizens about how their needs,*

interests and expectations are being addressed. As such, little positive change
takes place in the attitudes and behaviours of citizens to improve their lives.

The study developed a framework of nine essential stages which, inter alia, support the strategic management of communication as a way of leveraging identified citizenry needs, interests and expectations at a community communication level. The nine stages were used as a vehicle to ensure that there is mutual collaborations, co-governance and multi or inter-relationships between citizens; public representatives as communicators; and the Provincial Government officials.

Moreover, the nine stages strengthen the resolve of having a participative environment where ordinary citizens have the willingness and power to impact sustainability programmes and governance initiatives through strategic communication efforts. Through strategic communication management, public representatives were positioned as key linkages for information transfer and access between citizens at a horizontal level and top management at a vertical level.

The nine stages certify that major parts of governance initiatives planned at grassroots level through the influence of citizens conform to their needs, interests and expectations established based on dialogic communication – as such debates, negotiations and on-going discussions assist in government communication efforts. As a result of people-centred programmes and high levels of participation in organised citizenry engagement opportunities, public apathy is adequately addressed because of the knowledge shared among citizens beginning in a formal and informal environment.

These nine stages advocate that government communication be used to interpret and practically translate both governance initiatives and shared sustainability programmes to positively benefit citizens of any material interests. Furthermore, the nine stages have capabilities of providing an inclusive societal value because decisions are based on co-governance and purposively determined for consensus as the ultimate engagement goal. Such efforts are as a result of intentional communication aimed at establishing an educated, informed and impactful citizenry owing to collaborations – herein, strategic communication programmes motivate changes in attitudes and behaviours of citizens to improve their lives.
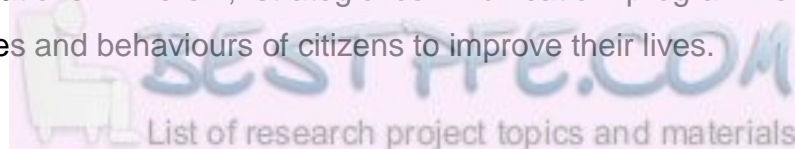
In the functional nine stages, top management has the opportunity to learn and understand various capabilities of citizens and to provide supportive mechanisms as well as an environment that encourages more inclusivity in dialogue as a two-way communicative process. In addition to the nine stages discussed in the Framework as the contribution of the current study to the discipline of communication management, and addressing the problem statement in detail, ten propositions were also considered:

PROPOSITION 1:

Formal and informal identification of material needs and interests lead to community communication at a horizontal level that result in and support mutual discussions, debates and negotiations (based on Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Framework).

This Proposition articulates the strength of ordinary citizens in using community communication programmes to determine their engagement path through adequately identified and agreed upon material aspirations at a horizontal level. The Proposition further addresses the unique need for more inclusive dialogue among citizens as a prerequisite for co-governance in government activities.

PROPOSITION 2:

To avoid possible distortions by public representatives at community communication forums, ordinary citizens escalate their resolutions directly to top management level to ensure that organised citizenry engagement opportunities are realised (based on Stage 2 and Stage 5 of the Framework).

In this Proposition, organised citizenry engagement opportunities empower ordinary citizens at a horizontal level to directly escalate their agreed upon resolutions for further deliberation and possible consensus with top management. The process occurs to eliminate any distortion that might arise as a result of lobbied public representatives or designated communicators. On their own influence, citizens are assured that their legitimate needs, interests and expectations reach relevant authorities for action.

PROPOSITION 3:

Through community communication, resolutions undertaken at the horizontal level based on formalised debates and negotiations are escalated and supported by top-management for further deliberations and feedback, and leads to collaboration (based on Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the Framework).

In this Proposition, resolutions undertaken by ordinary citizens are elevated and formalised as key decisions concerning them (citizens) at top management level to enable timely feedback and urgent attention. Herein, top management is obliged to respond with more public participation platforms to encourage adequate engagements.

PROPOSITION 4:

Public representatives in community communication forums are information-empowered to deliver and expedite collective resolutions of ordinary citizens to the vertical level for strategic deliberations through feedback (based on Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the Framework).

Through strategic communication programmes, this Proposition postulates that public representatives as designated communicators are empowered with information to disseminate to ordinary citizens to enable them to make informed decisions based on their identified needs, interests and expectations. The need for information is crucial to citizenry engagements. At times, discussions, debates and negotiations are pursued based on the information and knowledge shared by communicators to ensure that strategic decisions are citizenry oriented at a vertical level.

PROPOSITION 5:

At the vertical level, collated citizenry discussions and resolutions undertaken lead to inclusive dialogue through organised citizenry engagement opportunities for ratification (based on Stage 4 and Stage 5 of the Framework).

The Proposition suggests that decision-making at a vertical level are taken based on the influence of ordinary citizens. Such collated citizenry discussions and resolutions reflect an inclusive approach towards organised citizenry engagement as platform for more purposive deliberation and for ratification by the relevant authorities.

PROPOSITION 6:

Advanced discussions through organised citizenry engagement opportunities and collectively ratified by public representatives and ordinary citizens lead to consensus and mutual relationships (based on Stage 5 and Stage 6 of the Framework).

Organised citizenry engagement opportunities are crucial in sharing and understanding the viewpoints of ordinary citizens as key participants – engagements are expected to reflect collective consensus reached as a result of conclusive and impactful communication efforts.

PROPOSITION 7:

Consensus, reached as a result of collaborative and intentional communication is a manifestation of communicative action undertaken by strategic role-players (based on Stage 6 and Stage 7 of the Framework).

In this Proposition, communicative action is the result of collaborative efforts based on intentional and organised communication. Herein, strategic role-players engage in participatory endeavours and two-way communication aimed at facilitating purposeful and strategic relationships. Role-players are no longer individually identified but collectively reflect an inclusive communication culture. In actual fact, progressive strategic communication programmes have the capacity to ensure that discussions lead to communicative action.

PROPOSITION 8:

Communicative action is the result of purposeful and impactful communication aimed at building strategic relationships that reflect two-way participative communication (based on Stage 7 and Stage 8 of the Framework).

This Proposition affirms that two-way participative communication, as a result of impactful communication and inclusive dialogue among actors, leads to strategic relationships based on communicative action. Actors are information-empowered to make the necessary decisions and to use strategic communication as the corner-stone for deliberate engagements.

PROPOSITION 9:

Maximum communication impact birthed from strategic two-way relationships indicate that effective strategic communication efforts lead to ultimate engagement goals (based on Stage 8 and Stage 9 of the Framework).

In this Proposition, strategic communication efforts are positioned to deliver an ultimate engagement goals as a result of strategic two-way relationships pursued through maximum communication impact. Inclusive citizenry engagement is one of the ultimate goals reached based on participative governance, intentional collaborations and strategic planning and decision-making.

PROPOSITION 10:

An educated and informed citizenry supports strategic communication programmes to ensure an inclusive, purposeful and impactful society, as well as the identification of collective needs, interests and aspirations (based on Stage 9 and Stage 1 of the Framework).

The Proposition asserts that knowledge of strategic communication programmes is crucial in delivering an inclusive and motivated society. An educated and informed citizenry is capable of ensuring that their needs, interests and aspirations are advanced through organised engagement platforms. At the heart of co-governance, citizens as equal and active actors, resemble the willingness to learn and inform discussions based on dialogic communication. Participatory endeavours are also pursued by ordinary citizens and designated public representatives as a way of information sharing and self-empowerment at the horizontal level.

7.8 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is expected that one of the strategic goals of the North-West Provincial Government is to promote and contribute to good governance through the adopted five concretes and the envisioned RRR strategy. As part of good practice, communication throughout the Province should encourage and maintain the desired behaviour and underlying communal values of the community. In this light, Singh (2014) is of the opinion that behaviour is also a key enabler of good governance and management. From this perspective, it is therefore imperative that the Provincial

Government in collaboration with the people, embrace strategic communication in its efforts to promote governance initiatives and citizenry-oriented sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective. To be more specific, the current study recommends that the following areas be considered in practising strategic communication:

1. It is recommended that the interests of those most often previously exploited should be put at the forefront and communication should be made more transparent. It may be difficult for sectors of the community to assert themselves unless they see such transparency (or the effort to create it) by the Provincial Government authorities, either through the media or in direct communication.

2. Another recommendation pertains to the enactment and adoption of strategic communication programmes. Strategic communication can only be effective and have the momentum to move to another level or network of audience if those first contacted embrace the information and pass it on to others correctly. If the vehicle for information is owned, administered and emotionally made part of the community, authentic message(s) will gain added momentum and be sustained.

3. A revolutionary approach to strategic communication should therefore be embarked upon in the North-West Province, and especially in the African context, to achieve better outcomes. In this regard, truly conceived, good governance does not mean serving the interests of the government of the day, but those of ordinary citizens.

4. Provincial Government communication should establish channels for feedback and monitoring. Open debate at all levels will promote participation and facilitate monitoring and the evaluation of progress, especially during the implementation of the people-oriented programmes through collaborations.

5. The North-West Provincial Government should consider that citizens are arguing for a new notion of governance that requires political leadership to engage with citizenry in ways that allow for ongoing input into decision-making and policy formation. Government as a public institution is accountable to the

citizenry as a result of societal arrangement where government is elected by the people for the people.

6. Citizens, as an integral societal component, must have a clear understanding of the work expected from them; and receive ongoing feedback regarding how they are performing relative to those expectations. This will assist communication practitioners and senior officials to identify collaborative opportunities, and to address performance that meets expectations, but also to distribute recognition accordingly.

7. Strategic communication is essential for effective and efficient service delivery in order for government to deliver on its mandate. This requires that experienced and qualified officers perform communicative tasks with the public. It is imperative that any form of communication is carried out according to a communication plan. A communication plan describes precisely how one intends to communicate the right message to the right people at the right time. Accordingly, strategic communication is central and integral to ensuring the cohesiveness of both the governor and the governed.

8. It is also recommended that a comprehensive policy on citizen participation in the North-West Province be enacted. This policy will work as a guiding tool to assist local government stakeholders to provide a common understanding of what citizen participation is in terms of its conceptual understanding and underlying principles. The South African Draft Policy Framework for Public Participation in the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) offers a point of reference to this effect. Currently, there is no common understanding of citizen participation. It is conceived differently by different citizens.

In articulating the afore-mentioned recommendations, it becomes imperative for the North-West Provincial Government to recognise the practice of strategic communication as focused government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favourable to advance provincial interests and objectives through the use of co-ordinated information, themes, plans, programmes, and actions synchronised with other elements of interest to the Province (Paul, 2011:1; Okigbo & Onoja, 2017:65). In this

view, the enacted ability of the governed (ordinary citizens at most) to positively impact and inform the manifestation of the strategic communication practice should be considered and included in the strategic thinking and planning processes respectively.

7.9 PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The prime aim of this study was to examine the extent to which strategic communication management is applied to *support* governance initiatives and sustainability programmes. In achieving this aim, the study measured the way in which the North-West Provincial Government facilitated participation and citizenry engagement for empowerment through strategic communication management. The study illuminated other Provinces of South Africa that may warrant future research, for example, to examine the extent to which strategic communication is practised as a fundamental tool for citizenry engagement and inclusivity in Africa. This will also assist government officials and public representatives alike to communicate with citizens effectively, using intentional, deliberate and purposeful communication for maximum communication impact.

Through strategic communication, aspects such as training and education programmes to make citizens more aware of their rights to participate in government activities must also be considered for future research. The other untapped area warranting research is the evaluation of strategic communication efforts in National Government (African context). This will assist African scholars in their multi-disciplinary endeavour to revolutionise strategic communication in monitoring the extent to which participative development plans and collaborative governance initiatives have been achieved.

7.10 CONCLUSION

As set out in Chapter One, it was the intention of this study to contribute in two-fold, namely: make a scientific contribution to the body of knowledge; and to revolutionise strategic communication management in order to offer a better worldview to government communication practitioners. This study joins global debates on the status of communication management by emphasising the importance and uniqueness of strategic communication management for governance initiatives and

sustainability programmes, with an African perspective on government communication. In doing so, the current study demonstrated the value of strategic communication at a Provincial Government level and introduced of *inclusive citizenry engagement* as a working concept derived from stakeholder engagement – representing the inclusive stakeholder approach and citizen engagement, among others.

The government communication system in South Africa is often more complex and different from the business communication circle. Consequently, government spheres are therefore in the business of using communication to reach out to diverse citizen groups and to ultimately deliver identified services. In this approach, arms of government, such as the Local and Provincial levels, are continuously confronted with the challenge to adapt, adjust and reconfigure communication strategies and messages in line with citizenry demands. More broadly, Rensburg (2007:8) articulates that government communication is important in Africa, and therefore it is pivotal that governments, politicians, the media, communication scholars, and communication management practitioners work in unison to arrive at shared communication practices in this sector.

The author, Rensburg further expounds that if the theory, research, and practice implications are considered, there are many possibilities for strategic communication management in Africa. In line with this perspective, this Chapter was therefore devoted to revolutionising the practice of strategic communication in the context of a Provincial level of government in South Africa. This was done in order to understand the strategic landscape of communication in advancing, supporting and accelerating governance initiatives and the promotion of sustainability programmes from a participatory perspective at the North-West Provincial Government. To this end, the practice of strategic communication in the Province is still infrequently realised and *not* pursued to a greater extent. Unidirectional or one-way imbalanced operational communication was cited as a process unfortunately often utilised in an attempt to engage ordinary citizens, among other mechanisms.

In an attempt to revolutionise strategic communication, a conclusive reflection on the empirical results was considered in the current Chapter to provide a context-based thorough analysis and to answer the research questions as posed in Chapter One. In

the main, research questions were revisited with the belief that the empirical evidence, together with the literature, would address the questions in more detail, which was achieved.

Accordingly, the Chapter further expounded on a context-based strategic communication framework proposed, which is linked to a set of adopted and refined effective strategic communication guidelines. Moreover, specific core competencies required in the strategic thinking, planning, and execution of communication were provided to assist strategic communicators or public representatives alike to deal with community communication efforts.

In conjunction with the refined effective strategic communication guidelines and the specific core competencies, the Framework provides a holistic impression of how ordinary citizens, through their formalised and informal environment, can collectively inform, impact and collaborate in key decisions at a provincial level. This process guarantees that a horizontal approach to communication is adopted by communicators to be more consultative and participative as indicated in the provided Framework, among other organised citizenry engagement opportunities.

It is without a doubt that the bulk of government communication requires collaborative competencies from practitioners and thorough knowledge of the strategic communication practice, in particular. As Rensburg (2007) contends, these are, among others: preparing government communication guidelines and putting in place an effective government communication strategy, setting up media monitoring units, providing better leadership (through continuous training) in government communication, and continuously improving communication research to enable efficiency in the ever evolving and dynamic communication landscape.

In fact, a definite challenge for communication management practice is the education of senior officials who clearly do not know what strategic communication is all about. It is therefore the contention of this study, that governments have constituents who must be duly informed and carried along as partners in the processes of decision-making through collaborative means. Interestingly, participative governance usually mean those processes by which public institutions conduct their affairs, manage public goods, and regulate public conduct for the good of society.

As a result, good governance and collaborative government policies must reflect the responsibility of public officials to address the needs of the masses and ordinary citizens in society. Similarly, all other members of the Provincial Government departments are ambassadors of those departments and must be trained, as well as equipped with relevant information, to provide a professional and positive image of the work of government to ordinary citizens.

Olukotun and Omotoso (2017) suggest that unfortunately, the roots of strategic communication are still shallow for the professional engagement of public communication because many communication professionals in Africa do not yet realise the responsibility of governments to meet the needs of ordinary citizens, as opposed to satisfying the selfish desires of select and favoured interest groups. Accordingly, this perspective is reflective of the notion that some Provincial Government officials selectively extend patronage networks to retain political power at the expense of ordinary citizens.

It is the contention of the current study that strategic communication will in turn help to foster a clear strategy at the heart of government, as well as far better co-ordination across and beyond government to ensure the delivery of the required inclusive citizenry engagement through strategic effect. Strategic communication must be seen to reach out from Provincial Government to operational environments and to all constituencies as well. Similarly, strategic communication must be perceived to be relevant, credible and authoritative at all levels of the governmental process, from the highest policy level to the practical levels where engagement with ordinary citizens takes place.

In order to be effective, therefore, strategic communication should be both a centre-of-government concern – part of the policy-making and strategic process at the highest levels – and a whole-of-government unifier, a common feature of all activities at all levels of the Provincial Government. Finally, persuasive influence is integral to strategic communication and is thus critical to the relationship between the governor and the governed.

Given the supposed intimate relationship between the Provincial Government and its citizens and the message, strategic communication design must take place in
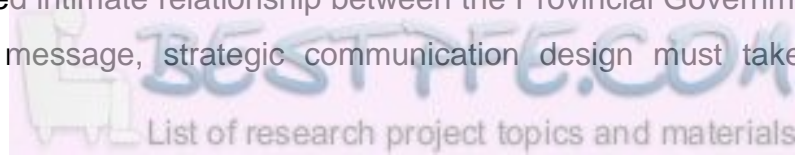
support of clearly identified and articulated citizenry needs, interests and expectations to deliver maximum social value in which inclusivity for all is envisioned. As such, effective strategic communication will demand early recognition of the concept of *inclusive citizenry engagement* over the short, medium and longer terms, even within policy formulation and collaborative partnerships. Only then will the Provincial Government be able to communicate strategically with highly engaged, empowered, informed and impactful ordinary citizens.

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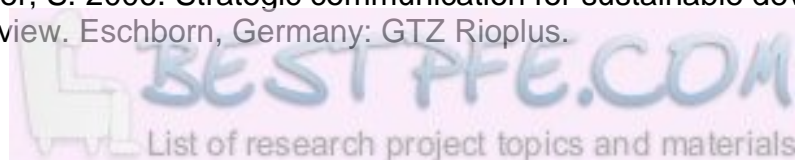
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Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Department of Business Management: Division of Communication Management

Title of the study

Strategic communication management for governance and sustainability: a participatory communication perspective for inclusive citizenry engagement

08 AUGUST 2017

Research conducted by:

Mr. JT. Mmutle (u15314732)
Cell: 0810926637

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Mr. Tsietsi Mmutle, Doctoral student from the Department of Communication Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to fulfil the requirements for a doctoral degree, and equally to gain insight into the title mentioned above. The study seeks to understand how strategic communication management can support corporate governance and sustainability programmes through a participatory perspective to achieve inclusive citizenry engagement. Furthermore, experiences and thoughts of ordinary citizens and government officials are crucial in understanding the importance of governance through a participatory communication perspective.

Please note the following:

This is an anonymous study survey as your name will not appear anywhere in the study. 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 study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

Please answer the questions as per the interview schedule as completely and honestly as possible.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

▪ Please contact my study leader, Dr. Estelle de Beer (tel: *012 420 5082*) or Prof. Ronél Rensburg (tel: *012 420 3395)* if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form 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.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   **Date**

Individual interview schedule

GROUP A – GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

SECTION A - SCM FOR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT FROM A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

1. Which method(s) is the Provincial Government using to communicate with citizens

2. Do citizens have enough access to information about the identified five concretes/programmes of the Provincial Government, in order to resemble high levels of public participation in the Province

3. Is public participation an important element of understanding the needs, interests and expectations of citizens through government identified programmes

4. How responsive is the Provincial Government to the immediate citizenry needs and expectations

5. In your own view, how effective is the consultation process conducted through community meetings or Imbizos to enhance people's knowledge of government programmes

6. Is the practice of communication in relation to provincial programmes two-way (message-feedback process) or one-way in the Province

SECTION B - SCM FOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT FROM A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

1. As the Provincial Government, do you think you're doing enough to communicate with citizens about policy matters and related key decisions

2. In your own view, can you say that communication platforms about governance programmes are open, transparent and responsive in the Province

3. What is the role of citizens in influencing policy formulation and strategic planning efforts in the Province

4. To what extent is the representation of citizens in decision-making for good governance and responsive-leadership in the Province facilitated

5. Based on your understanding, do you think the Provincial government has a strategic plan to co-ordinate and manage communication efforts in order to enhance inclusivity of citizens

6. What is the status of citizens in contributing to the identified programmes/concretes of the 5th administration (common-goal orientation)

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

GROUP B – ORDINARY CITIZENS GROUP INTERVIEWS

SECTION A - SCM FOR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT FROM A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

1. How is the Provincial Government engaging you as a citizen of the Province? Please articulate further…

2. As a citizen, are you benefiting from the Provincial Government programmes/concretes and if yes, in what way? Explain please…

3. Do you think the Provincial Government is doing enough to involve you as a citizen in development programmes/concretes and what is your role as a citizen? Provide more clarity…

4. How responsive is the Provincial Government to your immediate needs and interests as a citizen in the Province? Explain more…

5. In your own view, how effective is the consultation process between the government and you as a citizen to share information either through community meetings or Imbizos?

6. How often do Provincial Government officials communicate with you as an ordinary citizen in the Province?

SECTION B - SCM FOR GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT FROM A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

1. As a citizen, what steps or actions are you taking to enhance your knowledge of government programmes or activities and their benefit to you? Elaborate further please…

2. Do you think communication from the Provincial Government about programmes reaches you timely and allows for a two-way (message-feedback process) or one-way (one-directional) process in the Province? Articulate more please…

3. As a citizen, do you contribute to the Provincial Government policies and decisions that concern you and/or are you frequently consulted in the planning process? Please explain how…

4. In your own view, can you say that the Provincial Government is open, transparent and responsive when it comes to public consultations and participation in the Province? Elaborate further please…

5. According to you, what do you propose the Provincial Government to do in order to address your needs and meet your expectations through governance activities? Please explain more…

6. Do you think policies and laws in place encourage inclusivity and address your needs and interests as a citizen of the Province? Please elaborate more…