

Integrated intercultural employee communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents

Professor Arthur August Ngwezi and **Mrs Jacobeth Matlotlo Ngwezi**, for instilling an insatiable appetite for the pursuit of knowledge, laying a firm foundation of hard work and a love for our heavenly Father in my life

And

To the loving memory of my husband

Vincent Itumeleng Nkomo Mmope, for teaching me to persevere, never give up and that despair is never an option

And

To our precious daughter

Nqobile Leruo Mmope, my greatest inspiration.

'All things work together for the good to those who love God.' Romans 8:28

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of the higher education system in South Africa has led to the emergence of a visibly multilingual and multicultural work environment. Historically, the role and value of line managers in facilitating and executing strategic alignment at transformed universities has not been regarded as a top priority by senior management.

This study stems from the need to better understand how transformed universities apply employee and management communication assumptions to facilitate strategic alignment through face-to-face communication between line managers and culturally diverse subordinates. The crucial role that line managers play when communicating both interpersonally and interculturally emphasises the inherent and strategic value of effective employee and management communication in managing institutions of higher learning more efficiently.

The main objective of the study was to identify and describe assumptions that can serve as a foundation of a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa. The proposed framework enriches the extensive research on D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model by advancing the notion of Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication. This model enhances the reliability and validity of the manager's communication model when applied within a multilingual and multicultural work environment. This objective was achieved by performing a literature review and an empirical study.

This thesis is divided into three parts. In Part I, the conceptualisation of the study is addressed with a literature review with the aim of extracting theoretical perspectives pertinent to the objectives of the study. The theoretical perspectives are underpinned by three theories, namely: (1) the manager's communication model; (2) the Leader-Member Exchange Theory of effective communication; and (3) the Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory of effective communication. The Leader-Member Exchange and the Anxiety Uncertainty Management theories provide a hypothetical grounding to analyse the manager's communication model. These theories apply theoretically sound perspectives to the interpersonal and intercultural dimensions of effective line management communication.

Based on theoretically sound perspectives on interpersonal and intercultural dimensions of effective line management communication, the novel concept of a framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication is advanced and motivated. The Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication concept advances the value of integrating interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence at line management level to enable strategic alignment among a culturally diverse workforce, rather than approaching the competencies separately.

In Part II, an empirical investigation follows using a mixed-methods research approach. This section explores ways to understand and interpret the perspectives of support and academic line managers who fulfil the specific responsibility of strategic alignment. Their views on communication practices and challenges for line management and the extent of their effect on the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates are examined.

In Part III, the assumptions motivating the proposed conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication are identified and described based on the overall theoretical and empirical findings and conclusions. Fundamentally, the proposed framework recognises that interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies are key prerequisites to fulfilling the communication role of a line manager aimed at executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. The focus on developing a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management is a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Overall, the study indicates that a shared understanding of the prerequisites and assumptions motivating the notion of Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication can contribute towards effective and consistent practices within the communication role of line managers as they bring about strategic alignment in transformed universities in South Africa.

Keywords: Employee communication, management communication; interpersonal communication competence; intercultural communication competence; integrated intercultural employee communication; interpersonal communication barriers; intercultural communication barriers; strategic alignment.

OPSOMMING

Die transformasie van die hoër onderwysstelsel in Suid-Afrika het gelei tot 'n waarneembaar veeltalige en multikulturele werksomgewing. Histories het topbestuur nie die rol en waarde van lynbestuurders in die fasilitering en uitvoering van strategiese belyning by getransformeerde universiteite beskou as 'n prioriteit nie.

Hierdie studie spruit uit die behoefte om beter te verstaan hoe getransformeerde universiteite aannames aangaande werknemer- en bestuurskommunikasie toepas en hoe die strategiese belyning van 'n universiteit gefasiliteer kan word deur een-tot-een kommunikasie tussen lynbestuurders en kultureel diverse ondergeskiktes. Die belangrike rol wat lynbestuurders speel tydens kommunikasie, beide interpersoonlike en interkulturele kommunikasie, benadruk die inherente en strategiese waarde van effektiewe werknemer-bestuurskommunikasie vir die effektiewe bestuur van hoër onderwys instellings.

Die hoofdoelwit van die studie was om aannames te identifiseer en te beskryf wat kan dien as 'n fondasie vir 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer-kommunikasie vir lynbestuurders in getransformeerde universiteite in Suid-Afrika. Die voorgestelde raamwerk verryk die omvattende beskikbare navorsing oor D'Aprix (1996) se bestuurskommunikasiemodel met die gedagte van Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer-kommunikasie om die betroubaarheid en geldigheid van die bestuurder se kommunikasiemodel te versterk wanneer dit in 'n veeltalige en multikulturele werksomgewing toegepas word. Hierdie doelwit is bereik deur 'n literatuuroorsig en 'n empiriese studie te doen.

Hierdie tesis verdeel in drie dele. In Deel I word die konseptualisering van die studie aangespreek deur 'n literatuuroorsig wat ten doel het om toepaslike teoretiese perspektiewe te ontgin. Die teoretiese perspektiewe word onderlê deur drie teorieë, naamlik: (1) Die bestuurskommunikasiemodel; (2) die Leier-Lid Uitruilteorie van effektiewe kommunikasie; en (3) die Angs-Onsekerheid Bestuursteorie van effektiewe kommunikasie. Die Leier-Lid Uitruilteorie en die Angs-Onsekerheid Bestuursteorie bied hipotetiese gronde om die bestuurskommunikasiemodel te analiseer deur teoretiese perspektiewe op interpersoonlike en interkulturele dimensies van effektiewe lynbestuurskommunikasie toe te pas.

Die nuwe konsep van 'n raamwerk vir Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie word voorgelê en gemotiveer gegewe die teoretiese perspektiewe op interpersoonlike en interkulturele dimensies van effektiewe lynbestuurskommunikasie. Die konsep van Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie benadruk die waarde van die integrasie van interpersoonlike kommunikasiebevoegdheid en interkulturele kommunikasiebevoegdheid op die lynbestuursvlak om strategiese belyning van 'n kultureel diverse werksmag te bevorder, eerder as om die bevoegdhede apart te benader.

In Deel II volg 'n empiriese ondersoek wat gebruik gemaak het van 'n gemengde-metode navorsingsbenadering. Hierdie deel ondersoek maniere waarop die perspektiewe van ondersteunings- en akademiese lynbestuurders wat die spesifieke verantwoordelikheid van strategiese belyning het, ondersoek kan word. Hulle perspektiewe op kommunikasiepraktyke en uitdagings vir lynbestuurders en die mate waartoe dit 'n effek het op die kommunikasierol van lynbestuurders tydens strategiese belyning van kultureel diverse ondergeskiktes, kry besondere aandag.

In Deel III word die aannames wat die voorgestelde konseptuele raamwerk vir Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie onderlê geïdentifiseer gegewe die oorspronklike teoretiese en empiriese bevindinge en gevolgtrekkings. Die voorgestelde raamwerk gee erkenning aan die feit dat interpersoonlike en interkulturele kommunikasiebevoegdhede sleutelvoorwaardes is vir die kommunikasierol van 'n lynbestuurder wat die strategiese belyning van kultureel diverse ondergeskiktes moet bewerk. Die fokus op die ontwikkeling van 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie vir lynbestuurders bied 'n besondere bydrae tot die bestaande kennis.

Oorspronklik dui die studie aan dat 'n gedeeltes begrip van die voorwaardes en aannames wat die begrip van 'n Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie onderlê kan bydrae tot effektiewe en volgehoue praktyke binne die kommunikasierol van lynbestuurders wanneer hulle strategiese belyning moet toepas binne getransformeerde universiteite in Suid-Afrika.

Sleutelwoorde: Werknemer kommunikasie; bestuurskommunikasie; interpersoonlike kommunikasiebevoegdheid; interkulturele kommunikasiebevoegdheid; Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemer kommunikasie; interpersoonlike kommunikasiehindernisse; interkulturele kommunikasiehindernisse; strategiese belyning.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	One-Way Analysis of Variance
AUM	Anxiety Uncertainty Management
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EVP	Employee Value Proposition
HAI	Historically Advantaged Institution
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Institution
HR	Human Resources
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
IIEC	Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication
IO	Institutional Office
KPAs	Key Performance Areas
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
MC	Mafikeng Campus
NWU	North-West University
PC	Potchefstroom Campus
QUAL	Qualitative
QUAN	Quantitative
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UJ	University of Johannesburg
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VTC	Vaal Triangle Campus

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PART ONE



PART ONE:

CONCEPTUALISATION

The principal significance of this study is to conceptualise a framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management from a transformed South African higher education perspective. A conceptual framework is understood to imply a theory on the phenomena under investigation that is constructed, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure and overall coherence is something the researcher builds, not something that is ready-made (Maxwell, 2013).

The three literature study chapters introduce the building blocks that together form an approach to a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication. Each chapter provides a logical system consisting of a rationale and elements that form a building block. The rationale and elements of each building block are related to a specific research objective and ultimately to the overall focus of the current study. The three building blocks represent units of composition on which a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication is based.

In recommending the rationale and the elements of each of the three building blocks, the literature study identifies pertinent theoretical perspectives that address the specific objectives of the study. Taken together, these perspectives contribute insights to identify and describe assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa.

The building blocks are not final. In the end they coalesce to inform a single conceptual framework suited to the heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual work environment at transformed universities.

CHAPTER 1: **GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

The dawn of democracy in South Africa occasioned a process of radical reconstruction of public higher education by merging universities and technikons as prescribed by the principal Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and the National Plan for Higher Education of 2001 (Habib & Parekh, 2000; Reddy, 2000; Mosia, 2002; Jansen, 2003; Soobrayan, 2003; Kilfoil & Groenewald, 2005; Zide, 2010; Politicsweb, 2012). The restructuring and differentiation of universities signifies transformation in the higher education sector. The concept “transformation” in the context of higher education in South Africa implies the change of the nature, function, and condition of the higher education system so that it could become consistent with the demands of the new social order (SA, 1996; SA, 2003).

Prior to South Africa’s transition in 1994 from apartheid to democracy, public higher education consisted of 36 institutions made up of 21 universities and 15 technikons that served specific racial and language groups. In 2004, the 36 universities and technikons were restructured, rationalised and differentiated into 23 higher education institutions, specifically 11 traditional universities (offering theory-oriented degrees), six universities of technology (offering vocational diplomas and degrees) and six comprehensive universities (offering a combination of both qualifications) (cf. Cook, 1986; Bray, 1993; Cunningham, 2002; Hay & Fourie, 2002; Mosia, 2002; Carson, 2005; Cebekhulu & Mantzaris, 2006a; Cebekhulu & Mantzaris, 2006b; De Beer, 2006; Dlamini, 2006; Harber, 2007; Luthando, 2007; Malatjie, 2007; Marumo, 2008; Nel & Stumpf, 2007; Reddy, 2007; Baijnath & Barnes, 2010; Chetty, 2010; Pillay, 2010; Roman, 2010; Sattar & Cooke, 2010; Cloete, 2011; Makgoba & Mubangizi, 2011; SA, 2012).

In 2014, one of the merged universities, that is, the University of Limpopo, was officially demerged. This demerger resulted in the establishment of a new university known as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. In addition, two new universities known as the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University were established in 2013. These developments have increased the number of public universities from 23 to a total of 26 universities.

The apartheid higher education system was shaped by the Extension of University Education Act 45 of 1959. The most central stipulation of the Act prohibited Whites from attending the universities created for Blacks, and likewise debarred Blacks from attending Whites-only universities (Mosia, 2002; Asmal & Hadland, 2011; Makgoba, 2011). As a result of the segregation imposed at these institutions, the demographic in terms of race, ethnicity and language for both the workforce and students was virtually homogenous, with only obscured diversity.

The current democratic dispensation no longer differentiates between institutions of higher learning on the basis of race, ethnicity or language (Mosia, 2002; Fourie, 2008; Hall, Aiken & Mohamed, 2010; O'Connor & Schwab, 2010; Zide, 2010; Asmal & Hadland, 2011; Badsha & Cloete, 2011; Le Grange, 2011; Dell, 2012). Subsequently, a conspicuous change from a predominantly homogenous workforce to a progressively more heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual higher education workplace reflecting the demographics of South Africa ensued. The diverse staff profile at the transformed universities now includes employees with wide differences in age, life experience, work experience, cultural backgrounds, language, race, religion and education.

But, Pandor and Badsha (2010:275) concede that progress on the transformation of the race and gender composition of staff in higher education has been slow and remains a challenge for the sector. This implies that employees at the transformed universities will continue to become even more diverse as these institutions strive towards becoming more representative of the country's demographics. The prevalence of diversity in transformed universities is reinforcing the growing need for research to focus on how to work and communicate effectively with culturally diverse employees.

The current study focuses on three merged and consequently multicultural universities in South Africa. The universities selected represent the three institutional types that form part of the public higher education system in this country. The three selected universities are: (1) the North-West University (a traditional university); (2) Tshwane University of Technology (a university of technology); and (3) the University of Johannesburg (a comprehensive university). These universities represent a typical merger between a historically advantaged and predominantly White institution and a historically disadvantaged and mainly Black institution.

From a transformed higher education perspective, universities are in essence confronted with the following four predominant issues related to employee and management communication:

- Managers do not adequately understand and fulfil the central communication role as elucidated by D'Aprix's manager's communication model.
- Managers do not have adequate skills or the tools needed to communicate effectively, both interpersonally and interculturally, with employees of diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Managers fail to establish trust between themselves and culturally diverse employees to motivate employees to align with a university's strategy and to facilitate engagement.
- Universities lack a culture of open, honest and consistent communication that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a matter of core managerial accountability.

Indeed, empirical findings can confirm that effective employee communication "ranks among the most important issues emerging in studies of mergers" (Lalla, 2009:36) due to its critical role in facilitating strategic alignment, high levels of trust, increased productivity and enhanced organisational performance (Caldeira, 2009; G3 Business Solutions, 2011; Meyer, 2013; Munslow, 2013; VMA Group Africa, 2015).

Although a wide range of studies have been conducted worldwide on employee communication, there is very little information on how the South African public higher education sector in particular applies employee and management communication assumptions and best practice to motivate employees and to build trust and commitment towards a university's strategy (Ainspan & Dell, 2000; Adendorff, 2002; Meyer & Boninelli, 2004; Mosia, 2005; Faber, 2007; Tyobeka & Schoeman, 2007; Van der Walt, 2007; Sehume, 2008; Dibetle & Pretorius, 2009; Deloitte, 2011; Goldman, 2011).

Two recent studies emphasise the need to further explore the emerging and prevalent communication challenges for line managers that occur specifically within a multicultural work environment. Firstly, the findings of research conducted by the researcher in 2009 to explore the role of senior managers in internal communication and employee engagement within the specific context of strategic alignment at the North-West University prove useful. The university was established in 2004 as part of the transformation of the higher education landscape. As a result of this transformation, the staff profile of the institution is culturally diverse and multilingual. The exploratory study also investigated senior managers' understanding of the role they needed to play in sustaining effective internal communication and facilitating employee engagement. Having analysed the data from semi-structured

interviews with 22 senior managers from the three campuses and the Institutional Office at the university, the researcher identified the following critical findings (Mmope, 2010b:110):

- There is no system in place at the university to ensure that managers embrace, practice and fulfil their communication role in a controlled manner that can be measured to determine communication effectiveness.
- The level of senior managers' understanding of the role they play in achieving and sustaining effective communication with employees differs significantly.
- The central communication role, as elucidated by D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model, is executed in an unsystematic, uncoordinated and unstructured manner among senior managers.
- Communication is not regarded as one of the core managerial competencies that managers are appraised on.
- There is a need to offer senior managers a communication training programme and a manager's communication toolkit.
- There is a need to create a culture of engagement at the university and a shared understanding among senior managers of the concept of engagement.

In a doctoral study conducted over five years into the behaviours and skills of senior managers in large international companies, management communication researcher Adler (2011) brings the following key findings to light:

- Only one respondent in ten expressed the belief that managers know how to communicate corporate messages effectively.
- More than half said that their managers do not spend enough time communicating with their employees.
- Six out of ten described their managers at all levels as "out of touch".
- Eight out of ten believed that the communications skills across their executive teams could be improved.
- Almost 72 percent of the respondents said that managers in their companies see employee communication as critical to company success, but that effective communication is "rarely taken as a priority".

These findings highlight the need for research on employee communication and management communication. Some literature (cf. Tourish & Hargie, 1998; Ainspan & Dell, 2000; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; Sliburyte, 2004; Gay, Mahony & Graves, 2005; Matonkonyane, 2005; Goldman & van Tonder, 2006; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Gagnon, Jansen & Michael, 2008; Inglesi & Pouris, 2008; Madlock, 2008; Caldeira, 2009; Macleod & Clarke, 2009; Kamsteeg, 2011) already exists, suggesting that this problem is not unique to transformed universities in South Africa. Today, this problem is prevalent in most public and private organisations throughout the world.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

A comprehensive review of the literature on higher education systems reveals that global higher education reform trends were introduced to university management in the United States of America and Europe from the 1980s onwards (cf. Keller, 1983; Clark, 1983; Rovosky, 1990; Birnbaum, 2000; Cloete, Fehnel, Maassen, Moja, Perold & Gibbon, 2000; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Clark, 2003; Featherman, Hall & Krislov, 2010). As a result of profound higher education changes abroad, fundamental reform ideas were introduced in other parts of the world, including South Africa. The foundation and motivation of this study is embedded within this context.

This section briefly outlines two of the most significant international trends that have influenced higher education management as they are pertinent to this study. By so doing, the South African higher education context is linked to the international higher education perspective. This linkage provides an opportunity for a benchmarking approach to highlight the relevance and significance of this study.

The first distinct and influential international trend related to the study is the rise of the notion of “academic managerialism” within universities. Towards the end of the 1980s, universities experienced the effects of a worldwide shift from a traditionally hierarchical work structure towards a structure boasting features of a twenty-first century workplace characterised by flatter, networking and diverse workplaces. A decade later than the developed world, a number of South African universities began to develop strategic plans and mission statements and to implement performance management policies and systems as an integral part of human resources management. This signalled the rise of a more managerial mode of governance at the universities, referred to as “academic managerialism” in literature (cf. Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Cloete, Fehnel, Maassen, Moja, Perold, & Gibbon, 2000).

Another interesting and pertinent global trend is the professionalisation of the administration of higher education institutions. Maassen and Cloete (2002:28) have an interesting argument when they suggest that over the last 10 to 15 years in Europe and Australia, and at least a decade longer in North America, the complexities of the higher education environment have led to a more professionalised approach to management, recognised as a necessary condition for the institutions to deal more adequately with both external and internal pressures and demands. Accordingly, the increasing professionalisation of the university administration is, implicitly and explicitly, challenging the traditional dominance of academics in institutional affairs.

This inclination among universities overseas to professionalise management approaches has resulted in some noteworthy changes and concerns in South Africa's universities as revealed in a study on managerialism and the changing academic workplace conducted by Webster and Mosoetsa (2001). The study found that the vocabulary for managing the employment relationship at universities changed from personnel management to human resource management. When asked what the difference was between human resource management at universities compared to the private sector, respondents mentioned the difficulty in persuading academics that they are line managers, especially because the academics "do not want to be line managers" (Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001:11). In another study, the changing role of academics in South African universities was found to be one of the most stressful factors as a result of increased work pressure due to further responsibilities related to non-core activities, including administration (Pienaar, 2009).

Against the background of the advent of academic managerialism coupled with the propensity for the professionalisation of the administration of higher education institutions, Keller (1983) affirms that universities conceded that they need to manage the constant and continuous change. This implies that universities should be able to adopt new and appropriate management approaches to manage the unavoidable constant change and improve the universities' style of management.

In spite of the manifestation of the aforementioned global reform trends in South Africa, higher education scholars acknowledge that management in higher education is still a concept that evokes a negative reaction from many academics and as a result, universities tend to neglect management concepts and practices. This evident reluctance on the part of universities to adopt, advocate and implement management concepts, assumptions and practices seemingly undermines the potentially meaningful contribution of the management sciences field to higher education management (cf. Keller, 1983; Gibson, Ivancevich &

Donnelly, 1994; Birnbaum, 2000; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Meyer & Botha, 2004; Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Okoro & Washington, 2012). Consequently, this apparent challenge continues to contribute to management problems such as “weak leadership, poor planning, autocratic management practices, and low levels of accountability which threaten the viability of a number of universities in South Africa” (SA, 2012:46).

Based on the effects of these significant global reform trends, it is an irrefutable observation that the transformed universities can only benefit from adopting, contextualising and implementing the managerial idea of strategic alignment. The concept of strategic alignment that is applied using *effective interpersonal* and *intercultural communication competencies* for line management could possibly signal the consequent managerial idea at the core of cultivating a more effective management culture in the transformed universities.

The principal motivation for conducting the current study at the transformed universities is therefore to explore, understand and interpret the perspectives that academic and support line managers who fulfil the specific responsibility of strategic alignment have on the communication practices and challenges for line management, and the extent of their effect on the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees. The insight gained on the communication practices and challenges will contribute towards the conceptualisation of a framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication (IIEC) for line management. The suggested framework will provide a basis to begin for the inculcation of best practice for effective employee communication that can help to reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority, a core managerial accountability and an enabling factor for fulfilling strategic alignment at the transformed universities.

1.3 CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

This study represents an example of a multidisciplinary approach within the field of employee communication studies. Three substantial points merit the validation of this statement.

First, this study is rooted in employee communication. Over the last decade, the paradigm of employee communication has shifted tremendously from communicating ‘stuff’ to employees to partnering with business leaders to achieve business results through employee communication and employee engagement (Gay *et al.*, 2005; Quirke, 2008; Caldeira, 2009; Macleod & Clarke, 2009; Mmope, 2010a; Adler, 2011; Gillis, 2011; G3 Business Solutions,

2011; Munslow, 2012). This shift in paradigm from simply communicating information or issues to meaningful engagement could possibly imply one of the most significant advancements in recent years in the field of employee communication scholarship.

Considering this shift in paradigm, it can be acknowledged that the implementation of a strategic and integrated employee communication approach at the transformed universities is progressing more gradually compared to most universities in the United States, Europe, Canada and Great Britain as is evident from the International Association of Business Communicators' (IABC) global study to explore best practices in employee communication (Gay *et al.*, 2005) and the first white paper on the issues of communication in higher education (France, 2009). However, most universities in the United States, Europe, Canada, Great Britain and other parts of the world comprise a more homogenous line manager-to-subordinate profile that tends to adopt a Eurocentric approach to communication.

A Eurocentric approach is informed by the traditional western style of management that propagates individualism, self-centeredness, competition, exclusivism and instrumentalism. Universities in Africa and South Africa, in particular, are much more diverse in terms of race, culture, ethnicity and language. The unique South African work environment therefore necessitates a contextual approach to employee communication that is perhaps more Afrocentric in nature and suited to the culturally diverse character of South Africa's society and the transformed universities. An Afrocentric approach to communication is founded on the African value system that is consistent with humanism (Ubuntu), communalism, supportiveness and inclusivity (Finestone & Snyman, 2006; Zide, 2010; Singh & Chowdhry, 2014).

Second, the focus of this study is primarily on the specific scope of management communication, also referred to as line management communication. In particular, line managers as communicators and participants in social relationships at the level of interpersonal communication receive attention. A substantial body of research indicates that line managers represent the most employee-preferred communication channel within an organisation (cf. D'Aprix, 1996; Level & Galle, 1988; Smit & de J Cronje, 2002; Thatcher, 2005; Madlock, 2008; Quirke, 2008; Caldeira, 2009; Guest, 2009; Rothman, 2009; Mmope, 2010b; Adler, 2011; G3 Business Solutions, 2011; Wood, 2013). As a result of the prevalence of cultural diversity in the workplace, effective line manager-subordinate communication is blended with the notion of intercultural communication. This study subsequently serves as motivation for a unified approach that seeks to determine and

postulate the integration of the interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication and intercultural communication for line management.

As a result, the study of the close link between the concepts of employee communication, management communication, interpersonal communication, intercultural communication and strategic alignment connects the extensive field of organisational communication to the fields of strategic management, human resources management and higher education management. Accordingly, this forms part of a prevalence in theory to use a multidisciplinary approach to study the underlying theories and perspectives of the aforementioned concepts to yield pioneering insights.

The third and most important rationale for contextualising the current study in employee communication is that it presents an opportunity to motivate advancing the novel conception of IIEC for line management level. The conceptualisation of a framework for IIEC contributes important insight to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices and approaches of academic and support line managers when they strive to attain strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since the transformation of the higher education landscape in 2004, there has been substantial consensus and compelling empirical evidence that there is limited insight into how the South African public higher education sector, in particular, applies employee communication assumptions and best practice within the specific context of line management communication and strategic alignment to enhance institutional performance (discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2).

Ample empirical substantiation demonstrates that there is endorsement suggesting that effective employee communication is a critical enabling factor in achieving strategic alignment in an organisation (cf. Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Puth, 2000; Puth, 2002; Lachotzki & Noteboom, 2005; Gagnon *et al.*, 2008; Anderson, 2010; Gillis, 2011; G3 Business Solutions, 2011; Groyberg & Slind, 2012; Munslow, 2012).

The current approach towards fulfilling employee communication, line management communication and strategic alignment at the transformed universities differs drastically from the ideal model, in particular, the model found in strategy-focused organisations in the private sector (France, 2009). Numerous challenges have been identified by academic and support line managers when they fulfil their communication role in executing strategic alignment

(discussed in section 1.1). These difficulties include inconsistent approaches and practices amongst academic and support line managers towards executing the central communication role as elucidated by D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model. Additionally, cultural diversity and consequently, intercultural barriers that impact on effective communication are prevalent. Furthermore, there are multilingual policies that allow institutions to make use of more than one official language. Also, the interpersonal and intercultural competencies of line managers to enable them to fulfil effective communication with culturally diverse employees are increasingly in demand and there is no system in place to establish accountability for line management communication.

One possibility to address this employee communication and line management communication deficiency is through a conceptual framework suited to the unique, diverse and complex university work environment. From a line management communication perspective, the multicultural and multilingual university environment necessitates effective line managers who do not only possess adequate interpersonal communication skills, but also intercultural communication competence to fulfil strategic alignment. No formal framework towards inculcation of assumptions and best practice for fulfilling the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment satisfactorily exists at transformed universities. An investigation into assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for IIEC can serve as an initial attempt to address the current gap.

1.4.1 General research question

What are the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa?

1.4.2 Specific research questions

The following specific research questions result from the general research question:

1.4.2.1 What are the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and how do prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?

- 1.4.2.2 *What are the theoretical perspectives regarding best practice for effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*
- 1.4.2.3 *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*
- 1.4.2.4 *What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 General objective

The general objective of the study is to identify and describe the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives for this study are:

- 1.5.2.1 *To outline the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and to evaluate how prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment by conducting a literature study.*
- 1.5.2.2 *To outline the theoretical perspectives regarding best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment by conducting a literature study.*

1.5.2.3 *To explore and determine the perceived practices and emerging challenges of line managers with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment by means of semi-structured interviews and a survey.*

1.5.2.4 *To determine the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment by means of semi-structured interviews and a survey.*

1.6 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The substantive theory underpinning this study is the manager's communication model developed by astute employee communication scholar Roger D'Aprix more than two decades ago. This practical model describes six steps or tasks as essential elements of aligning employees' efforts to an organisation's strategy through effective two-way communication. The model is explicated further in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.3.1).

Additionally, two formal theories of effective communication informing this study are the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, and the Anxiety Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory. The LMX theory suggests that an interpersonal relationship evolves between supervisors and subordinates against the background of a formal organisation. LMX theory is grounded in the conviction that there are differences in the quality of relationships between leaders and their subordinates, referred to as members. The concept of relationship quality is defined as the degree to which trust, respect, and mutual obligation exist within a dyadic relationship between leaders and members (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Winkler, 2009). The LMX theory is explicated further in section 3.3 of Chapter 3.

The next theory underpinning this study is Gudykunst's (2005a) AUM theory. The AUM theory focuses on the basic factors that promote effective outcomes in effective communication. The AUM theory maintains that in intercultural interactions, the receiver in the communication process is regarded as a stranger. AUM refers to a stranger as someone who, though having physical proximity, is simultaneously conceptually distant. Therefore, interacting with strangers is filled with uncertainty and anxiety. AUM puts forward that effective communication can be achieved to the extent that one can mediate uncertainty and anxiety, and be mindful of the communication behaviour of the receiver (cf. Wiseman, 1995;

Littlejohn, 2002; Gudykunst, 2005b; Neuliep, 2006). The AUM theory is considered further in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.2).

The LMX and AUM theories of effective communication provide a hypothetical grounding to analyse the manager's communication model of line managers as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction respectively. In addition, these theories postulate logical theoretical assumptions to apply to D'Aprix's model with the aim of critically considering the reliability of the manager's communication model when used and applied in a multicultural and multilingual work environment such as the transformed universities.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This study focuses primarily on three significant dimensions of universities: first, line management communication; second, strategic alignment; and third, cultural diversity in transformed universities.

Specifically, this study explores the practices and challenges of the communication role of line managers in providing clarity and creating context pertaining to a university's strategy in order to facilitate strategic alignment to a university's strategy through face-to-face communication with culturally diverse subordinates. The line manager refers to a manager in an academic or support department responsible for managing subordinates' Key Performance Areas (KPA's), which contribute towards achieving the strategic objectives and goals of a university. The segmenting of line managers pertinent to the focus of this study is outlined in detail in section 3.2.1 of Chapter 3.

Secondly, the particular setting of this study is mainly embedded within the notion of strategic alignment. Literature (cf. Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Robertson, 2003; Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010) singles out strategic alignment as an essential ingredient in the successful execution of the strategic management process. Strategic alignment refers to "an ongoing process that builds employee commitment towards a university's strategy through face-to-face line manager-subordinate communication" (Gay *et al.*, 2005:17). In order to build employee trust and in so doing, motivating employees to align their day-to-day efforts with the strategy and thereby enhancing institutional performance, line managers should possess the inclination and ability to practice effective communication consistently (Wyatt, 2004; Gay *et al.*, 2005).

The third dimension that serves to delineate this study is the prevalence of a culturally diverse workforce at the transformed universities. Culturally diverse employees amplify the crucial role of line managers in facilitating and sustaining effective communication with employees from different cultural backgrounds. This cultural diversity is partially determined by matters of race, ethnicity and language. The cultural differences between the races and ethnic groups complicate the communication situation. The relationship between culture and communication is complex because culture influences communication, and communication reinforces culture (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010; Martin, Nakayama, van Rhee van Oudtshoorn & Schutte, 2013; Molinsky, 2013). The specific focus on intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes at line management level is the central motivation for advancing the hypothetical necessity to determine and integrate certain aspects of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence.

1.8 MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH

This study is based on a mixed-methods research approach and a literature review. A detailed discussion of the selected research design and the methodology is provided in Chapter 5.

1.8.1 Literature review

The review of related literature involved the systematic identification, location, and analysis of publications in peer-reviewed journals, theses and dissertations, research reports and documents that are relevant to this study's research questions. The review of the literature is addressed in more detail in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. An outline of the three literature review chapters in relation to the specific research objectives is provided in section 1.10.

A search was conducted on the following databases to confirm that no other similar study has been conducted on the higher education sector since the merger and incorporation process was implemented in 2004: National Research Foundation: Nexus Database System; South Africa's current and completed research projects; Ebsco-Host: Academic Search Premier; Communication and Mass Media Complete; MasterFILE Premier; SocINDEX with Full Text; Business Source Premier; Emerald Online; ProQuest: Theses and Dissertations; SABINET: Current and Completed Research; ISAP articles from SA Journals; SA Theses

and UCTD, SA ePublications; SACat: South African catalogue of books; Ferdinand Postma Library (North-West University); Internet: Google search engine and IABC online library.

The review of the literature was helpful in extracting the conceived theoretical perspectives pertinent to the objectives of the study. Also, the literature review contributed towards ensuring that the empirical study has a scientifically sound basis from which to measure the pertinent and selected constructs, variables, assumptions and practices and additionally, to analyse, interpret and contextualise the empirical findings.

1.8.2 Empirical study

- ***A mixed-methods research approach***

A mixed-methods research approach was employed to address the specific objectives of the study as stated earlier in section 1.8. This study applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches because a single approach to research (quantitative or qualitative) is inadequate to address this research problem.

The intent of the two-phase exploratory research approach is that the results of the first method (qualitative) help to develop the second method (quantitative). This design is particularly useful when a researcher has to develop and test an instrument because one is not available or has to identify important variables to study quantitatively when the variables are unknown. It is also appropriate when a researcher wants to explore a phenomenon in depth and then measure its prevalence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). A concise outline of the selected mixed-methods methodology is provided next, and in greater detail in Chapter 5.

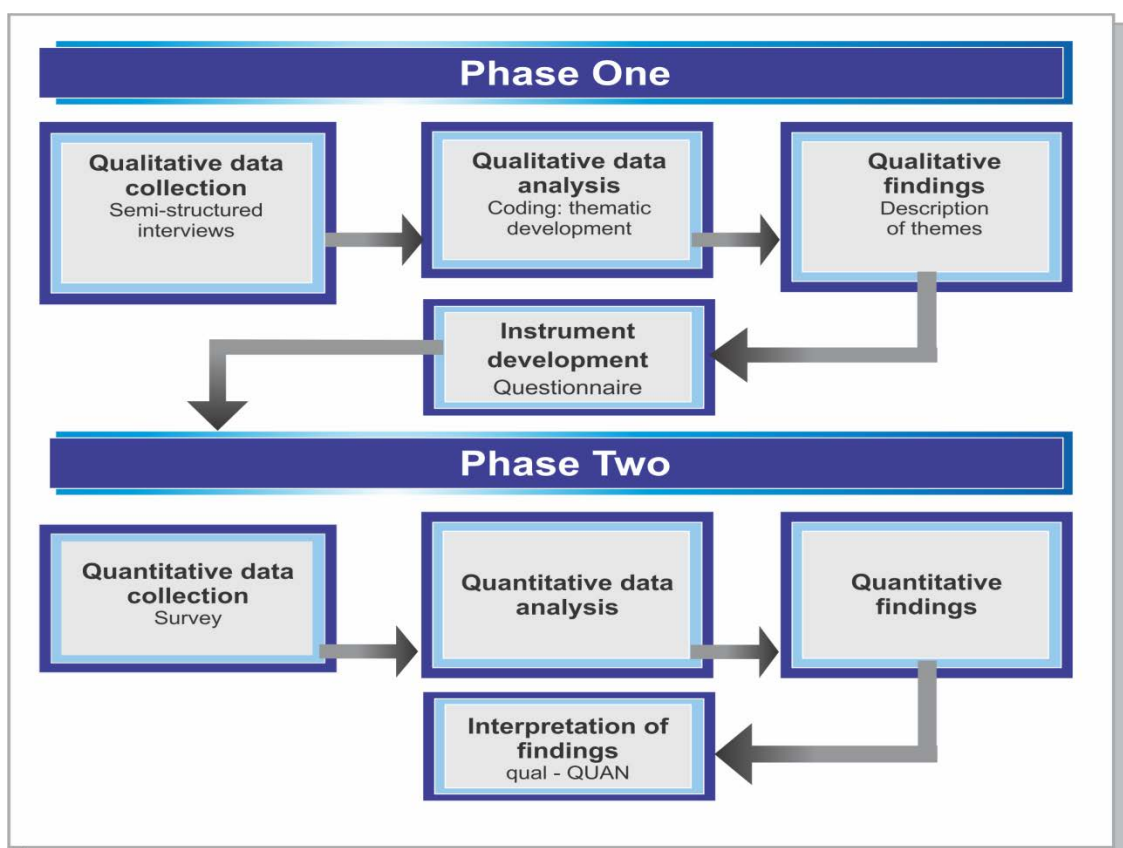
1.8.3 Mixed methodology

- ***Data collection***

The qualitative data collection began with semi-structured interviews with a sample of communications and human resources professionals and academic and support line managers from the three selected universities, namely the North-West University (NWU), the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). The aim of the interviews was to explore and determine the perceived practices and emerging challenges in relation to best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

The follow-up quantitative phase was employed by means of a survey aimed at a sample of academic and support line managers at the Institutional Office (IO), Mafikeng Campus (MC), Potchefstroom Campus (PC) and Vaal Triangle Campus (VTC) of the NWU. The target population of line managers who carry the responsibility of strategic alignment is N=254. Out of the target population, line managers (N=195) were selected using the simple random sampling technique and N=146 responses were received back from the respondents of the study. Therefore, the N=146 responses constituted a response rate of 74.87 percent.

The stages employed in the study and elucidated in the above discussion are illustrated in Figure 1-1.



Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:122); Moeng (2010:120).

Figure 1-1: Exploratory sequential design: instrument development model

- **Sampling**

For the qualitative investigation, the researcher used purposeful sampling to select the participants from the NWU, UJ and TUT. The method of simple random sampling was used to draw a representative sample of line managers from NWU for the quantitative study.

- ***Sequential data analysis***

For the data analysis, the sequential mixed-methods data analysis procedure was applied. The initial analysis of the qualitative data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews was conducted using the open-coding analysis technique to discover and identify themes related to the overall objective of this study. Thereafter the identified themes and variables were used to formulate questions and to structure a questionnaire for the subsequent quantitative phase.

For the quantitative data analysis, the Statistical Support Services of the NWU were consulted to assist with the statistical analysis of the data. The specific statistical analysis and software used are discussed in Chapter 5 of this study.

- ***Presenting, explaining and contextualising findings***

The contiguous approach to integration through narrative was used to inform the integration, interpretation and reporting of the qualitative and quantitative findings in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. The three building blocks of IIEC informed an iterative process working back and forth between the elements and constructs of the building blocks of the conceptual framework and the qualitative and quantitative findings to contextualise and interpret findings.

1.9 ETHICAL MEASURES

All participating institutions were approached with a request for the applicable information to ensure that the respective processes for ethical clearance were followed. In addition, the researcher took the following “requirements for any code of practice governing survey research within an organisation” into account to ensure that this study is conducted justly (cf. Gill & Johnson, 2002:122):

- The researcher consulted with all interested parties before undertaking fieldwork and proceeded only after consent and agreement.
- The researcher conspicuously conveyed the purposes of the interviews and a survey research to all respondents to judge whether they may be adversely affected by their participation.

- The researcher assured participants in the semi-structured interviews and respondents in the survey that their identity will be strictly anonymous and all the responses will be used for research purposes only.
- The researcher asked for permission to record the interview on an audio-recorder.
- The researcher reported any special circumstance that might affect the interpretation of the results.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

The outline of this study is divided into the following three parts:

PART ONE CONCEPTUALISATION

- **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The introduction and motivation for the study; problem statement; the context, research questions and research objectives; theoretical approaches; delimitations of the study; research methods; ethical measures and outline of the chapters are elucidated.

- **CHAPTER 2: BEST PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS OF EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION**

Theoretical perspectives on effective employee communication in terms of current best practice, challenges and assumptions of effective employee communication are identified and discussed; the rationale and the elements of the initial building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC that concentrates on an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university are proposed.

- **CHAPTER 3: THE COMMUNICATION ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS IN EXECUTING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

The dimensions of line management communication are discussed by means of segmenting line managers in the university workplace; then, the manager's communication model and the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication are discussed; the communication role of line managers is examined through the LMX theory of effective communication; a theoretical assumption of the interpersonal dimension of line management

communication is submitted; and the rationale and the elements of Building Block 2 are proposed.

- **CHAPTER 4: EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATED INTERCULTURAL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION**

Theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication are discussed; intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes are considered; the AUM theory of effective communication is applied to intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction; a theoretical assumption of the intercultural dimension of line management communication is submitted; the rationale and the elements of Building Block 3 are proposed. Based on the above, the novel construct of IIEC is advanced.

PART TWO: EMPIRICAL STUDY

- **CHAPTER 5: MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH**

The appropriateness and value of employing the selected mixed-methods approach; the integration approaches at the design, methods, interpretation and reporting levels; and the research design in terms of the specific qualitative and quantitative techniques and procedures used for collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting the findings are outlined and discussed in detail.

- **CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF BUILDING BLOCK 1 FINDINGS**

The qualitative research results pertaining to Building Block 1 are presented and discussed.

- **CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF BUILDING BLOCK 2 FINDINGS**

The qualitative and quantitative research results pertaining to Building Block 2 are presented and discussed.

- **CHAPTER 8: PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF BUILDING BLOCK 3 FINDINGS**

The qualitative and quantitative research results pertaining to Building Block 3 are presented and discussed.

PART THREE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa is advanced based on the preliminary building blocks and the summary of the findings; the conclusions and recommendations that emanated from the study are made.

In order to illustrate the process that is undertaken in this study to develop a conceptual framework, Figure 1-2 outlines a visual representation of the theoretical and empirical elements of the research process that culminates in a proposed conceptual framework for IIEC for line management in transformed universities in South Africa.

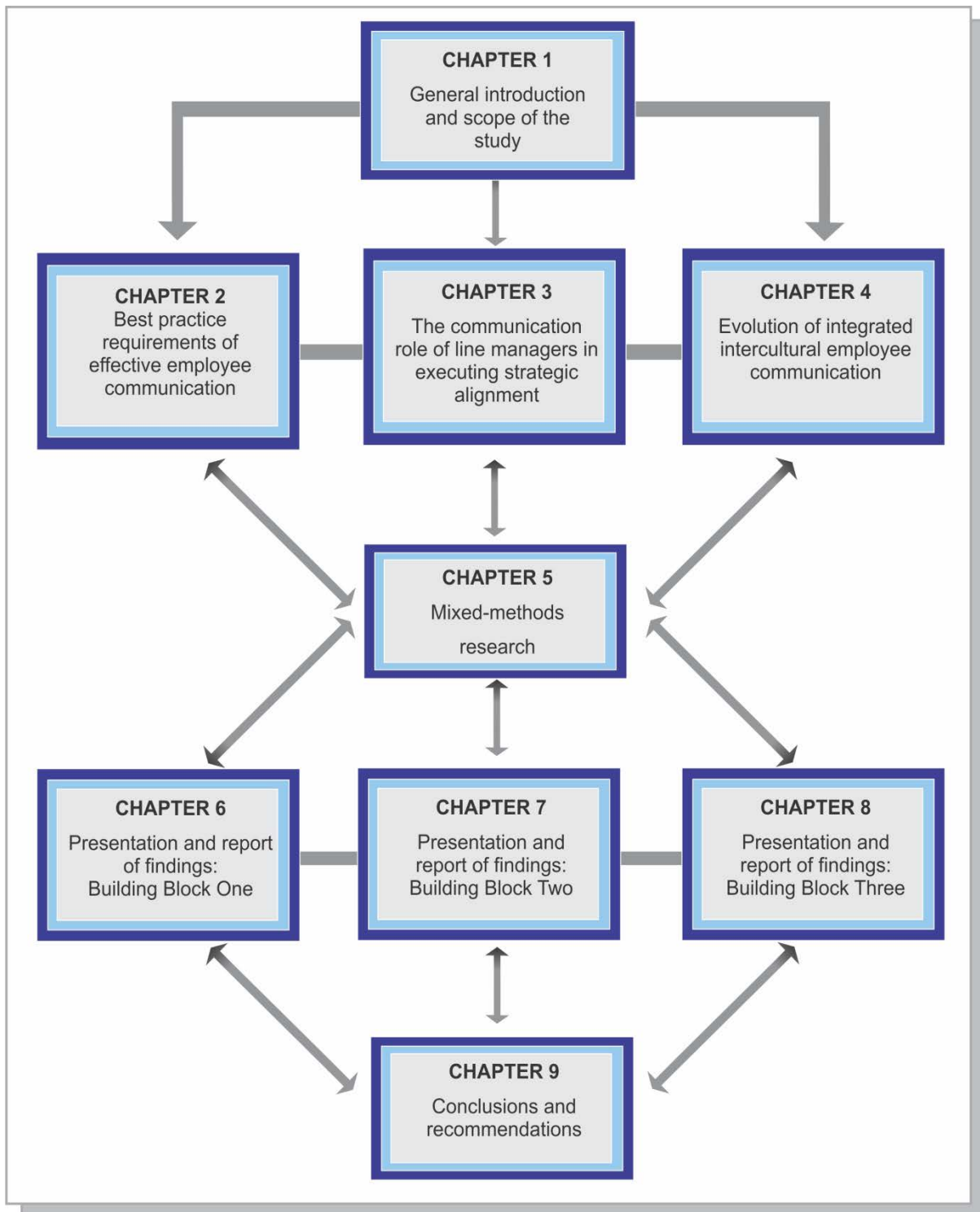


Figure 1-2: Structure of the study

1.11 CONCLUSION

Line managers at post-apartheid and transformed universities in South Africa continue to face a myriad of communication challenges whenever they attempt to build employee trust and to motivate subordinates to align their efforts towards executing a university's strategy. These observable communication challenges highlight the significance and relevance of undertaking this employee and management communication study.

The principal motivation for conducting the current study at the transformed universities is therefore to explore, understand and interpret the perspectives of academic and support line managers who fulfil the specific responsibility of strategic alignment on the communication practices and challenges for line management, and the extent of their effect on the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees.

The insight gained on the communication practices and challenges will contribute towards identifying and describing the assumptions motivating a framework for IIEC for line management in transformed universities in South Africa. The suggested framework will provide a basis on which to begin the inculcation of best practice for effective and integrated employee communication that can help to reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority, a core managerial accountability and an enabling factor for fulfilling strategic alignment at the transformed universities.

In addition, the proposed framework will postulate the probable integration of the interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication and intercultural communication for line management within the specific context of strategic alignment. Moreover, the proposed framework will provide a common basis for universities to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices and approaches of line managers when they strive to attain strategic alignment.

The consequent advancement of the concept of IIEC contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

CHAPTER 2: **BEST PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS OF EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The employee communication function is growing in recognition and prominence in organisations across the globe and particularly in higher education institutions. In South Africa, there seems to be disparity and differing approaches to executing employee communication, and very few institutions seem to implement and manage this function effectively (France, 2009; VMA Group Africa. 2015).

Consequently, transformed universities continue to grapple with the ongoing challenge to accomplish effective employee communication that fosters a culture of open communication and advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a core managerial accountability. In order to improve communication practices and the approaches of line managers within academic and support departments when fulfilling strategic alignment, universities must first cultivate an enabling environment aligned to best practice requirements of effective employee communication.

The discussion in this chapter is an attempt to address research objective 1.5.2.2 specified in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.2). It is formulated as follows: *To outline the theoretical perspectives regarding best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.*

In order to organise the discussion, this chapter is divided into two sections that combine an analysis of literature based on substantive theoretical and empirical data. The first section focuses on theoretical perspectives on effective employee communication to identify and discuss current best practice, challenges and assumptions of effective employee communication. The second part proposes the rationale and the elements of the initial building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC on the basis of the theoretical perspectives on effective employee communication. The motivation for this approach is that the literature provides a legitimate basis to explicate the conceived theoretical perspectives pertinent to

the specific objectives of this study (stated in Chapter 1, section 1.5.2) in order to make reasonable recommendations that are based on sound and scientific research.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

2.2.1 Current best practice, challenges and assumptions of effective employee communication

Given the magnitude and diversity of literature on employee communication in organisations, a comprehensive review is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the literature study draws on recent theoretical and empirical perspectives on effective employee communication and its role in facilitating strategic alignment, and processes and systems that help to align employees to an organisation's strategy.

Literature suggests six prerequisites that underpin best practices of executing and managing an optimal employee communication capability in an organisation (cf. Shannon, 2002; Sliburyte, 2004; D'Aprix, 2005; Davis, 2005; Smith, 2005; Marsen, 2006; Gillis, 2007; Harris & Nelson, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Arnold & Silva, 2011; Maurer, 2011; MondayMindset, 2011; Smith, 2011; Spaho, 2012; Angelopulo & Barker, 2013; Business Communication Articles, 2013; Meyer, 2013; Whitworth, 2014a). These fundamentals demonstrate that the establishment, implementation, management and continuous improvement of an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach is an ongoing effort and a daunting undertaking. The prerequisites are discussed sequentially below.

2.2.1.1 Culture of open communication

The most vital prerequisite for effective employee communication is a positive culture of open communication. Employee communication helps to create and reflect a culture of open communication within an organisation where employees at all levels feel free to openly share ideas, opinions and suggestions. As stated earlier in section 1.1 of Chapter 1, a critical challenge confronting organisations and also the transformed universities is an underdeveloped culture of open communication.

According to Grunig and Grunig (2011), factors that facilitate a culture of open communication include: (1) a participative culture where employees are empowered; (2) a two-way system of communication; and (3) a decentralised, less formal organisational structure. If the organisational culture is open, receptive to honesty and democratic in tone,

employee communication will flourish and this creates a virtuous cycle in which communication itself reinforces the openness of the culture. However, if on the other hand the culture is closed, hierarchical and autocratic, D'Aprix (2005:4) reasons that communication will be cautious, highly filtered and subject to endless approval. It is important to note from the above assertion that effective employee communication and a culture of open communication are mutually reinforcing. In other words, effective employee communication helps to create a culture of open communication. In turn, an open culture of communication reinforces effective employee communication.

Ideally, creating a culture of open communication is the joint responsibility of the leadership, line managers and communication practitioners. The leadership, line managers and communication practitioners must ensure that there is an accurate, timely, uninterrupted and unbiased flow of information up, down, and across the organisational structure. In addition, a culture of open, honest and continuous communication is the basis for enhancing employee understanding, building trust, embracing diversity and stimulating engagement (Level & Galle, 1988; D'Aprix, 2005; D'Aprix & Fields-Tyler, 2006; Berger, 2008a; Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010; Sanchez, 2011; Wu, 2012; Whitworth, 2014c).

Employee communication also creates an effective link between the vision, mission, strategy, brand promise and the rewards and benefits received by employees, also referred to as an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) (Drum, 2014:5). According to Drum (2014), every employer has an EVP, but it is not all employers who can articulate, express and manage an EVP. From a higher education perspective, there are noticeable gaps between universities in as far as articulating and managing an EVP.

The above discussion culminates in the following two key assumptions:

- **ASSUMPTION 1:** Effective employee communication reinforces a culture of open communication and vice versa.
- **ASSUMPTION 2:** A culture of open, honest and continuous communication is the joint responsibility of the leadership, line managers and professional communicators.

2.2.1.2 Integrated and strategic communications management system

When establishing an integrated and strategic communications management system an organisation should take numerous elements within an organisation into account. The most important features of a strategic communications management system include the following

fundamentals: (a) communication policies and networks; (b) budgetary autonomy and resources; (c) tasks of the communications department; and (d) communication training and support (Oakland, 2001; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; Thatcher, 2005; Modaff, DeWine & Butler, 2008).

a) Communication policies and networks

A strategic communications management system comprises the following three elements: (1) communication networks; (2) communication policies; and (3) communication activities. The examination of communication effectiveness is best approached by first considering whether communication networks objectives are being achieved, then implementing communications policies and matching individual communication activities to the appropriate communication networks (Greenbaum, 1974; Berger, 2008a; Berger, 2008b). Ideally, this assertion seems to be desirable in theory, but in practice it appears to be a daunting challenge. D'Aprix (1996) argues that making communication a management system with an emphasis on strategy and message content, accountability for process outcomes, and training for the task of effective communication are the real challenges. These challenges are possibly still persistent in many organisations because it is still unusual to encounter an organisation that performs periodic and formal appraisals of the general communications system for the purpose of maintaining and developing the effectiveness of this vital interaction-influencing function (Greenbaum, 1974; D'Aprix, 1996; D'Aprix, 2009; Grossman, 2012).

b) Budgetary autonomy and resources

Communicating effectively is impossible without adequate means, including financial means and human resources. In principle, communications departments require a structured budget to operate. However, in practice, empirical findings indicate that the opposite is the norm. One study established that communication management is apparently accorded a high level of responsibility and considered crucial to the organisation's strategic positioning, but this fact is not always reflected in the existence of a structured communications budget (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003). Davis (2005) concur and point out that the onus is on communication professionals to ensure that enough resources are in place to meet an organisation's internal communication needs. Another investigation compared institutions of higher education to the private sector and discovered that in

comparison to the private sector, the institutions have a very limited budget for communications activities (France, 2009).

Furthermore, Van Ruler and De Lange (2003) found that the presence or absence of a structured budget did not always coincide with the presence or absence of a reported coordinating department. In other words, having a single coordinating department apparently does not automatically imply also having specific budgets for this coordination. Even more notable is the fact that the position of the department in the hierarchy did not influence the existence of a separate budget. In essence, the director of communication must have an appropriate operating budget, staff with the necessary expertise and the latest communications tools and methods (France, 2009).

With regard to staff, the number of staff members in communications departments vary considerably. In general, communications departments tend to grow the number of staff steadily to keep up with new activities. When analysing the internal communication function in South Africa, the VMA Group Africa survey found that 60 percent of internal communications departments comprise two to four people (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; VMA Group Africa, 2015). This could possibly be indicative of budgetary constraints, which are often cited as the main factor that limits the appointment of required communication practitioners.

c) Tasks of the communication department

The three indicators for the tasks of a department managing communications are: (1) centralisation by coordinating different communication activities within one single department; (2) the position of the department in the organisational hierarchy; and (3) the relationship between organisation and communication (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:148). Van Ruler and de Lange's (2003) study found that the trend is to centralise communication management as the majority of the responding organisations had one single department from which all communication activities were coordinated. Davis and Company (2005) argue that whether centralised, decentralised, a matrix, or some combination of the three, the structure is irrelevant so long as that structure fosters the collaboration, networking and alignment needed to meet the set goals. Regarding the relationship between the organisation and communication, a crucial factor revealed in empirical findings is that the communications department should operate at a high level and have the power to

influence organisational policy and strategic decisions (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; VMA Group Africa, 2015).

In an annual survey of key issues impacting on communication practitioners in South Africa, 58 percent of respondents confirmed that they report to the managing director or other board members, compared to 64 percent of communicators reporting directly to the CEO across Europe (VMA Group Africa, 2015). This shows that in South African organisations, communication is increasingly being taken seriously. Davis and Company (2005:58) argue that it does not really matter if the employee communication function reports to Corporate Communications, Public Affairs, Human Resources or Marketing, as long as the senior person responsible for the coordinating department is positioned high in the organisational hierarchy, values employee communication and acts as an advocate of the function to senior management.

With regard to the relationship between organisation and communication, 58 percent of respondents in the VMA Group Africa survey said that they expected the influence of communication to increase in their organisations in the next two years given the strategic role communication plays in reputation management, internal communication and leadership training. This illustrates that strategic communications management is regarded as an integral part of the management of most organisations.

d) Communication training and support

The general assumption that “communication somehow just happens” (D’Aprix, 2005:4) or the widely held misnomer that “managers believe that if they spend five minutes with employees and pass out relevant materials, their communication role is done” (Davis & Company, 2005:39), exacerbates the persistent communication breakdown at line management level. Despite communication practitioners’ best efforts to provide line managers with communication support, information often stops at the line manager level, resulting in a situation where line managers are informed while their employees are in the dark.

In reality, consistent and effective communication is often needed to increase employees’ understanding, but managers frequently do not recognise the value of communication training to improve communication skills and most managers confess that they think they do not need training (Davis & Company, 2005). A

possible contributing factor to line managers' reluctance to value communication may be attributed to the fact that facilitating more conversation and opening the lines of communication with subordinates may involve the confrontation of many communication barriers and much resistance. Often unskilled communicators receive insufficient assistance to improve their skills (cf. Tarver, 1984; Hunt, 1985; Level & Galle, 1988; Gordon, 2004; Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Wood, 2004; Hills, 2014).

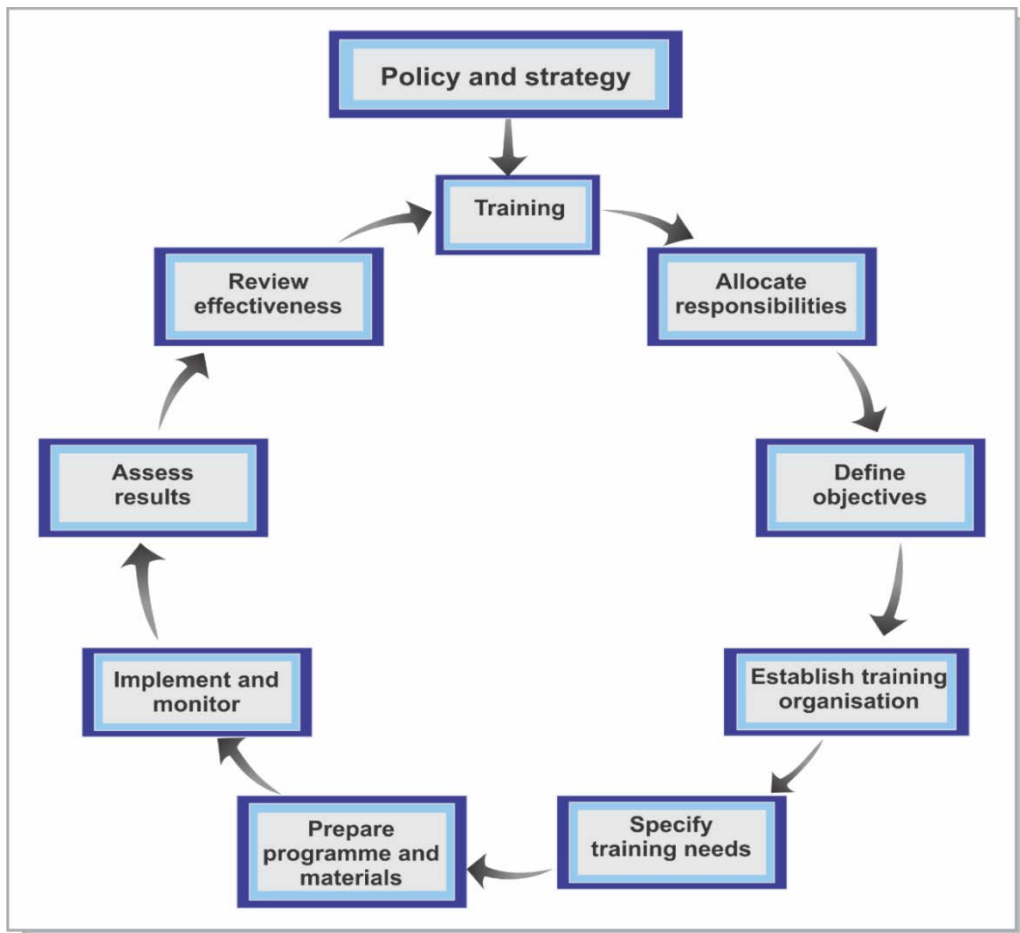
It is for this reason that communication training should be geared towards helping managers accept responsibility for their own behaviour that may create barriers to effective communication. Furthermore, line managers can strive to break communication barriers down by concentrating on their understanding of the communication process rather than 'departmental' information needs (D'Aprix, 2005; Thatcher, 2005; G3 Business Solution, 2011).

Many organisations suffer from a communication deficit because line managers are not held accountable for their communication role. A South African consultancy that specialises in communication training for managers, G3 Business Solutions (2011), reiterates that communication professionals in organisations realise that when there is no intervention in the form of communication capacity building for managers, their organisations pay a significant price. The consultancy concedes that up-skilling managers in core communication skills is one of the most critical contributions that a corporate communications team can make because it provides an opportunity to equip managers with core communication skills that foster an open communication climate.

Oakland (2001) believes that training people is the single most important way to actually improve performance. This conviction is also true regarding communication training and enhancing communication skills and competencies. For training to be effective, however, the author points out that it must be planned in a systematic and objective manner. Oakland (2001:207-210) postulates that training activities can be considered in the form of a cycle of improvement that comprises the following nine key steps that can be used to make communication training an important aspect of a strategic communications management system (see Figure 2-1).

Other forms of communication training for line managers may include communication workshops, coaching, online courses and "train the trainer" workshops to enable line managers to lead engagement style discussions with their

teams. In addition, supplementary communication tools include monthly manager updates and talking points, online communication tools including guidelines, a communication toolkit that offers tips, techniques and templates for managers, discussion and facilitation guides to aid discussion and debate and communication charters to clarify roles and responsibilities (Thatcher, 2005; Caldeira, 2009; Munslow, 2012).



Source: Oakland (2001:210).

Figure: 2-1: The training cycle

The following significant assumptions can therefore be gathered from the above discussion:

- **ASSUMPTION 3:** A strategic communications management system is an integral part of the management of an organisation.
- **ASSUMPTION 4:** Communication capacity building for line managers is a shared responsibility of corporate communications, human resources and managers.

2.2.1.3 The role of the professional communicator

Literature distinguishes between the specialist and strategic roles of the professional communicator in an organisation. First, professional communicators are often still seen as specialists who fulfil the historical roles of producers and distributors of messages through a network of communication channels managed by the corporate communications department. Second, the strategic role of professional communicators focuses on issues management, facilitators and counsellors to executives and managers, and strategic support for business plans (cf. D'Aprix, 1996; McDonell, 2003; Stahl, 2004; Gay *et al.*, 2005; Thatcher, 2007; Berger, 2008a; Hay & van Gensen, 2008; Quirke, 2008; Wright, 2009; LeMenager, 2011; Munslow, 2013).

In a study aimed at determining the influence of organisational constraints on the specialist and strategic roles of the professional communicator, De Jager (2000) concludes that the specialist and strategic roles of the professional communicator are interdependent and interlinked. A review of the literature (cf. De Jager, 2000; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Stahl, 2004; D'Aprix, 2005; Gay *et al.*, 2005; Berger, 2008a; France, 2009; Smith, 2011; Munslow, 2013; Whitworth, 2014) highlights the following standards and KPAs pertaining to the specific strategic role of professional communicators. The following accountabilities should ideally form part of the director of communications' job description:

- a) **Advising and coaching:** In this role, communicators advocate and advise in strategic decision making, and counsel and coach executives and managers to better engage with employees (cf. Stahl, 2004; Gay *et al.*, 2005; Berger, 2008b; Smith, 2011; Munslow, 2013).
- b) **Intelligence gathering:** This role entails conducting research to gather intelligence from the internal and external environment and to provide empirical evidence of aspects pertaining to the execution of business strategies. This means that communicators must provide strategic support for business plans. They must possess knowledge of the organisation's structures, challenges and objectives; understand employee issues and needs and marketplace requirements and realities (Stahl, 2004; O'Murchu, 2014).
- c) **Formulating the communication policy, strategy and planning:** In this role, communicators must develop a robust strategy and plan of action to continuously deliver on strategic priorities. Also, they must devise the communication policy of the organisation, be involved in the creation of the brand of the organisation, be

constantly aware of what is going on and manage their teams (cf. Berger, 2008b; France, 2009).

d) Close working relationship with the office of the president or vice-chancellor:

A fundamental prerequisite for the strategic role of the director of communications is a close working relationship with whoever is in charge of the business strategy, in particular, the office of the president, vice-chancellor (VC) or chief executive officer (CEO). The director must be physically located in close proximity to these offices. This physical proximity encourages an ongoing discussion between the two offices, which is essential (France, 2009:15).

e) Establishing accountability:

The areas of external and internal communication are frequently spelled out as managerial responsibilities of directors of communications and often subjected to critical evaluation or audit. However, very few organisations go beyond this emphasis on internal and external communication accountabilities to recognise management communication responsibilities as KPAs of both employee and line management communication. The specific communication role of line managers does not form part of managers' KPAs or performance appraisal and as a result line managers are not held accountable. In this role, communicators have to work with the human resources department and senior management to establish the necessary accountability with regard to the communication role of line managers. Recognising management communication responsibilities as KPAs of both employee and line management makes it more feasible to monitor and to measure communication performance to recognise the managers who communicate effectively, and to make those managers who choose to ignore their communication role face negative consequences (D'Aprix, 2005).

Establishing accountability for line management communication is key to effective communication down the line, which is an essential part of aligning subordinates and building employee commitment towards a university's strategy through effective face-to-face line management communication. Communicators can help leaders provide clearer direction by helping them articulate messages, increase consistency of messages and remain 'on message' (D'Aprix, 2005; Wright, 2009; Whitworth, 2014).

f) Supporting line management communication:

This role entails supporting line managers in two key ways. First, by providing training that aims to create "an awareness of the need for effective line management communication and by

defining the communication role of managers, determine the skills they need, and provide the tools to support them". Second, professional communicators can ensure that line managers have compelling messages to consistently communicate to employees (Gay & D'Aprix, 2006). For example, when important announcements or changes are made, it is important for the communication team to supply materials, common talking points, powerpoint presentations or other appropriate tools for line managers to communicate effectively (D'Aprix, 2005; Thatcher, 2005; Mmope, 2010b). When line managers are provided with the relevant information, the professional communicator should coach managers to be more successful when responding to feedback in a one-on-one encounter by: (1) clarifying the managers' role as responder; (2) preparing managers with answers; and (3) helping managers stimulate discussion (Davis & Company, 2005:34).

- g) Academic credentials and professional recognition:** The director of communications must be a high level specialist with a thorough understanding of the field of communications and its complexities. Also, communicators should hold relevant academic credentials (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; France, 2009). Van Ruler and De Lange (2003) report that professional knowledge requirements have increased with the development of the profession. They point out that one of the characteristics for regarding communications management as a fully-fledged profession is that professionals have acquired a body of knowledge that allows a theoretical approach to the vocation. This implies that, ideally, practitioners must have graduated from a recognised form of higher education to be considered a communication professional.

However, in practice organisations across the globe seem to have varying degrees of emphasis on the importance of communication academic credentials for communication professionals. In a study based in the Netherlands, Van Ruler and De Lange (2003) found that there is a lack of professional education amongst communication professionals as a result of the non-communications background of people chosen or appointed to fulfil the strategic communications function. Amongst the respondents, the majority had a college or university degree, but only a few of these had a degree in communications.

In the United States of America training is deemed to be best practice and the academic credentials of communication practitioners are an important prerequisite to fulfil the communication role in an organisation. In addition, communication experience is crucial. The director of communications is usually a person between

45 and 55 years old, and the majority of these directors have held their senior positions for more than five years. It is also in the United States that the directors of communications have the most experience in communication and they are also the best paid. Similarly, in South Africa the majority of communicators who responded to the VMA Group Africa survey indicated that they have more than 11 years of work experience and a substantial number of respondents said they have more than 20 years of experience (France, 2009; VMA Group Africa, 2015).

- h) Outsourcing:** Given the diversity and complexity of the responsibilities of the communications director, a growing number of communicators are opting to outsource some of their tasks. The general sub-contracted activities fall into two categories, that is: (1) guidance regarding communications strategy; and (2) executing more practical tasks. Outsourcing some activities allows the communications director to avoid being spread too thin, to be more efficient and to concentrate on strategic issues, such as advising the administration and organising communications activities. The VMA Group Africa survey found that insourcing communication work is becoming increasingly prevalent in South Africa, and it is directly linked to business performance. In addition, a considerable number of senior communication professionals in South African organisations still find themselves fulfilling specialists activities of employee communications such as distributing information, implementing internal campaigns, managing the various communication channels, writing news articles and even taking photographs instead of fulfilling strategic roles (cf. Caldeira, 2009; France, 2009; Naude, 2009; Munslow, 2013; VMA Group Africa, 2015).

The above discussion emphasises the following fundamental assumption in relation to best practice of effective employee communication:

- **ASSUMPTION 5:** The specialist and strategic roles of the professional communicator in an organisation are interdependent and interlinked.

2.2.1.4 *The communication role of the line manager*

Literature highlights three key certainties of the communication role of line managers. Firstly, most employees look to their line managers as their most trusted source of information and expect their immediate manager to share important company information and to put it in context (cf. Clampitt, 2001; D'Aprix, 2005; Thatcher, 2005; Dunn-Roy, 2007; Caldeira, 2009; Adler, 2011; Whitworth, 2014). Secondly, face-to-face communication remains the most

effective communication channel for line managers in executing strategic alignment and day-to-day tasks with their teams (Mmope, 2010b; Goman, 2011; LeMenager 2011; G3 Business Solutions, 2011; Whitworth, 2014a).

The third conviction is that effective interpersonal communication between line managers and subordinates creates shared understanding of an organisation's strategy and motivates employees to align with an organisation's strategy and in so doing, builds high levels of trust, facilitates strategic alignment, employee engagement and enhances organisational performance (Johnson, 2004; Morgan, 2004, Gay *et al.*, 2005; IOMA, 2005, Smythe, 2008, Colan, 2009; MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Shaffer, 2009; Finch & Blanchard, 2010; Kruse, 2012).

Another important criterion to highlight is the responsibility of line managers to make subordinates aware of their role and responsibility to also communicate. Grossman (2012) and Whitworth (2014c) concur that as much as managers must play a leading role in informing, listening to, and motivating employees, the employees also have a responsibility to seek and absorb information to do their jobs better. In other words, subordinates have to seek out information or ask questions if they do not know something.

From the above discussion, the following assumption is understood:

- **ASSUMPTION 6:** The communication role of the line manager in executing strategic alignment requires effective interpersonal communication with subordinates.

2.2.1.5 *The role of leadership*

Effective communication for leadership means that the leaders have taken the time to clearly and succinctly articulate the vision of the business, describing the larger business context, building understanding and commitment to the organisation's strategy and establishing priorities. At this tier of leadership, senior leaders should take communication seriously and become model communicators themselves because leaders can have a significant impact by simply being visible and approachable (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Gay *et al.*, 2005; Gordon, 2006; Barrett, 2008; Gay & D'Aprix, 2006; Wright, 2009; LeMenager, 2011; Nel & Beudeker, 2011; Whitworth, 2011; Gobeil, 2014; Schuman, 2014; Whitworth, 2014b).

The empirical findings of a global study revealed that the leading challenges to effective leadership and management communication include (Gay *et al.*, 2005):

- **Leaders not being on the same page** – not communicating consistent messages.
- **Lack of visibility of the leadership** – especially during tough times.
- **Lack of employee trust in leadership** – leadership is not credible.

These challenges cause barriers to effective communication in an organisation and are often exacerbated by “a lack of sufficient organisational commitment to addressing these issues” (Gay *et al.*, 2005:32).

2.2.1.6 Communication performance measurement

The sixth and last prerequisite underpinning best practice for executing and managing an optimal employee communication capability is measuring communication performance. Measuring the effectiveness of communication efforts is becoming increasingly important to South African organisations that want to demonstrate the impact of communication practices (Davis & Company, 2005; VMA Group Africa. 2015).

In order to establish accountability for effective employee communication, a communication appraisal system with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure line managers' communication performance and communication competence developed by the director of communications and the director of human resources should be in place (Thatcher, 2005; Berger, 2008a; Madlock, 2008).

According to Thatcher (2005:12), the key elements of a communication appraisal process include the following five features: (1) communication competencies; (2) key performance indicators; (3) communication training, tools and support; (4) regular measurement of the managers' communication performance, and (5) recognition and rewards for desired communication behaviours and improved performance.

The key elements of a communication appraisal process reveal the interdependent and mutually reinforcing roles of the manager, the communications director and human resources director in supporting line managers to fulfil their communication role in a coordinated, controlled and structured manner that can be measured to determine communication effectiveness. The process also advocates the link between the line manager's communication competence and practising effective communication (Thatcher, 2005; Madlock, 2008; Caldeira, 2009).

A critical challenge to communication measurement is that even though it is considered to be important, many organisations are not yet incorporating communication measurement into their communication action plans, thus ranking it among the least important communication activities (France, 2009; VMA Group Africa. 2015). The empirical findings of a global study highlighted the following three main themes as the reasons for this trend (Gay *et al.*, 2005:44):

- senior leadership already believes that communication is critical;
- communicators lack the time and resources to focus on measurement;
- there is a lack of knowledge about how to measure results.

The following substantial assumption can therefore be advanced from the above discussion:

- **ASSUMPTION 7:** Communication performance should be measured in a systematic, coordinated, controlled and structured manner linked to a recognition and rewards programme.

2.2.1.7 Conclusion of assumptions of effective employee communication

Based on the above detailed discussion of current best practices for effective employee communication, the identified fundamental assumptions pertinent to executing and managing an optimal employee communication capability within an organisation are summed up in Table 2-1. These assumptions, named *the seven assumptions of an optimal employee communication capability*, facilitate and contribute towards the establishment of an enabling environment, efficient management and continuous improvement of an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that can help to reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a core managerial accountability within the transformed universities.

Table 2-1: The seven assumptions of an optimal employee communication capability

Assumption 1	Effective employee communication reinforces a culture of open communication and vice versa.
Assumption 2	A culture of open, honest and continuous communication is the joint responsibility of the leadership, line managers and professional communicators.
Assumption 3	A strategic communications management system is an integral part of the management of an organisation.
Assumption 4	Communication capacity building for line managers is a shared responsibility of corporate communications, human resources and managers.
Assumption 5	The specialist and strategic roles of the professional communicator in an organisation are interdependent and interlinked.
Assumption 6	The communication role of the line manager in executing strategic alignment requires effective interpersonal communication with subordinates.
Assumption 7	Communication performance should be measured in a systematic, coordinated, controlled and structured manner linked to a recognition and rewards programme.

The above discussion elucidating the present-day perspectives, best practices and assumptions of effective employee communication forms the basis to propose the rationale and the elements of the first building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC. Based on the foregoing discussion, the suggested initial building block concentrates on an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university.

2.3 BUILDING BLOCK 1: AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR AN INTEGRATED, STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION APPROACH IN A UNIVERSITY

This section provides the rationale for Building Block 1 first, followed by the proposed elements. The suggested elements determine the fundamental requirements of the initial building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC.

2.3.1 The rationale for Building Block 1

In order to advance employee communication towards fulfilling a strategic and effective role that builds high levels of employee trust and employee motivation that enhances strategic alignment and overall institutional performance, the transformed universities should foster an enabling environment to cultivate a culture of open, honest and continuous communication.

An enabling environment implies the existence of a holistic organisational communication management approach that integrates the accountabilities of the main role players in the three main spheres of organisational communication, namely: (1) the professional communicator in the employee communication sphere; (2) line managers in the management communication domain; and (3) leaders such as the VC in the leadership communication sphere. Moreover, an enabling environment denotes commitment from the leadership, line managers and professional communicators to inculcate and sustain effective employee communication practices and thereby instil a culture of open communication within the transformed universities. The obvious explanations for embracing an enabling environment are numerous and include the following key reasons:

- First, an enabling environment for effective line management communication could transform the harmful costs of poor employee communication, which confuses and demotivates employees, increases absenteeism and employee turnover, into a conduit that builds trust, motivates employees to align with a university's strategy, embrace diversity and stimulate engagement.
- Second, an enabling environment for effective line management communication will enhance employee understanding and employee commitment towards achieving the strategic objectives and goals of a university and therefore improve institutional performance.
- Third, an enabling environment will foster a strong culture of open, honest and continuous communication and consequently influence a unified university culture that fosters engaged employees.
- Lastly, an enabling environment will allow the transformed universities to try out scientific approaches to effective employee and line management communication in the multicultural and multilingual university setting in order to contextualise and ascertain the best suited prototype and to construct a suitable model for the unique university work environment.

In the absence of such an enabling environment, managers find it difficult, if not impossible, to execute their communication role consistently and effectively as part of their day-to-day line management role and as part of the strategic management process of the institutions.

In light of the above rationale, the next section focuses on advancing the most important elements of Building Block 1.

2.3.2 Summary of elements of an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach

The ensuing ideas that determine the main elements of Building Block 1 are illustrated in Figure 2-2. This illustration is submitted as an attempt to create a basis for conceptualising a framework that is built on sound employee communication best practice and assumptions. Furthermore, Figure 2-2 highlights the integrated and holistic approach that fosters an effective and strategic employee communications approach. It must be borne in mind that these are only preliminary ideas and not the final conceptual framework for IIEC.

- **Element 1: Institutional strategic intent**

A university's strategic intent must clearly articulate the vision, mission and strategic objectives to facilitate the consistent articulation of key messages and common talking points regarding strategic objectives and goals.

- **Element 2: Institutional culture**

There should be a culture of open, honest and continuous communication that advocates line management communication as a strategic priority. A core managerial accountability is crucial.

- **Element 3: Institutional communications management system**

The appropriate communication policies, networks, resources and structure must be in place to create an enabling environment for the execution of an effective and strategic employee communications function. This communication infrastructure should emphasise the communication roles of professional communicators, line managers and leaders alike and ensure the continuous communication training and support and the appraisal of line managers' communication performance.

- **Element 4: Common talking points**

Communication professionals play a crucial role in the interpretation of a university's comprehensive strategic plan into clear, concise and consistent common talking points. Furthermore, identifying the correct communication tools and the support that line managers need to inform employees about the university's strategic objectives and goals and to align employees' efforts accordingly to the strategic plans is essential.

- **Element 5: Communication activities**

Communication activities in the three main spheres of employee, management and leadership communication must be aligned to improve and sustain effective communication that contributes towards achieving and sustaining strategic alignment. The role of a communications director, line managers and the Vice-Chancellor (VC) together with the executive leadership should be integrated and work in a close and mutually reinforcing manner.

- **Element 6: Effective line manager-to-employee communication**

It is the role of line managers to align the day-to-day efforts of employees towards achieving the strategic objectives of the universities. Therefore, managers have to communicate effectively with employees of differing cultural backgrounds.

- **Element 7: Communication performance measurement**

Communication performance measurement should be an integral part of a communication appraisal process with KPIs to measure the line managers' communication performance. A communication appraisal process should facilitate the execution of line management communication in a coordinated, controlled and structured manner that can be measured to determine communication effectiveness.

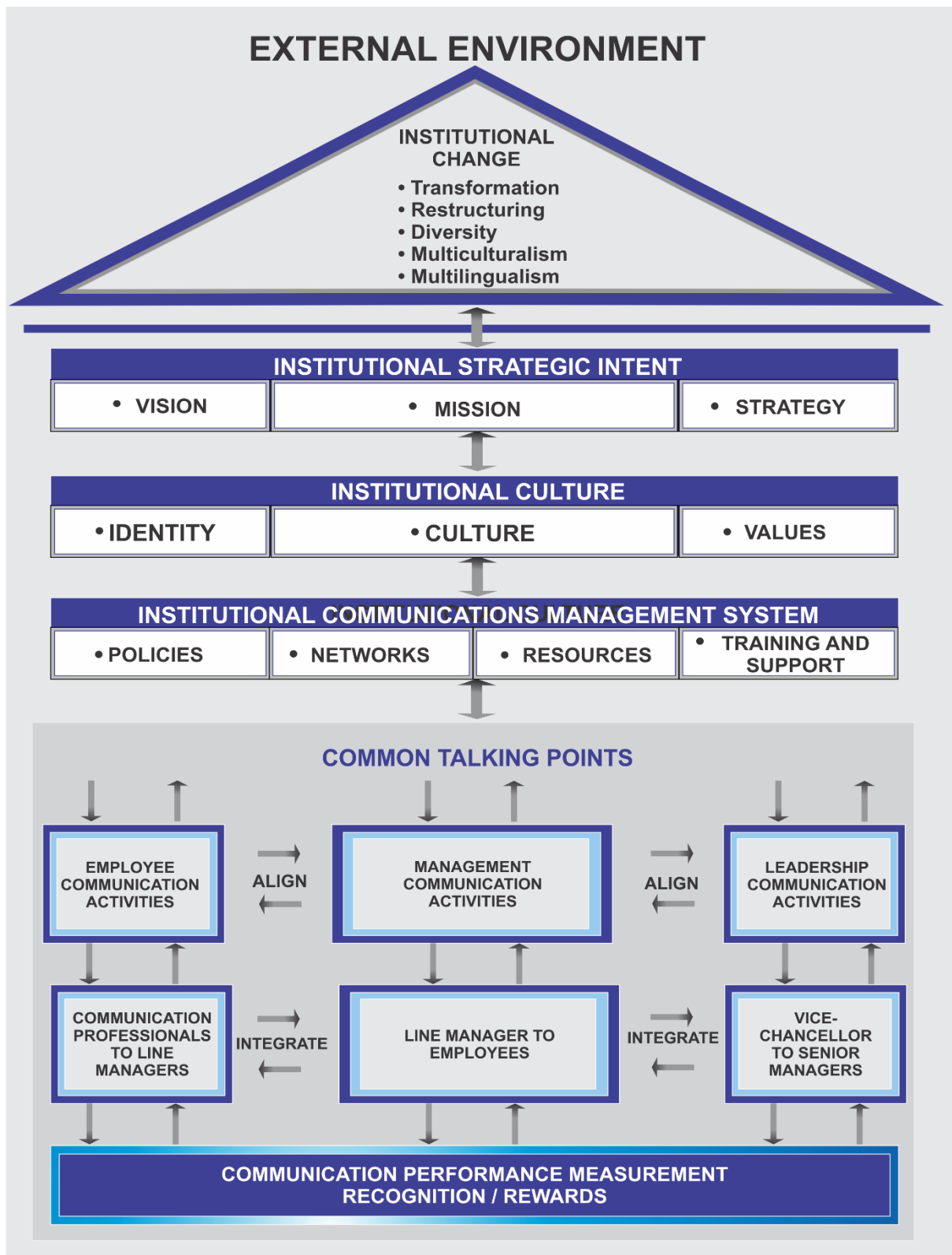


Figure 2-2: An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university

Regular measurement of the line managers' communication performance is a key success factor in establishing accountability for effective communication with employees. Considering the rationale and the seven elements of Building Block 1, it is appropriate to attest to the assertion made that the execution of effective employee communication has shifted towards one of integrated communication activities with blurred boundaries between the three main spheres of employee, management and leadership communications.

Therefore, in order to implement and practice employee communication in a more integrated and effective way, various communication scholars maintain that there is a necessary, interdependent and mutually reinforcing relation between the three main spheres of employee communication, management communication (specifically the interpersonal communication process between a line manager and subordinates) and leadership communication (cf. Davis & Company, 2005; Thatcher, 2007; Thatcher, 2005; Quirke, 2008; Caldeira, 2009; Adler, 2011; Meyer, 2013; Whitworth, 2014a; Whitworth, 2014b).

This mutually reinforcing relationship between the three spheres of organisational communication necessitates an integrated and strategic communications management approach within the transformed universities that supports the consistent and effective execution of the specific communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Moreover, this integrated approach signals a significant paradigm shift from managing the three spheres of organisational communication in silos towards applying a more multi-domain perspective that links the domains of employee, management and leadership communications.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Theoretical perspectives regarding best practice requirements for effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment uncover six prerequisites underpinning current best practice. Furthermore, best practice suggests seven assumptions of an optimal employee communication capability. These assumptions are crucial in facilitating the accountable execution, efficient management and continuous improvement of an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication function within transformed universities.

Based on the insight gained regarding current best practice, a critical first step towards conceptualising a framework for IIEC is addressed by proposing the rationale and seven elements of Building Block 1. In essence, the seven elements, that is: (1) institutional strategic intent; (2) institutional culture; (3) institutional communications management

system; (4) common talking points; (5) communication activities; (6) effective line manager-to-employee communication; and (7) communication performance measurement outline the initial best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

Building Block 1 suggests that transformed universities must cultivate an enabling environment that integrates the accountabilities of the professional communicator in the employee communication sphere, the line managers in the management communication sphere and the leaders in the leadership communication sphere. This integrated approach constitutes an intersection between employee communication and management communication that is aligned to best practice of effective and strategic employee communication. Additionally, this approach implies one of the most significant advancements in employee communication in transformed universities in recent years.

Through comprehending and adopting an integrated approach, universities will begin to endeavour to foster a culture of open and continuous communication and contribute towards positioning line management communication as a strategic imperative and an integral part of an integrated and effective employee communication approach in transformed universities such as the NWU, UJ or TUT. The next chapter considers the specific communication role of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment in more detail. This lays a basis for proposing the rationale and the elements of the subsequent building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC.

CHAPTER 3:

THE COMMUNICATION ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS IN EXECUTING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 proposes the rationale and the elements of “Building Block 1: An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university”. The essence of the rationale of Building Block 1 explains that universities must cultivate an enabling environment that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a managerial accountability (discussed in Chapter 2, sections 2.2.1.7 and 2.3.2).

The emphasis of the next building block is on the dimensions of line management communication, mainly the interpersonal dimension of the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. The reason for placing an emphasis on this communication role is that it is central to the specific focus of research objectives 1.5.2.1 and 1.5.2.2 (stated in Chapter 1, section 1.5).

The particular focus on the communication role of line managers as conceptualised by D’Aprix’s (1996) manager’s communication model necessitates an examination based on theoretical perspectives to consider the reliability of the model when used and applied in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual work environment such as the NWU, UJ or TUT. This insight is required to contribute towards the general objective of the study (see Chapter 1, section 1.5.1).

This chapter has three related purposes. First, it outlines the dimensions of line management communication by means of segmenting line managers in the university workplace. Then, the key limitations of the manager’s communication model and the assumptions of effective communication for the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment are discussed. Second, the communication role of line managers is examined through the LMX theory of effective communication. Furthermore, a theoretical assumption of the interpersonal dimension of line management communication is submitted. Third, the aforementioned sections lay the groundwork to propose the rationale and the elements of Building Block 2.

3.2 THE DIMENSIONS OF LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

3.2.1 Segmenting line managers in the university workplace

Managers are typically classified into two categories. The first category classifies managers as either top, middle or first-line managers. Secondly, managers are identified by the functional or specialist area of management for which they are responsible. As a result of this, managers usually come packaged in a variety of titles (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Daft, 1983; D'Aprix, 1984; Bennett, 1989; Robbins, 1997; Robbins, 2003; Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Robbins & Timothy, 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

The lines that draw the noticeable distinction between the top, middle and first-line categories of management are becoming increasingly blurred as a result of “institutional transformation, the rapid changes of the twenty-first century workplace and the changing organisational form that is becoming flat, flexible and more networked” (Lancaster, 1995a; Lancaster, 1995b; Okoro & Washington, 2012; Zeleza & Olukoshi, 2004). It is probably problematic to utilise the abovementioned typical categories of management in an attempt to identify the appropriate line management levels and to select the line managers pertinent to this study within the university workplace.

With the above understanding, the stakeholder approach is suggested as an alternative approach that could be applicable and more relevant to utilise in the higher education setting of this study. Internal communication scholars Welch and Jackson (2007) investigated a stakeholder approach to internal communication and subsequently applied stakeholder theory to internal communication. The scholars interpret the meaning of a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives”. The researchers use organisational structural levels to identify broad organisation stakeholder groups. The stakeholder approach resulted in the identification of the following five stakeholder groups at different levels in organisations: (1) employees; (2) strategic management; (3) day-to-day management; (4) work teams; and (5) project teams (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183).

Taken together, the stakeholder groups, organisational level and participants suggest the following four interrelated dimensions of internal communication: (1) internal line management communication; (2) internal team peer communication; (3) internal project peer communication; and (4) internal corporate communication. The researchers apply these interrelated dimensions of internal communication to aspects of internal communication management. This results in an internal communication matrix depicted in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Internal communication matrix

Dimension	Level	Direction	Participants	Content
1. Internal line management communication	Line managers / supervisors	Predominantly two-way	Line managers-employees	Employees' roles, appraisal discussions, team briefings
2. Internal team peer communication	Team colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Team information, team task discussions
3. Internal project peer communication	Project group colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Project information, project issues
4. Internal corporate communication	Strategic managers / top management	Predominantly one-way	Strategic managers-all employees	Organisational / corporate issues, goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements.

Source: Welch and Jackson (2007:185).

Notwithstanding the interrelated nature of the four dimensions of internal communication mentioned in Table 3-1, the focus of this study is specifically on the dimension of internal line management communication. This dimension comprises managers, supervisors or directors as an audience in their own right, or as Hunt (2005:24) states, as an important agent in the delivery of communication to employees.

Employment status within a typical university places administrative, professional, and support staff on one side in a support section, and faculty staff on the other side in a academic section as confirmed by Hall *et al.* (2010). Therefore, the pertinent levels of line managers within a university setting such as the NWU, UJ or TUT can be identified in both the support and academic sections of a university. The identified levels of the relevant line managers are listed in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2: Levels of line managers who fulfil strategic alignment in a university

Support section	Academic section
Executive Director	Executive Dean
Registrar	School Director or Head of Department
Dean of Students	Research Director
Chief Director, Senior Director or Director	
Manager or Head	

In the university workplace, a line manager refers to a manager or director who fulfils the specific responsibility of managing employees' KPAs that contribute towards attaining institutional objectives and goals. In fulfilling this managerial responsibility, line managers also deliberately contribute towards facilitating and achieving strategic alignment.

The two situations with the highest impact on fulfilling strategic alignment where the managers' ability to communicate effectively is most critical are: (1) day-to-day operational communication with subordinates; and (2) a strategic conversation to facilitate strategic alignment between subordinates' efforts and strategic objectives and goals (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Puth, 2002; Fielding, 2006; Gay & D'Aprix, 2006; Caldeira, 2009; Adler, 2011; G3 Business Solutions, 2011; Meyer, 2013; Grossman & Jensen, 2014).

A strategic conversation implies "a conversation aimed at imparting an organisation's vision, mission and strategic intent with subordinates in order to encourage strategic alignment." An additional objective of a strategic conversation is to create a fit between the strategy (what employees want to achieve) and the culture (the way employees do things), something that is necessary for implementation (strategy execution) (G3 Business Solutions, 2011:2).

Accordingly, the focus of this study is mainly on day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation initiated by a line manager in a department within an academic or support section of a university. The main objective of the communication between a line manager and his or her subordinate in these two situations is threefold:

- to create a shared understanding of a university's strategy;
- to motivate employees to align with a university's strategy and to build trust; and

- to convey day-to-day work instructions or assignments and provide feedback.

The intention of delineating the above line managers is not to deliberately exclude or to reduce the role of other managers as far as strategic alignment is concerned. The integration and coordination of the work of employees by line managers at the other organisational levels such as strategic management, work teams and project teams are equally important in the strategic alignment process. Nevertheless, the day-to-day line management level has a very critical role to play in terms of directing, changing and controlling the behaviour of employees to be consistent with the strategic goals and objectives set by a university.

To guide the communication practices and tasks that line managers must manifest during day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation with subordinates, the manager's communication model conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) proves useful. For this reason, the manager's communication model is used as a prototype to clarify the fundamental tasks aimed at fulfilling strategic alignment through communicating effectively with subordinates. The ensuing discussion aims to list the features of the manager's communication model followed by a discussion based on a theoretical examination of the reliability of the manager's communication model when applied in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual situation. In addition, the key limitations of the model and challenges confronting line managers when attempting to fulfil the specific tasks of the model are elucidated.

3.2.2 The manager's communication model

The model illustrated in Figure 3-1 identifies six steps or tasks as essential elements of aligning employees' effort to an organisation's strategy through effective two-way communication. Line managers should essentially inform employees of the following six key aspects in the manager's communication model: (1) job responsibilities; (2) performance feedback; (3) individual needs; (4) department objectives and results, (5) vision, mission and strategy; (6) engagement. D'Aprix (1996) asserts that the objective of this model is to guide the behaviour that line managers must manifest to motivate employees to become involved and to contribute to an organisation's objectives and goals through effective two-way communication.

However, an examination based on theoretical and empirical facts (cf. Barry & Crant, 2000; Puth, 2000; IABC Research Foundation, 2001; Walters, 2005; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Gagnon *et al.*, 2008; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2009; Mmope, 2010b; D'Aprix, 2011; Gabriel, 2012; Richardson & Taylor, 2012; Clampitt, 2013; Dasgupta, Suar & Singh, 2013;

Mogorosi, 2013; The Skillsportal, 2013; Verhoef, 2013), regarding the effect of two-way communication on the implementation of the specific tasks of the model brought some challenges and limitations to light. The key limitations are elucidated next.



Source: D'Aprix (1996:98).

Figure 3-1: The manager's communication model

3.2.2.1 The limitations of the manager's communication model

First, literature and empirical evidence suggest effective two-way communication as a prerequisite to align employees' effort to an organisation's strategy through performing the six tasks of the model (Berger, 1987; Berger, 2008; Blankson, 2011; Bisel, Messersmith & Kelley, 2012). This suggestion of aligning employees' effort through effective two-way communication is a somewhat simplistic and idealistic view of the appropriate communication competence supporting the effective and consistent application of the manager's communication model in a heterogeneous and multilingual situation involving a line manager and subordinates from differing cultural backgrounds.

A fundamental argument to substantiate the above statement is that the nature of the six tasks of the model is multidimensional and should be practiced systematically in order to

reach the ultimate goal of engagement. The idea of “multidimensional” implies that in addition to creating a shared understanding of a university’s strategy, motivating subordinates to align with a strategy and building trust, conveying day-to-day work instructions or assignments and providing feedback through effective two-way communication, the communication role of line managers entails supplementary competencies. The supplementary areas of competencies referred to include skills such as coaching and advising, counselling, and directing and controlling behaviours of subordinates.

Given the fact that this communication role is multidimensional and by implication it entails varied areas of communication competencies, it is probably ambiguous and misleading to base the accomplishment of the tasks of the model only on effective two-way communication. Instead, the effective and consistent implementation of the specific tasks of the model require a combination of pertinent communication skills such as interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence. Considering that the communication skills of line managers are critical and at the same time these skills are found to be lacking amongst most academic and support line managers, this creates a serious challenge for fulfilling this crucial communication function within transformed universities.

A second key limitation of D’Aprix’s model that is found to be particularly worrisome stems from the fact that its documented success is hypothetically defied when linked to an intercultural interaction, similar to the interactions found in multicultural and multilingual universities. In literature, the situation that frames the application of the manager’s communication model is approached from a premise that it is homogenous, seldom accounting for the inherent barriers found in heterogeneous interactions. Therefore, reported facts regarding the successful execution of the model based on a homogeneous interaction are generally not reliable in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual situation.

Also, the model assumes that the communication between a line manager and subordinate is ‘flawless’. In fact, within a multicultural and multilingual workplace challenging interpersonal and intercultural interactions are inevitable. Therefore, there are numerous barriers that act as filters and consequently influence the accomplishment of strategic alignment.

As a result of employees from differing cultural backgrounds at the transformed universities, it may be argued that to apply D’Aprix’s model in a fixed and idealistic approach without considering the underlying barriers inherent in interpersonal and intercultural interactions is

probably problematic for line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment. Also, it has been claimed in literature (cf. Boshoff, 1982; Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Madlock, 2008; Barker & Gower, 2010; Shrivastava, 2012; Grossman & Carr, 2014; Hills, 2014; Ang, 2013) that the prevalence of the underlying barriers may directly or indirectly impact on the two situations with the highest impact on fulfilling strategic alignment elucidated earlier (see section 3.2.1). Therefore, it may be asserted that line managers need to acquire and use well-developed communication skills to communicate effectively, interpersonally and interculturally, and to obviate potential barriers when they align culturally diverse subordinates to a university's strategy. This argument implies that the need for effective line managers who do not only possess effective interpersonal communication skills, but also intercultural communication competence is on the increase in multicultural and multilingual universities.

Fundamentally, the manager's communication model should be adapted, or at the very least, contextualised to maintain its reliability when applied in heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual situations. Likewise, line managers should be able to communicate effectively, understand subordinates' behaviour, resolve conflict and motivate subordinates to be aligned to a university's strategic goals and objectives.

The foregoing discussion draws attention to the fact that in a heterogeneous situation, the prevalence of underlying barriers may have a direct or indirect impact on fulfilling day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation effectively. Within a multicultural work environment, the culturally diverse employees bring about wide differences in traits such as personality, life experience, cultural background, language, values, attitudes and education, and this adds to the challenge of the empirical reliability of D'Aprix's model in such a situation.

Given the wide-ranging differences, it may be appropriate to highlight and describe the predominant barriers that may distort or interfere with an effective communication process between a line manager and a subordinate when enabling strategic alignment. It has been claimed by some scholars (Puth, 2002; Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Shrivastava, 2012) that these barriers provide a context and lens through which a line manager and subordinates interpret meaning and understanding. In addition, it is maintained that these barriers are likely to cause miscommunication, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and conflict if they are not managed appropriately.

Therefore, it remains the responsibility of the line manager as the primary communicator in the context of fulfilling day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation with his or her subordinates to "identify, anticipate, minimize and eliminate the potential

barriers of effective communication” no matter the differences amongst subordinates (Fierbaugh, 2012; Hills, 2014). This assertion, once again, stresses the need and the importance for effective academic and support line managers with effective communication insight and practice capabilities. Since the focus of this discussion is on the interpersonal dimension of the communication role of line managers, attention now shifts to describing the common interpersonal barriers. The barriers related to cultural differences between a line manager and subordinates receive attention in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.1.1).

3.2.2.2 *Interpersonal barriers to effective communication outcomes*

Based on the literature review (cf. Boshoff, 1982; Klaus & Bass, 1982; Level & Galle, 1988; Smeltzer, 1994; Sorrentino & Roney, 2000; Hayes, 2002; Puth, 2002; Robbins, 2003; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; Hunt, 2005; Dobra & Popescu, 2008; Adler, 2011; Fierbaugh, 2012; Shrivasta, 2012; Hills, 2014; Qiao, 2014; King, 2015), the following seven interpersonal barriers that may have a direct or indirect negative impact on achieving effective communication during a formal line manager-subordinate interaction are identified and briefly described.

Much of the focus in discussing the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment takes a line manager-centric view. The following interpersonal barriers to effective communication are identified from both the line manager and subordinate’s point of view, bearing in mind that in an interpersonal interaction aimed at fulfilling strategic alignment it is the line manager who assumes the role of a primary communicator.

- a) **Interpersonal differences:** Different individuals interpret the same communication differently depending on their previous experience and background, personal characteristics and various other differences between the communicator and the receiver. The likelihood of successful communication is far higher when the person who communicates and the person who receives the message are similar in terms of background, language, and understanding and both ensure a similar interpretation of the message. The fewer the interpersonal differences, the stronger the chances of communication success (Could, 1969; Boshoff, 1982; Trenholm & Jensen, 1992; Robbins, 2003; Shrivastava, 2012; Wood, 2013).
- b) **Gender differences:** Men and women communicate differently. Literature suggests that the gender communication differences are so vast that when messages are interpreted through a gendered lens it poses a barrier to achieving communication success. The communication approach of a man remains linear, logical and

sectioned, while woman's expression is a combination of logic and emotion (Madlock, 2008; Shrivastava, 2012; Hills, 2014).

- c) **Source credibility and a lack of trust:** The receiver ascribes a certain level of credibility, trust, confidence and value to the words and actions of the source of a message. A fundamental lack of trust can make effective communication extremely challenging. When employees don't trust their line manager, they are less likely to communicate and share on a completely transparent level. Moreover, the communication that does occur may be judged as suspect and untrustworthy (Boshoff, 1982; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hills, 2014; Grossman & Carr, 2014; Ang, 2015).
- d) **Time pressures:** Due to a lack of time, line managers often do not transmit information at all or they transmit information only partially. Line managers need to understand effective communication as a way to enable the work process rather than as an activity that they perform if they have the time and if it matches their style (Could, 1969; Boshoff, 1982; D'Aprix, 1996; Grossman & Carr, 2014; Whitworth, 2014).
- e) **Emotions and attitudes:** The way line managers convey information to their staff has consequences for the attitudes they develop towards the organisation. On the other hand, managers should take an interest in their employees' emotions and attitudes because they give warning of potential problems. Emotional barriers are directly linked to the emotions of either the communicator or the receiver. The emotional barrier consists of various emotions like hatred, mistrust and fear. Employees can have thousands of attitudes, but managers should be interested in attitudes that are job-related. The three most relevant of these attitudes are job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational commitment (Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Shrivastava, 2012; Dasgupta *et al.*, 2013; Hills, 2014).
- f) **Selective listening:** Communication is often selective. The communicator specifically transmits only a part of what he or she knows or what they think their superior wants to hear, therefore distorting communication. Receivers also tend to block out or to distort information contained in a message, especially when the contents of a message is in conflict with their own beliefs. Communicators may do likewise with feedback (Boshoff, 1982; Robbins, 2003; Grossman & Carr, 2014).

- g) Noise:** Noise barriers are external factors that can create complexity, difficulty and interruptions in the flow of communication. There are many examples of noise that could be present in an environment. The noise barriers pertinent to interpersonal communication include environmental, physiological, psychological, cultural and semantic noises. Line managers need to be sensitive to potential noise barriers and should be able to prevent these barriers from interfering with effective communication (Puth, 2002; Dobra & Popescu, 2008; Shrivastava, 2012).

The preceding discussion sets out to examine the reliability of the manager's communication model primarily based on theoretical perspectives. The examination uncovers certain limitations, challenges and potential interpersonal barriers that may become dominant and have certain influences on an interpersonal line manager-subordinate interaction. These influences may have an impact on the effective and consistent execution of the manager's communication model by academic and support line managers. More importantly, the limitations of D'Aprix's model as recognised from a heterogeneous situation attest to the assertion made that the reliability of the model is challenged when applied in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual situation. From the foregoing discussion, the following prerequisites that can contribute to maintaining the reliability of the model when applied in a multicultural and multilingual setting are understood:

- an understanding and application of the six tasks of a manager's communication role;
- conducting day-to-day operational communication with subordinates;
- having a strategic conversation to facilitate alignment between subordinates' efforts and strategic objectives and goals;
- effective and appropriate communicator competence, in particular, interpersonal communication competence.

In addition to the abovementioned prerequisites, two assumptions of effective communication for the communication role of line managers are identified in literature. The assumptions are elucidated next.

3.2.2.3 Assumptions of effective communication for the communication role of line managers

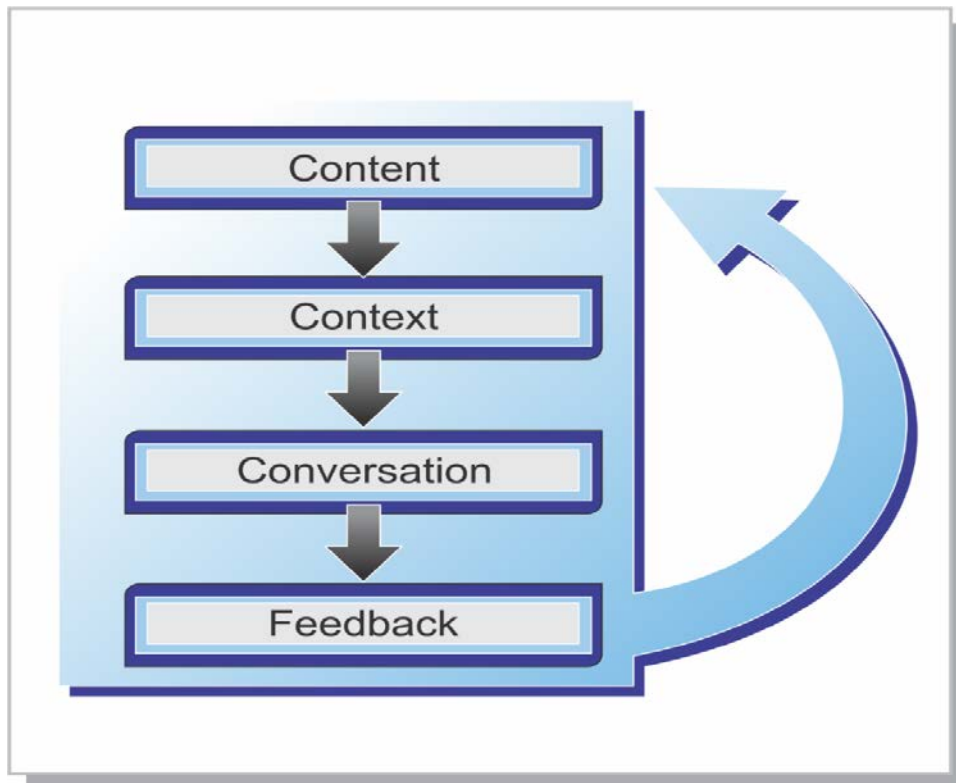
The following assumptions of effective communication signify the main supplemental competencies underpinning the effective and consistent implementation of the manager's communication model by academic and support line managers in a culturally diverse university environment.

3.2.2.3.1 The four-step process of conversation

The pivotal assumption of effective communication as it relates to practicing the six tasks of the manager's communication model is a four-step process of conversation suggested by communication experts (cf. Thatcher, 2005; Quirke, 2008; Caldeira, 2009; Whitworth, 2014; O'Murchu, 2014). According to these experts, in order to fulfil the managerial responsibility of communicating effectively through everyday face-to-face operational communication and through a strategic conversation with subordinates, line managers should possess and demonstrate the following four competencies:

- **Providing content:** Line managers should provide employees with clear messages in plain language, presented in a familiar and recognisable format, with the intended meaning clearly highlighted.
- **Creating context:** Line managers should have the context themselves to put information in context for employees.
- **Having a conversation:** Line managers should acquire the appropriate skills to prepare information and engage in a conversation with employees to create clear understanding.
- **Gathering feedback:** Line managers should provide upward channels for response, to test understanding and as a means of continuing the conversation and providing input to the next round of communication.

All four steps are needed and each is a vital link in the chain of effective communication as illustrated in Figure 3-2.



Source: Quirke (2008:177).

Figure 3-2: Four-step process of conversation

The four-step process of conversation emphasises two elements pertinent to line manager-subordinate interaction, that is: (1) *What to communicate* (content and context); and (2) *How to communicate* (conversation and feedback). In an interpersonal line manager-subordinate communication process, managers should be more concerned about “*How to communicate*” (Bambacas & Patrickson, 2009; Adler, 2011; Geertshuis, Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2015). This places an emphasis on the behaviour, motivation and relational aspects of the interpersonal communication process. For this reason, a greater understanding of relationship quality between a line manager and subordinates is necessary and accordingly it receives attention in section 3.3.

The second assumption identified focuses on guidelines for behaviours that can help line managers communicate more effectively and appropriately in an interpersonal interaction with subordinates.

3.2.2.3.2 Guidelines for interpersonal communication competence

Interpersonal communication competence refers to the ability to communicate in ways that are effective and appropriate. It is vital to understand that even though communication unavoidably takes place between a line manager and his or her subordinates, not all communication that takes place is effective.

Accordingly, in the context of this study the competent communicator is viewed as one who manages an encounter so that mutual understanding, transfer of meaning and functioning relationships with subordinates are achieved. The elements of communication competence comprise knowledge, motivation, behaviour and effectiveness related to the process of communication (Richmond & McCroskey, 1989; Penley, Alexander, Jernigan & Henwood, 1991; Burton & Dimpleby, 1995; Wood, 2004; Wood, 2010; Garrett, 2011; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Madlock, 2008; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2009; G3 Business Solutions; 2011; Hynes, 2012; Dasgupta *et al.*, 2013; Dziak, 2015).

The following five guidelines suggest the fundamental elements of effective interpersonal communication competence for line managers (Wood, 2004; Wood, 2010).

- **Guideline 1 - develop a range of skills:** Managers should be flexible and learn a range of communicative abilities. No one style of communication is best in all circumstances, with all people, or for pursuing all goals.
- **Guideline 2 - adapt communication appropriately:** Managers should consider the personal goals and context of the people with whom he or she communicates and appropriately adapt communication.
- **Guideline 3 - engage in dual perspective:** Dual perspective is understanding both your own and another person's perspective, beliefs, thoughts, or feelings. Managers must have an ability to engage in a dual perspective in order to understand how someone else thinks and feels about issues.
- **Guideline 4 - monitor your communication:** Managers should possess the capacity to observe and regulate their own communication. Monitoring occurs both before and during interaction. A manager's ability to monitor allows him or her to adapt communication in advance and gauge effectiveness as interaction happens.
- **Guideline 5 - commit to effective and ethical interpersonal communication:** This commitment requires a manager to communicate with each subordinate or employee as a unique and valuable person and not to treat employees unequally. It

is also a commitment to an interactive and evolving communication process and a willingness to deal with this complexity.

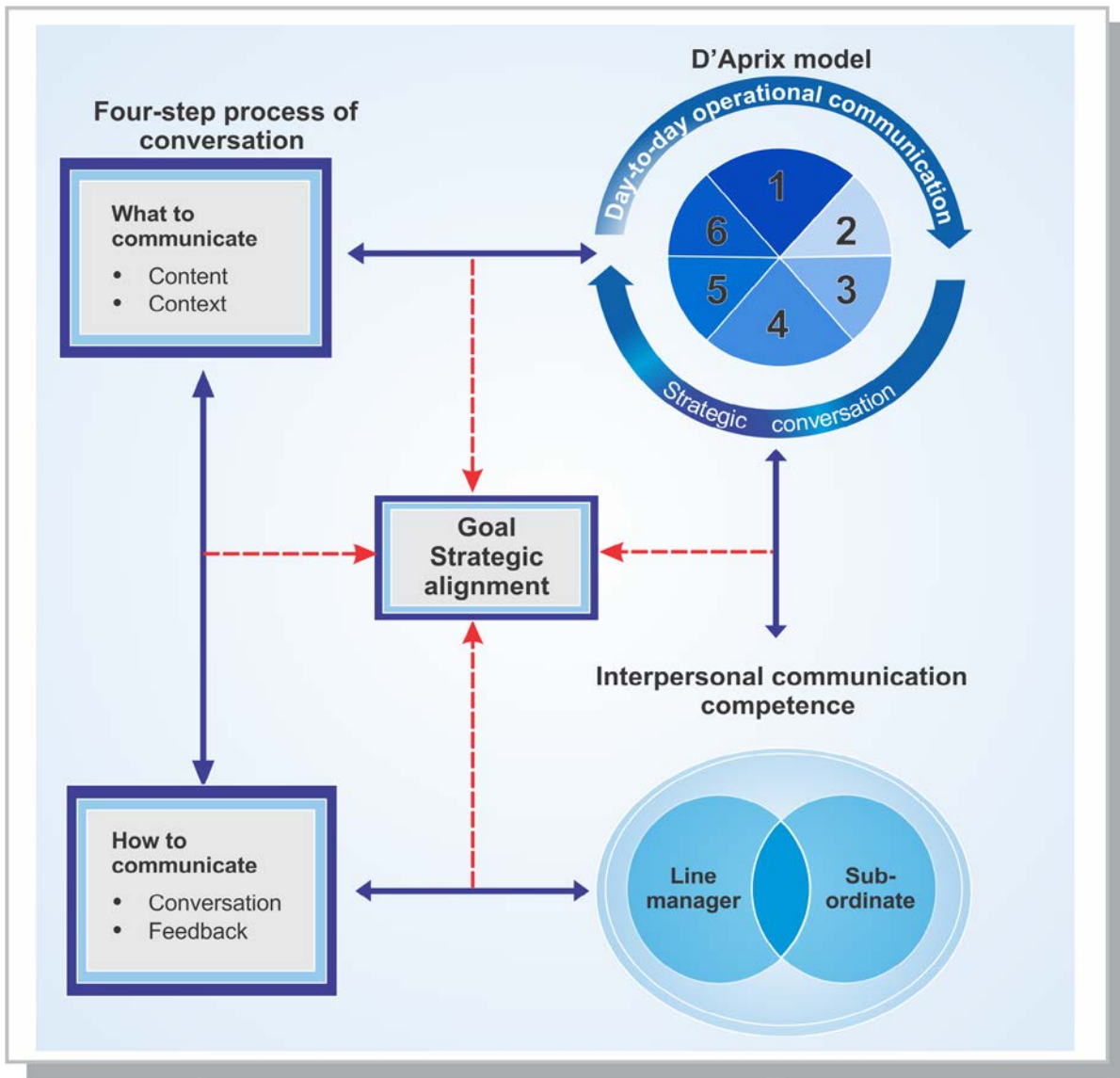
Moreover, appropriate and effective interpersonal communication competence would ultimately create “enabling managers”. The enabling manager refers to those leaders who are primary information sources to their subordinates and facilitate perceived alignment between their subordinates’ work contributions and organisational goals and outcomes (D’Aprix’s, 1996; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Madlock, 2008; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2009).

The above elucidation emphasises the following fundamental assumptions in relation to effective communication for the communication role of line managers.

- **ASSUMPTION 1:** Interpersonal communication competence comprises elements of knowledge, motivation, behaviour and effectiveness related to the process of communication.
- **ASSUMPTION 2:** Line managers should possess elements of interpersonal communication competence and demonstrate appropriate interpersonal competence in order to provide content, create context, have conversations, and gather feedback in a manner that achieves effective communication outcomes.

3.2.2.4 Summary of assumptions for the communication role of line managers

Based on an examination of D’Aprix’s model, the description of interpersonal barriers and the elucidation of prerequisites pertinent to executing the manager’s communication model effectively, the combined supplemental assumptions underpinning the effective and consistent implementation of the communication role of line managers are illustrated in Figure 3-3. These assumptions are named *the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication*. Elucidating these assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication forms the basis to propose the rationale and the elements of Building Block 2 of a conceptual framework for IIEC.



Source: Adapted from D'Aprix (1996); Quirke (2008); Wood (2010).

Figure 3-3: The assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication

Figure 3-3 illustrates that in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual situation the six specific tasks of the manager's communication model should be included as part of fulfilling day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation. A line manager must be equipped with interpersonal communication competence to effectively provide content, create context, have conversations and gather feedback among subordinates. Linked together and practiced simultaneously in an integrated manner, these assumptions will facilitate the means to fulfil the specific tasks of the manager's communication model in an effective and consistent manner when used and applied in a culturally diverse work

environment such as the NWU, UJ or TUT. In this way, the reliability of executing the manager's communication model effectively and consistently among academic and support line managers in a heterogeneous situation can be upheld. Moreover, the successful integration and practice of these assumptions will enhance the ability of a line manager to accomplish strategic alignment, which is the ultimate goal of the communication role of a line manager.

When integrating the abovementioned assumptions that guide behaviours, it should be borne in mind that the principal interpersonal communication competence sustaining effective communication between a line manager and culturally diverse subordinates must be blended with intercultural communication. The dimension of intercultural communication is explicated in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.1).

An integrated approach as justified above will sustain the reliability of the manager's communication model when applied in a culturally diverse workplace. In addition, such an integrated approach will foster enabling line managers who are primary information sources to their subordinates and who play a pivotal role in the strategic alignment process within universities. Moreover, an integrated approach will clarify central tasks and essential competencies for fulfilling the communication role of line managers effectively and consistently.

The focus of the foregoing discussion is mainly on examining the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment from an effective communication perspective as guided by the manager's communication model. Attention now shifts to an examination of the communication role of line managers from a relationship perspective using the LMX theory of effective communication. The analysis of the communication role of line managers from a relationship perspective contributes a greater understanding of line manager-subordinate interaction, specifically how relationship quality may affect effective communication outcomes and the realisation of strategic alignment. Additionally, the theoretical analysis contributes to framing theoretical assumptions pertinent to the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication.

3.3 THEORETICAL APPROACH TO EXAMINE THE COMMUNICATION ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS

3.3.1 The Leader-Member Exchange theory of effective communication

The LMX theory provides a consistent framework for this study to analyse the communication role of line managers, specifically how relationship quality may affect effective communication outcomes that enable strategic alignment. Exchanges between supervisors (leaders) and their subordinates (members) are referred to as leader-member exchange. In essence, LMX as a construct is grounded in the conviction that there are differences in the quality of relationships between leaders and their subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 1997; Clemens, Milsom & Cashwell, 2009; Winkler, 2009; Winkler, 2010).

LMX theory is selected on the basis of how well it explains the nature and predicts the consequences of high- and low-quality relationships between leaders and members. The theory purports that dyadic relationships develop and are negotiated over time through a series of exchanges (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997) and that relationships differ in quality (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, & Ferris, 2012; Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski & Chaudhry, 2009). The quality of relationships, and the reciprocal exchanges between them, have been shown to affect important supervisor and subordinate attitudes, behaviour and performance (Fix & Sias, 2006; Ilies, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007; Liden *et al.*, 1997; Liden & Sparrowe, 1997; Barkar & McCann, 2015; Geertshuis, Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2015).

Hypothetically, LMX theory advances the following key theoretical statements:

- The construct of relationship quality is the degree to which mutual trust, respect, and obligation exist within a dyadic relationship between a leader and subordinates.
- The in-group comprises high-quality relationships characterised by a leader who shows high levels of mutual trust, respect, and obligation towards members.
- The out-group contains low-quality relationships characterised by a leader exhibiting low levels of mutual trust, respect, and obligation towards members.

In practice, one well-reported consequence of relationship quality pertinent to the communication role of line managers is that the quantity and quality of communication with subordinates may vary depending on the quality of the relationship between a leader and a member (Ihidero, 2011; Geerthuis, Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2015). According to LMX

theory, subordinates in higher LMX relationships receive better role-related information from their supervisors, including clearly articulated expectations and feedback on performance (Barkar & McCann, 2015; Dulebohn *et al.*, 2012; Geertshuis *et al.*, 2015), which enables them to attune and modify their behaviour and so outperform their lower LMX colleagues. This consequence is of great significance to line manager-subordinate communication in relation to strategic alignment.

The foregoing exposition of key LMX theoretical statements and reported consequence of relationship quality provides a basis for a greater understanding of how relationship quality may affect the communication role of line managers in accomplishing strategic alignment. Fundamentally, it is understood that effective communication outcomes are predictive of enhancing high-quality relationships between leaders (line managers) and members (subordinates).

The following probable consequence in relation to the communication role of line managers can therefore be gathered from the above assertion. A possible consequence of relationship quality is that the realisation of effective communication outcomes may vary depending on the quality of the relationship between a line manager and a subordinate. This purported consequence of relationship quality provides a basis to advance a theoretical assumption of the interpersonal dimension of line management communication, particularly, the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

3.3.2 Theoretical assumption of the interpersonal dimension of line management communication

Assumptions refer to statements that are considered true, even though they have not been scientifically tested. An assumption may be accepted as being true based on logic or reasons, but without proof or verification. An assumption provides a basis to develop theories and research instruments (Patidar, 2015).

Based on this understanding an assumption is submitted in this section to advance a perceived association between interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and accomplishing strategic alignment.

This assumption is based on two fundamental understandings. First, it is understood that the six steps of the manager's communication model conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) necessitate interpersonal communication competence to provide content, create context, have conversations and gather feedback among subordinates through day-to-day

operational communication and a strategic conversation. The outcome of the specific line manager-subordinate communication is to realise effective communication outcomes which enable strategic alignment.

Second, the quantity and quality of communication with subordinates may vary depending on the quality of the relationship between a line manager and a subordinate. Therefore, the perceived interpersonal communication competence of a line manager may directly or indirectly influence the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates.

Based on this fundamental understanding it is assumed that:

- *Interpersonal communication competence leads to effective communication outcomes. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes enhance high-quality relationships. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates.*

The assumption submitted above implies a perceived relationship between the concepts of interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationship and strategic alignment for line management. The supposed link and perceived relationship between these concepts implies that effective interpersonal communication competence enables strategic alignment.

3.4 BUILDING BLOCK 2: THE INTERPERSONAL DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

This section provides the rationale for Building Block 2 first, followed by the proposed elements. The suggested elements determine the fundamental requirements of Building Block 2 of a conceptual framework for IIEC.

3.4.1 The rationale for Building Block 2

It is presumed that effective line management communication can only begin to play a strategic and pivotal role in motivating employees to align with a university's strategy once a holistic organisational management approach that integrates the accountabilities of professional communicators, line managers and the leadership exists as reasoned in Building Block 1 (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.1).

Once such a holistic approach exists, it will be possible to embed line management communication as a central element in the strategic alignment process within universities. Furthermore, this improvement will assist universities to recognise and advocate the principal communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment as a strategic priority and a managerial accountability.

To embed the communication role of line managers as central in the strategic alignment process, academic and support line managers must strive to fulfil this role in an effective and consistent manner. To realise this daunting objective, the following three essential prerequisites must be fulfilled by line managers as non-negotiable steps in the strategic alignment process:

- contextualising and adopting the manager's communication model as a prototype of performing the six specific tasks as part of day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation;
- communicator competence for line managers, in particular, interpersonal communication competence to interact effectively and appropriately with subordinates through the four-step process of conversation; and
- an integrated approach combining the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication in the strategic alignment process.

In fulfilling these steps, the following benefits will enrich line management communication and employee communication approaches that will reinforce strategic alignment at the transformed universities:

- a common basis for universities to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment. This will help to encourage line managers to approach communication practices and behaviours in a more consistent, aligned and effective manner;
- a shared understanding of the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication. This will make line managers aware of the need to constantly gauge their level of interpersonal communication knowledge, motivation, skills, behaviour and to make necessary adjustments; and
- clarification of the communication tasks of line managers and a shared understanding of supplementary communication competencies to fulfil the line

managers' communication role adequately and accordingly achieve effective communication outcomes and strategic alignment.

In the absence of an integrated approach linking the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication as a non-negotiable step in the strategic alignment process, line managers find it difficult to apply their communication role to influence and direct the behaviour of their subordinates to work willingly to pursue the goals of a university. At an institutional level, this implies that universities will continue to experience difficulty in its attempt to alleviate line management communication as a strategic priority and a core managerial accountability. For this reason, interpersonal communication competence for line management is arguably the most critical form of communication that needs to be understood, embraced and practiced effectively and consistently by academic and support line managers.

3.4.2 Summary of most important elements of the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication

Figure 3-4 illustrates the progression from Building Block 1 to Building Block 2. The illustration depicts the logical coalesce of Building Block 1 recommended in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2-2 in section 2.3.2) with the four subsequent elements of Building Block 2. In Figure 3-4 emphasis is placed on the interpersonal dimension of the communication role of line managers. The figure also highlights the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication that form an integral part of an effective and consistent line management approach. This illustration is submitted as an attempt to create a basis for conceptualising a framework that is built on sound and scientific line management communication perspectives.

Figure 3-4 illustrates the following four elements of Building Block 2. These elements are preliminary ideas and not the final conceptual framework for IIEC.

- **Element 1: Interpersonal communication competence**

Interpersonal communication competence comprises elements of knowledge, motivation, behaviour and effectiveness to communicate effectively and appropriately in a formal dyadic setting. Line managers must know how to apply these elements effectively and appropriately to fulfil the six tasks of the manager's communication role through day-to-day operational communication, a strategic conversation and the four-step process of conversation. The principal interpersonal

communication competence must be blended with intercultural communication competence to enable a line manager to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. The end goal of effective interpersonal communication competence, specifically with regard to the communication role of a line manager, is to accomplish strategic alignment.

- **Element 2: High-quality relationship outcomes**

A key measure of effective interpersonal communication competence by a line manager is the extent to which there are high-quality relationships between a line manager and his or her subordinates. High-quality relationships are characterised by high levels of mutual trust, respect and obligation between the line manager and subordinates. In the event of interpersonal communication incompetence, there will be low-quality relationships characterised by distrust, disrespect and no reciprocation. Distrust between a line manager and subordinates can serve only to increase the improbability of effective communication.

- **Element 3: Effective communication outcomes**

The key outcomes of effective interpersonal communication competence by a line manager include shared understanding, transfer of meaning, motivation and trust. The extent to which there are effective communication outcomes amongst diverse subordinates correlates with the effectiveness of a line manager's interpersonal communication competence. The line manager's inability to obviate potential barriers to effective communication and interpersonal communication incompetence will lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, demotivation and misalignment among subordinates.

- **Element 4: Enabling manager**

Appropriate and effective interpersonal communication competence ultimately creates enabling managers who are primary information sources to their subordinates and facilitate alignment between their subordinates' work contributions and organisational goals and outcomes. Enabling managers play a pivotal role in the strategic alignment process within universities.

The next chapter identifies and discusses the rationale and the elements of the ultimate building block. Taken together, the elements of the three building blocks will contribute insight to conceptualise a framework for IIEC for line management from the perspective of the transformed South African higher education sector.

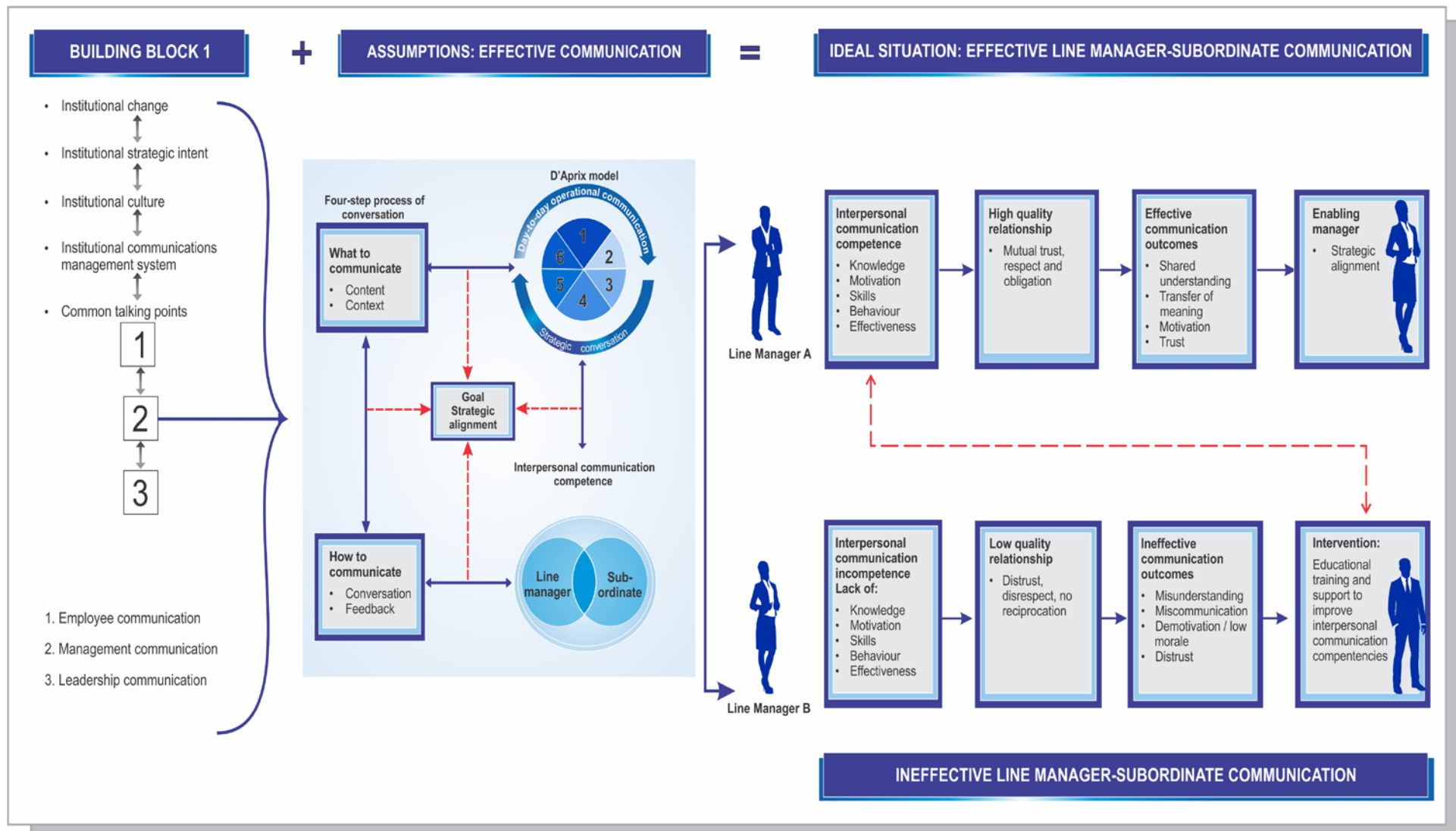


Figure 3-4: Building Block 2: The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter makes theoretical contributions to contextualise and adapt the communication role of line managers as conceptualised by D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model. Essentially, it asserts that the principal interpersonal communication competence enabling a line manager to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates is blended with intercultural communication. It proposes assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication and illustrates an integrated approach to apply these assumptions to the manager's communication model to guide line managers to fulfil this role effectively and consistently. This integrated approach is significant as it fosters enabling line managers who are primary information sources to subordinates and pivotal role-players in the strategic alignment process within universities.

The chapter highlights a perceived relationship between the concepts of interpersonal communication competence, high-quality relationships, effective communication outcomes and strategic alignment. The perceived relationship between these concepts implies that effective interpersonal communication competence enables strategic alignment. This contribution is significant because it points to a theoretical assumption regarding the interpersonal dimension of line management communication.

Based on a theoretical examination of the manager's communication model, the proposed assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication, and the submitted theoretical assumption, the rationale and the four elements of Building Block 2 are proposed. Building Block 2 is a logical progression from Building Block 1 that places an emphasis on line management communication, in particular, the interpersonal dimension of the communication role of line managers.

In essence, Building Block 2 suggests contextualising and adopting the manager's communication model as a prototype to fulfil the communication role of line managers effectively and consistently in the transformed universities. Furthermore, Building Block 2 advocates the principal interpersonal communication competence as a prerequisite to enable strategic alignment. More importantly, it endorses an integrated approach by recommending the combination of the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication as a non-negotiable step in the strategic alignment process.

In the next chapter, the rationale and the elements of Building Block 3 are considered. The ultimate building block forms a basis to motivate and advance the novel concept of IIEC, which is the central notion related to the general objective of the study.

CHAPTER 4:

EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATED INTERCULTURAL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 proposes the rationale and the elements of “Building Block 2: The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication”. A fundamental assertion posited in the preceding chapter is that the principal interpersonal communication competence enabling a line manager to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates is blended with intercultural communication (stated in Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). As a result, this chapter focuses on the intercultural dimension of the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

This discussion is an attempt to address research objective 1.5.2.1 specified as follows in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.2): *To outline the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and to evaluate how prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.*

The specific emphasis on intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes is the central motivation for advancing the probable integration of certain interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management (see Chapter 1, section 1.7). This purported integration is the principal motivation for advancing the novel IIEC concept.

This chapter discusses theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication. Furthermore, intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes are considered. Then, the AUM theory of effective communication is applied to intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction and a theoretical assumption of the intercultural dimension of line management communication is submitted. In the final instance, the chapter proposes the rationale and the elements of Building Block 3. Based on the above, the novel concept of IIEC is motivated and advanced.

4.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

4.2.1 The prevalence of intercultural communication in line manager-subordinate interaction in the university workplace

Whenever cultural inconsistency influences the nature and the effects of communication, it means intercultural communication is at work as recognised in literature. The concept of intercultural communication is understood to imply interacting with a person from another culture and also, a process of interpreting and negotiating meaning (cf. Gamble & Gamble, 1999; Gibson, 2000; Neulip, 2006; Santos & Rozier, 2007; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Livermore, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the terms “intercultural communication” and “intercultural interaction” are used interchangeably. The notion of intercultural communication is closely associated with other concepts such as “culture” (Casmir, 1999; Gamble & Gamble, 1999; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2013); “cultural diversity” (Els & Meyer, 2004; Okoro & Washington, 2012; Bodibe, 2013; McClimens, Brewster & Lewis, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2015) and “cultural competence” or “intercultural competence” (Koester & Lustig, 1993; Tovey, 1997; Hogan-Garcia, 1999; Neulip, 2006; Crowne, 2008; Jiang, 2011; Okoro & Washington, 2012; Mafela, 2013; Oliveira, 2013).

In this study, intercultural communication is approached from a communicator competence perspective with a particular focus on effective communication outcomes, namely shared understanding, transfer of meaning, motivation and trust. More specifically, intercultural interaction refers to an academic or support line manager interpreting and negotiating the meaning of verbal and nonverbal messages during an interaction with a subordinate from a different culture. The ultimate goal of this process is to realise effective communication outcomes, enhance high-quality relationships and ultimately, to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees.

The prevalence of cultural diversity in transformed universities is intensifying the manifestation of intercultural communication. Understandably, intercultural communication is recognised as one of the occurrences that challenges the effective and consistent implementation of the communication role of line managers among line managers (discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.4). Furthermore, as seen earlier on, intercultural barriers may have an influence on the two situations with the highest impact on fulfilling strategic alignment (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1) and similarly, on the achievement of effective communication outcomes (stated in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1). Moreover, multilingual policies, which

recognises the use of more than one official language at some universities, coupled with the increasing demand for interpersonal and intercultural competencies of line managers to enable them to fulfil effective communication with culturally diverse employees, are exacerbating the complexity of this situation (discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.4).

In the setting of transformed universities and interpersonal line manager-subordinate communication, cultural diversity is partially determined by matters of race and ethnicity. Most employees at universities identify themselves according to five broad racial categories: Black; White; Coloured; Indian; and Asian. The Black group is further divided into nine dominant ethnic groups: Zulu; Xhosa; South Sotho; North Sotho; Tswana; Venda; Tsonga; Ndebele and Swazi.

The racial groups can also be divided into language groups. Most of the White and Coloured populations are either Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking. Among the Black population, the diverse ethnic groups divide into nine indigenous language groups, which is why South Africa has eleven official languages. However, English and Afrikaans are chiefly recognised as the academic and business languages of most organisations, including universities (cf. Mbigi & Maree, 1995; Mbigi, 1997; Jackson, 1999; Lesch, 1999; Barnett & Lee, 2002; Morosini & Steger, 2003; Finestone & Synman, 2005; Locke, 2007; Sherif Trask & Hamon, 2007; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Mafela, 2013; Martin, Nakayama, van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, & Schutte, 2013; Mothobi, 2013; Verhoef, 2013; Singh & Chowdhry, 2014).

The cultural differences between employees from different racial and ethnic groups increases the importance of intercultural communication. This factor poses challenges for the interpersonal line manager-subordinate interaction, which is central to the communication role of line managers explicated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.2.1). Literature attests that managers at all levels will increasingly find themselves interacting face-to-face with and managing culturally diverse employees (cf. Van Rooyen, 2000; Amuenje, 2003; Liu, Chua & Stahl, 2010; Livermore, 2010; Coleman, 2011; Okoro & Washington, 2012; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Mafela, 2013; Molinsky, 2013; Guo, Cockburn-Wootten & Munshi, 2014; Singh & Chowdhry, 2014).

Maxwell (2013:83) concurs and argues further on the basis of the complexity of intercultural interaction. The author claims that as humans experience more intercultural contact, the instances of disjuncture, in other words moments when interacting people are governed by different sets of rules, will become ever more common. This assertion is certainly already a daily reality for most line managers working with culturally diverse employees in transformed universities. This increases the need for effective line managers who do not only possess

effective interpersonal communication skills, but also intercultural communication competence to obviate potential barriers and interact appropriately when aligning culturally diverse subordinates to a university's strategy (stated in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1).

The above elucidation establishes that the varied cultures that are prevalent within the transformed university workplace have systems of meaning unique to themselves. Depending on how much these cultures differ, a line manager and a subordinate from different cultures can find it very difficult to share meaning, and this might lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, misinterpretation or conflict when interacting. In addition, this may lead to alienation or an inability to develop trust and rapport, thus making it difficult, if not impossible to accomplish strategic alignment (cf. Phillipson, 1990; Gudykunst, 2005d; Chen & Starosta, 2004; Neulip, 2006; Santos & Rozier, 2007; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Gore, 2013; Martin *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, it stands to reason that in a conversation between a line manager and a subordinate from a different linguistic and cultural background the degree of shared meaning is likely to be limited because of cultural variations in verbal and nonverbal messages. A fundamental assumption regarding intercultural communication, as noted by Neuliep (2006:32) and Samovar *et al.* (2010:12), is that the cultural perceptions and nonverbal signs are distinct enough to alter the meaning between the communicator and recipient during intercultural communication. What is important to understand, as pointed out by Mafela (2013), is that when interacting line managers and subordinates belong to different cultural backgrounds, a line manager has to consider the role culture plays in shaping communication for them to understand each other. One of the ways in which a line manager can consider the role of culture is through taking cognisance of potential intercultural barriers and developing competencies to be able to obviate potential intercultural barriers as they unfold during an interaction.

A view of the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment that does not include the role that culture plays specifically through potential intercultural barriers will yield an incomplete picture of the phenomena under study. The main reasons for considering intercultural barriers are stated in Chapter 1 (sections 1.4 and 1.7) and Chapter 3 (section 3.2.2.1). In an effort to get a complete picture of the phenomena under study and to adequately address the specific objective of this discussion, it is necessary to identify the most prevalent intercultural communication barriers and to consider how these barriers may impact on realising effective communication outcomes. This aspect is discussed next.

4.2.1.1 *Intercultural barriers to effective communication outcomes*

In the preceding chapter the following seven interpersonal barriers, deemed to be among the most common interpersonal barriers that may impact negatively on achieving effective communication outcomes during a formal interpersonal line manager-subordinate interaction, were identified and briefly described (see section 3.2.2.2):

- interpersonal differences
- gender differences
- source credibility and a lack of trust
- time pressures
- emotions and attitudes
- selective listening
- noise

The ensuing discussion focuses on specific barriers to effective communication outcomes pertinent to intercultural communication, and by extension cultural diversity. The potential intercultural barriers that may come into play in an interpersonal interaction between a line manager and subordinates from different cultural backgrounds has been recognised (see Chapter 1, section 1.4 and Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1).

Accordingly, several additional barriers that come from cultural differences between a line manager and a subordinate are identified in literature. These additional barriers may also have a direct or indirect impact on achieving effective communication outcomes and subsequently on fulfilling strategic alignment. It is important to point out that the identified intercultural barriers can be problematic for an effective communicator with interpersonal communication competence because they bring about a multitude of contributing factors that can cause uncertainty and anxiety. Therefore, in an intercultural interaction, it is important for a line manager as the primary communicator to understand the nature and origins of intercultural barriers. These may cause high levels of anxiety and uncertainty that are likely to result in misinterpretation, misunderstanding and miscommunication.

There is a specific focus on the intercultural communication barriers that may have an impact on effective communication outcomes. This focus is based on the premise that an integrated approach that combines both interpersonal communication competence and intercultural

communication competence in facilitating effective communication outcomes among culturally diverse subordinates is paramount. Similarly, an integrated approach towards interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies reinforces effective line management communication in as far as strategic alignment is concerned.

Using the interpersonal communication process between a line manager and a subordinate during day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation, the intercultural barriers identified in addition to interpersonal barriers are depicted in Figure 4-1. Collectively, the interpersonal and intercultural barriers represent the most substantial and challenging barriers to realising effective communication outcomes and accomplishing strategic alignment. Each of these barriers can manifest in varying degrees depending on the degree of cultural inconsistency between a line manager and a subordinate. The specific intercultural communication barriers are discussed next.

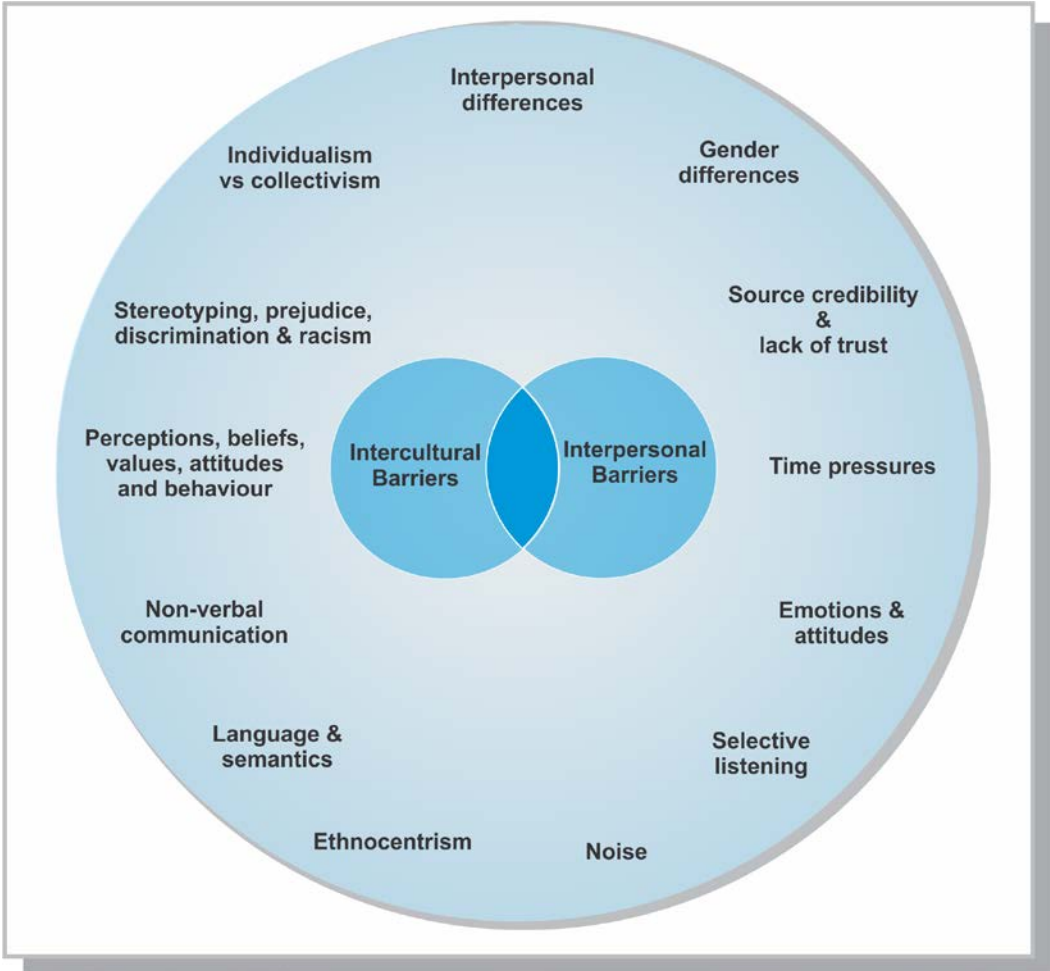


Figure 4-1: Interpersonal and intercultural barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes

- a) **Ethnocentrism:** *Ethnocentrism* is the belief that one's own cultural group, usually equated with nationality or ethnicity, is superior to all other cultural groups. The more ethnocentric a person is, the greater the person's tendency to view other cultures as inferior. When line managers measure all cultures in relation to their own cultural group and then perceive their culture to be the most powerful one, and even believe that their values and beliefs should be adopted by other cultures, ethnocentrism becomes a barrier. One of the major interpersonal consequences of ethnocentrism is anxiety. The more ethnocentric a line manager is, the more uncertain or anxious they feel about interacting with subordinates from other cultures, especially if that culture is relatively unknown to them. Also, this anxiety can impede effective intercultural communication. There can be serious consequences if line managers engage in negative ethnocentrism at the same time as they are trying to practice successful intercultural communication with subordinates (cf. Van der Zee, van Oudenhoven & de Grijjs, 2004; Neuliep, 2006; Wright, 2008; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Neulip, 2012; Fall *et al.*, 2013; Martin *et al.*, 2013). Behaviour that is associated with negative ethnocentrism can result in limited quantity and quality of information, low-quality relationships and perceptions of inculcating favouritism towards subordinates from similar cultural backgrounds, instead of treating all subordinates equally. Such behaviour can be detrimental to the strategic alignment process within multicultural universities.
- b) **Language and semantics:** *Language* is a medium to describe or convey in words what we want to say. Language involves the use of buzz-words, jargons, colloquial expressions, symbols, signs and even pronunciation, which may become barriers if not received in the same context that the sender had in mind while establishing communication (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1992; Dobra & Popescu, 2008; Gore, 2013; Mafela, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

Semantics refers to how words communicate the meaning we intend to get across in the communication process. Different interpretations of the same words can distort communication. Differences in culture can lead to different interpretations and semantic problems (Boshoff, 1982; Chen & Starosta, 2004; Mafela, 2013; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Verhoef, 2013; Singh & Chowdhry, 2014). When a line manager and a subordinate from different cultural backgrounds communicate, the words used can mean different things and the same words can be interpreted differently. This can distort communication and consequently thwart any opportunity to realise effective communication outcomes.

The language used by a particular culture has its own set of meanings that often differs from other cultures. Transformed universities have a serious challenge in as far as the issue of language is concerned. The skill of communicating is generally complicated by the fact that employees have varying levels of proficiency in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the 11 official languages. Some universities have adopted more than one official language, but there are employees, both Black and White, who cannot express themselves proficiently in any of the official languages, which may include Afrikaans and English.

Although multilingualism is directly linked to multiculturalism and it is considered an integral aspect of cultural diversity at universities, the multilingual stance adopted by some universities can be detrimental to effective communication outcomes. Language difficulties can easily result in misunderstandings and frustration. Language barriers also influence knowledge sharing because employees are reluctant to share if they cannot understand concepts very well or communicate their opinions clearly (Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Verhoef, 2013).

- c) **Nonverbal communication:** *Nonverbal messages* are mainly expressed through facial expression, postures and gestures. The range of nonverbal communication includes silence, paralanguage (the use of voice or tone), unconscious and conscious body movement, eye contact, touch, gestures, space and distance, clothes and personal appearances and accessories, or cultural views on time. What is proper and correct in one culture may be ineffective or even offensive in another. In line manager-subordinate interaction, a line manager uses body language to convey unspoken messages, but each culture develops specific rules about nonverbal etiquette (Neulip, 2006; Goman, 2008; Kingsley, 2011; Maxwell, 2013).

Separating verbal and nonverbal behaviour into two distinct categories is virtually impossible, therefore effective line managers should take cognisance of the importance of making words and body language congruent and matching communication style to the context of the communication situation when it takes place. When nonverbal messages are in conflict with verbal messages, subordinates may become confused because mixed signals have a negative effect on effective communication outcomes and make it almost impossible to build relationships of trust (Neuliep, 2006; Dobra & Popescu, 2008; Goman, 2008; Samovar *et al.*, 2010).

- d) **Perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour:** *Perception* is described as the process of selecting, arranging and interpreting sensory impressions to make sense of the environment. Culture is one of the perceptual lenses through which information and symbols are interpreted. Differing perceptions are one of the most frequently shared barriers identified in the literature. The perceptions of each individual are different and most of the time communication occurs on the basis of one's perception of an incident, issue, problem, its understanding and the process of seeking a solution for it. It is important for a line manager to realise that what his or her subordinates perceive is often different from objective reality. In other words, people react not to reality, but to what they perceive as reality. The perception barrier can change the whole meaning and sometimes it can alter it to an extent that the source did not intend (Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Shrivastava, 2012; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

Line managers should acknowledge that subordinates may have vastly different *values and beliefs*. Employees' values and beliefs influence their attitude, level of motivation, perception and individual behaviour. Beliefs are usually reflected in actions and communication behaviour. One of the most important functions of beliefs is that they form the basis of values, which provide rules for making choices (Smit & de J Cronje, 2004; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2013).

The receiver (subordinate) attaches a certain value to a message based on factors like the receiver's opinion of the communicator (line manager) and his or her previous experiences with the communicator, cultural orientations and the anticipated meaning of the message. It remains a challenge to negotiate differences in values and beliefs, therefore line managers should pay particular attention to assumptions and biases that may arise while communicating (Level & Galle, 1988; Neulip, 2006; Wright, 2008; Martin *et al.*, 2013).

- e) **Stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and racism:** *Stereotyping* is a complex form of categorisation and generalisation of information and experiences that guide behaviour towards a particular group of people. Cultural stereotyping refers to one culture describing another culture in a fixed way without any evidence of whether they are right or wrong. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. They operate emotionally and often below the level of conscious awareness, making them particularly hard to challenge, change or discard once adopted. The four key reasons why stereotypes hamper intercultural communication are: First, stereotypes

are a kind of filter; they only allow information to enter that is consistent with information already held by the individual. In this way, what might be true is never given a chance. Second, stereotypes assume that all culture-specific information applies to all individuals from a particular group. Third, stereotypes are oversimplified, exaggerated, and overgeneralised, thus preventing effective communication. Finally, stereotypes distort the meaning of a message because they are based on half-truths and often untrue premises and assumptions (Barnett & Meihua, 2002; Neulip, 2006; Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Bratanova & Kashima, 2014; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

Prejudice is a negative attitude towards a cultural group based on little or no experience. Whereas stereotypes tell what a group is like, prejudice tells how we are likely to feel about that group. People hold some prejudices because they help reinforce certain beliefs or values. Prejudice may also arise from a personal need to feel positive about one's own group and negative about others, or from perceived or real threats. Like stereotypes, prejudice, once established, is very difficult to undo (Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2013).

The behaviour that results from stereotyping or prejudice is called discrimination. *Discrimination* may range from very subtle nonverbal to overt verbal insults. Also, discrimination may be interpersonal, collective and/or institutional (Martin *et al.*, 2013).

Ethnocentrism, stereotyping and prejudice in the extreme is perceived as racism (Neulip, 2006; Martin *et al.*, 2013). *Racism* can be categorised as either personal or institutional. Personal racism involves judgments and acts of violence against people from a race other than your own (Samovar *et al.*, 2010). It is particularly important that line managers understand and actively work to eradicate prejudice, discrimination and racism.

f) *Work-related values: Individualism versus collectivism*

In an individualistic culture individual goals are stressed, whereas in a collective culture, group goals are given precedence instead. Individualistic cultures cultivate individual initiative and achievement, while collectivist cultures tend to nurture group influences (Larson & Risberg, 1998; Gamble & Gamble, 1999; Samovar *et al.*, 2010).

A defining characteristic of a line manager with a collectivist culture is their notable concern with relationships. These relationships form a rigid social framework that distinguishes between in-groups and out-groups. People rely on their in-groups to look after them, and in exchange they believe they owe loyalty to the group. Collectivism influences a number of communication variables. In a multicultural setting, collectivism is the ideal work-related value (Rourke & Tujela, 2009; Samovar *et al.*, 2010). In practice, this value translates into a line manager putting great store in treating culturally diverse subordinates equally and fairly, irrespective of their race, ethnicity or cultural orientation.

When the aforementioned intercultural barriers transpire during an intercultural interaction between a line manager and a subordinate, they pose varied and numerous challenges when line managers attempt to create a shared understanding, negotiate the same meaning, and then motivate culturally diverse subordinates and build trust. These challenges can be obviated by applying appropriate intercultural competence in addition to effective interpersonal communication competence.

The foregoing suggestion attests to the assertion made earlier that the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment can no longer be addressed or managed adequately in multicultural and multilingual universities by only applying interpersonal communication competence (see Chapter 1, section 1.4). What is now required is an integrated approach that concentrates on combining both interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies to ensure effective line management communication that can yield effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships between line managers and culturally diverse subordinates.

This argument is supported by Connerly and Pedersen (2005:ix) when they state that: “the very qualities that make someone an effective monocultural leader may make him or her less qualified for a multicultural environment. Multicultural leaders must be context-sensitive”. Mafela (2013) supports the above argument and makes a fundamental statement that contributes much understanding to the foregoing argument. The scholar maintains that in order for people from different racial and ethnic groups to interact successfully, it is imperative to be conversant with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. This implies that over and above interpersonal communication competence, line managers must acquire a competence that includes culturally-oriented means of communicating effectively, verbally and nonverbally, with subordinates from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The preceding sections have discussed the prevalence of intercultural communication and discussed intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes. Of particular relevance to the current study is intercultural communication competence and how it complements interpersonal communication competence to contribute towards realising effective communication outcomes, and by so doing enable strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. This specific subject is outlined next.

4.2.1.2 Intercultural communication competence and effective communication outcomes

Literature differentiates the meaning of “intercultural competence” from “intercultural communication competence”. Intercultural competence refers to the potential outcome of four interdependent components of the intercultural communication encounter: (1) knowledge; (2) motivation; (3) behaviour; and (4) situational features. On the other hand, intercultural communication competence is defined as the degree to which one effectively adapts verbal and nonverbal messages to the appropriate cultural context (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Neulip, 2006; Santos & Rozier, 2007; Arasaratnam & Barnejee, 2011).

Therefore, intercultural communication competence is more concerned with linguistic and behavioural competence. Verbal and nonverbal appropriateness and effectiveness are two specifically important qualities of intercultural communication competence that are considered as key domains of intercultural competence.

This discussion is mainly concerned with intercultural communication competence. However, the relevance and importance of intercultural competence in the context of intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction is accepted as overarching and intertwined with the meaning of intercultural communication competence. In other words, these terms are understood to go hand-in-hand and therefore they cannot be separated.

The theoretical and practical foundations of both intercultural communication competence and intercultural competence highlight the need for individuals to be responsive to cultural differences through acquiring the relevant knowledge, skills and encounters from cultures. Developing intercultural communication competence demands the following three abilities as identified in literature (Chen & Starosta, 2004; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Santos & Rozier, 2007; Arasaratnam & Barnejee, 2011; Fall *et al.*, 2013):

- the ability to unfold and expand personal characteristics, including flexibility, sensitivity, open-mindedness, and motivation to communicate across cultures.
- acquiring cultural knowledge to reduce situational ambiguity and uncertainty in interacting with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- a set of behavioural skills to adjust oneself to the changes of new patterns of interaction among cultural diversities, including language ability, behavioural flexibility, interaction management, identity maintenance and relationship cultivation.

The foregoing discussion establishes how intercultural communication competence differs from interpersonal communication competence elucidated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.2.3.2). It is understood that whereas interpersonal communication competence denotes the ability to communicate in ways that are effective and appropriate. Intercultural communication competence signifies the degree to which one effectively adapts verbal and nonverbal messages to the appropriate cultural context. This implies that during an intercultural interaction with subordinates, line managers require more than the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately. In addition, a line manager needs to effectively adapt his or her behaviour and language to the appropriate cultural context.

Therefore, intercultural communication competence could be considered just as critical to fulfil a line manager's communication role in multilingual and multicultural universities. Failure to become interculturally competent implies that when a line manager and a subordinate have differing cultural expectations for what is considered to be competent communicative behaviours, the result will most often be misunderstanding, miscommunication and distrust. Moreover, failure to become interculturally competent may lead to low-quality relationships. Such a situation between a line manager and subordinates from differing cultural backgrounds will result in demotivation and misalignment between subordinates' efforts and the strategic goals of a university.

By learning how to combine interpersonal and intercultural competencies effectively and properly, line managers will be able to manage encounters with culturally diverse subordinates in such a way that effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships are realised. This assertion has three significant implications for the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment on the one hand, and the supposed association between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management on the other hand.

First, it implies that in an intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction the onus is on a line manager to use appropriate intercultural communication skills in addition to effective interpersonal competence to navigate an intercultural interaction effectively and to manage his or her own communication behaviour appropriately. Second, it implies that a line manager who possesses an understanding and the ability to blend interpersonal and intercultural competencies appropriately and effectively will be better placed to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. Third, it implies that the need to blend and apply interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management points to an interrelatedness of certain aspects of the two competencies. This purported interrelatedness of certain aspects of interpersonal and intercultural competencies is the main motivation for advancing the concept of IIEC.

Considering the manifestation of intercultural communication within universities and the anxiety and uncertainty often experienced in intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, the AUM theory of effective communication provides a lens through which to consider the predominant behavioural manifestations during an intercultural interaction. The reason for applying this theoretical approach is twofold: (1) the AUM theory provides a theoretical basis to explicate basic factors that promote effective outcomes in intercultural communication; and (2) the theory lays a basis to determine a theoretical assumption related to the intercultural dimension of effective line management communication.

4.2.2 Theoretical approach to examine intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction

4.2.2.1 The Anxiety Uncertainty Management theory of effective communication

Anxiety and uncertainty are considered the two predominant behavioural manifestations during intercultural interaction. AUM theory holds that intercultural interactions cause anxiety and that anxiety and uncertainty directly influence the communication experience. In the situation of intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, anxiety entails feeling uneasy or apprehensive about what might happen, whereas uncertainty is the inability to predict or to explain subordinates' feelings, attitudes and behaviours (cf. Gudykunst, 1988; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Wiseman, 1995; Littlejohn, 2002; Gudykunst, 2005a; Gudykunst, 2005b; Gudykunst, 2005c; Neulip, 2006; Liu, 2010; Samochowiec & Florack, 2010; Ni & Wang, 2011; Neulip, 2012; Fall *et al.*, 2013).

Hypothetically, AUM theory advances the following statements (Gudykunst, 2005b; Neulip, 2012):

- Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty, whereas dissimilarities increase uncertainty. Increases in uncertainty levels produce decreases in liking; decreases in uncertainty levels produce increases in liking.
- During intercultural communication, culture acts as a filter through which all messages, both verbal and nonverbal, must pass.
- Communication is effective to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it. This argument puts great emphasis on the importance of the concept of 'mindfulness'.
- When we are mindful we need to focus on negotiating meanings with strangers, in other words, "we need to mindfully try to understand strangers' meanings and try to make sure that they understand our meanings" (Gudykunst, 2005a:291).

These core assumptions of AUM theory are supported by studies showing remarkable correlations between uncertainty, anxiety and perceived communication effectiveness or avoidance behaviour (cf. Hubbert, Gudykunst, & Guerrero, 1999; Duronto, Nishida, & Nakayama, 2005; Grant, 2007; Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). Of particular relevance to intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, AUM theory puts forward that effective communication can be achieved to the extent that one can mediate uncertainty and anxiety, and be mindful of the communication behaviour of the receiver (cf. Wiseman, 1995; Littlejohn, 2002; Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst, 2005a; Gudykunst, 2005b; Neulip, 2006). Communication effectiveness implies that a subordinate who is receiving and interpreting a message attaches meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it, that is, the line manager (Neulip, 2006). The result of communication effectiveness is shared understanding and negotiation of the same meaning between a line manager and his or her subordinate.

The degree of communication effectiveness is achieved based on the degree to which uncertainty and anxiety are managed, plus one's degree of mindfulness. The majority of the time when people are not mindful, communication is ineffective. Thus, high levels of anxiety and uncertainty are more likely to result in avoidance behaviour (Gudykunst, 2005c). This kind of behaviour from a line manager can only serve to thwart any attempt to achieve communication effectiveness when fulfilling strategic alignment.

In practice, an insightful and reported consequence of avoidance behaviour and ethnocentrism pertinent to intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction is that ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension impede the reduction of uncertainty during intercultural encounters. Therefore, as ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension increase, interacting parties experience less communication satisfaction. Therefore, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension inhibit the capacity to be mindful (Gudykunst, 2005c; Neulip, 2012; Fall *et al.*, 2013). This insight is of significance to the prevalence of culturally diverse employees in the university workplace. Fundamentally, it prompts the key assertion that intercultural communication competence fosters mindful managers who are context-sensitive, flexible, adaptable, open-minded, motivated to communicate across cultures and facilitate alignment between culturally diverse subordinates' work contributions and organisational goals and outcomes. Mindful managers are the success factor to effectively managing cultural differences and recognising the significance of the differences in as far as strategic alignment is concerned.

The foregoing discussion and exposition of key AUM theoretical statements provides a basis to advance a theoretical assumption of the intercultural dimension of line management communication, in particular, intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction.

4.2.2.2 Theoretical assumption of the intercultural dimension of line management communication

In this section, an additional assumption is submitted as an extension of the initial assumption presented in the preceding chapter. The additional assumption substantiates a perceived association between the concepts of intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and accomplishing strategic alignment.

This assumption is based on the following two fundamental understandings:

First, there are intercultural barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes when line managers facilitate alignment between culturally diverse subordinates' work contributions and a university's goals and outcomes. AUM maintains that during intercultural interactions effective communication can be achieved to the extent that one can mediate uncertainty and anxiety and be mindful of one's communication behaviour towards the receiver.

Second, line managers who are mindful and possess both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies will achieve effective communication outcomes. Such line

managers are able to build trust and facilitate strategic alignment across a variety of cultural orientations among subordinates.

Based on this fundamental understanding it is assumed that:

- Intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence leads to effective communication outcomes among culturally diverse subordinates. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes enhance high-quality relationships. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.

The above assumption implies that for line management, intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence should be approached from an integrated perspective if they are to yield effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships among culturally diverse subordinates. Moreover, it is implied that integrated intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence for line management enable strategic alignment.

4.3 BUILDING BLOCK 3: THE INTEGRATED DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

This section provides the proposed elements of the third and ultimate building block first, followed by the rationale of Building Block 3 in the form of a summary of elements of effective line management communication. Taken together, the elements determine the prerequisites of a conceptual framework for IIEC for line management at transformed universities in South Africa.

4.3.1 Elements of the integrated dimension of effective line management communication

- **Element 1: Intercultural communication competence**

Intercultural competence complements intercultural communication competence. The interculturally competent communicator is motivated to communicate, knowledgeable about how to communicate, and skilled in communicating across diverse cultures.

- **Element 2: Integrated approach to effective line management communication**

An integration of interpersonal and intercultural communication knowledge, motivational and behavioural elements and effectiveness facilitates effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships that enable strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. The extent to which there are effective communication outcomes correlates with the degree to which a line manager adapts and integrates interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies appropriately.

- **Element 3: Effective communication outcomes**

The key outcomes of an integrated approach to line management communication is shared understanding, shared meaning and motivation among subordinates regardless of the cultural orientations of subordinates. An additional key outcome is mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual obligation between a line manager and a subordinate.

- **Element 4: Mindful managers**

A mindful manager is open-minded and realises that other people may not share a perspective similar to theirs. In intercultural interactions, it is especially important that the communicator is mindful. Line managers should display an open mind to incoming verbal and nonverbal messages from subordinates from culturally diverse backgrounds.

4.3.2 Summary of the elements of the Building Blocks

Figure 4-2 represents the elements identified from Building Block 1 through to Building Block 3. Taken together the three Building Blocks and the 15 elements point to four interrelated aspects of intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication. The four interrelated aspects are: (1) interpersonal and intercultural communication behaviour, motivation and effectiveness; (2) effective communication outcomes; (3) enabling manager; and (4) mindful manager.

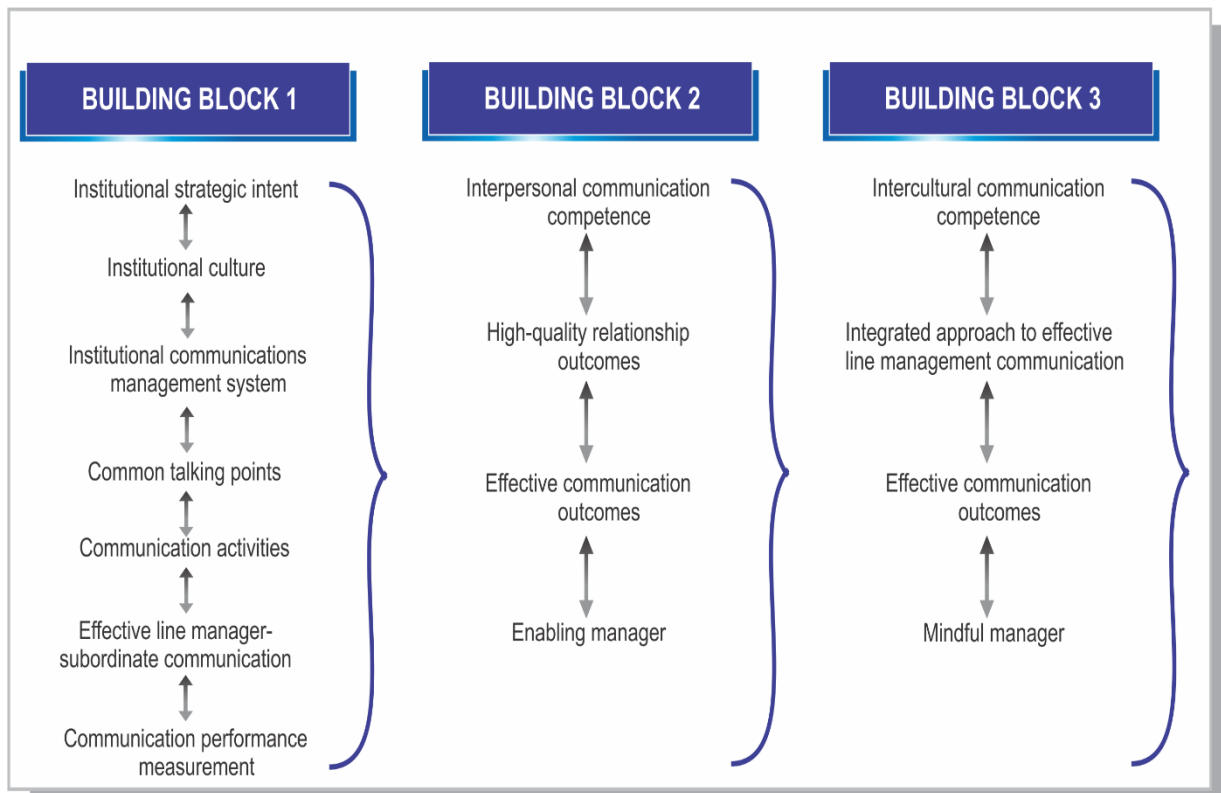


Figure 4-2: Summary of elements of effective communication for strategic alignment

4.4 EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATED INTERCULTURAL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

4.4.1 The motivation for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication

The IIEC model depicted in Figure 4-3 is advanced as an extension of D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model. The IIEC model focuses on the integration of certain aspects of intercultural and interpersonal communication competence to achieve effective communication outcomes and ultimately, strategic alignment. It should not be viewed as the end, but rather as the means to navigate intercultural interaction to achieve the end, which is effective communication outcomes and strategic alignment.

In Figure 4-3 the interpersonal communication process between a line manager and a subordinate is applied as a point of departure. The figure illustrates the different cultural and work backgrounds of a manager and a subordinate. It also shows the needs and goals of a line manager and a subordinate in as far as the goal of strategic alignment is concerned.

During the interaction, there are interpersonal and intercultural communication barriers that come into play as the line manager-subordinate interaction unfolds. Through recognising pertinent aspects of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence, an effective line manager draws the relevant competencies and applies them in an appropriate and an effective way to obviate the barriers. As the relevant intercultural and interpersonal competencies are blended during a line manager-subordinate interaction, IIEC then emerges.

The following four key points substantiate the above motivation and elucidate the foundation for the IIEC. First, interpersonal communication competence forms the foundation for developing and improving intercultural communication competence. In other words, intercultural communication competence builds on interpersonal communication competence. The line manager's ability to integrate the appropriate levels of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence as prescribed by the cultural patterns in verbal and nonverbal messages during an intercultural interaction will determine the extent of the effectiveness of IIEC in contributing towards fulfilling strategic alignment.

Therefore, the first characteristic of the IIEC construct is that it is informed by both intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence.

Secondly, the researcher submits that by using an integrated approach, the IIEC model acknowledges that interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence reinforce one another as far as the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment is concerned. Therefore, although interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence perspectives may be approached separately in literature, in practice these concepts are closely related and interdependent, and together they form the core of line management communication. So, the second characteristic is that interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence are mutually reinforcing for line management level.

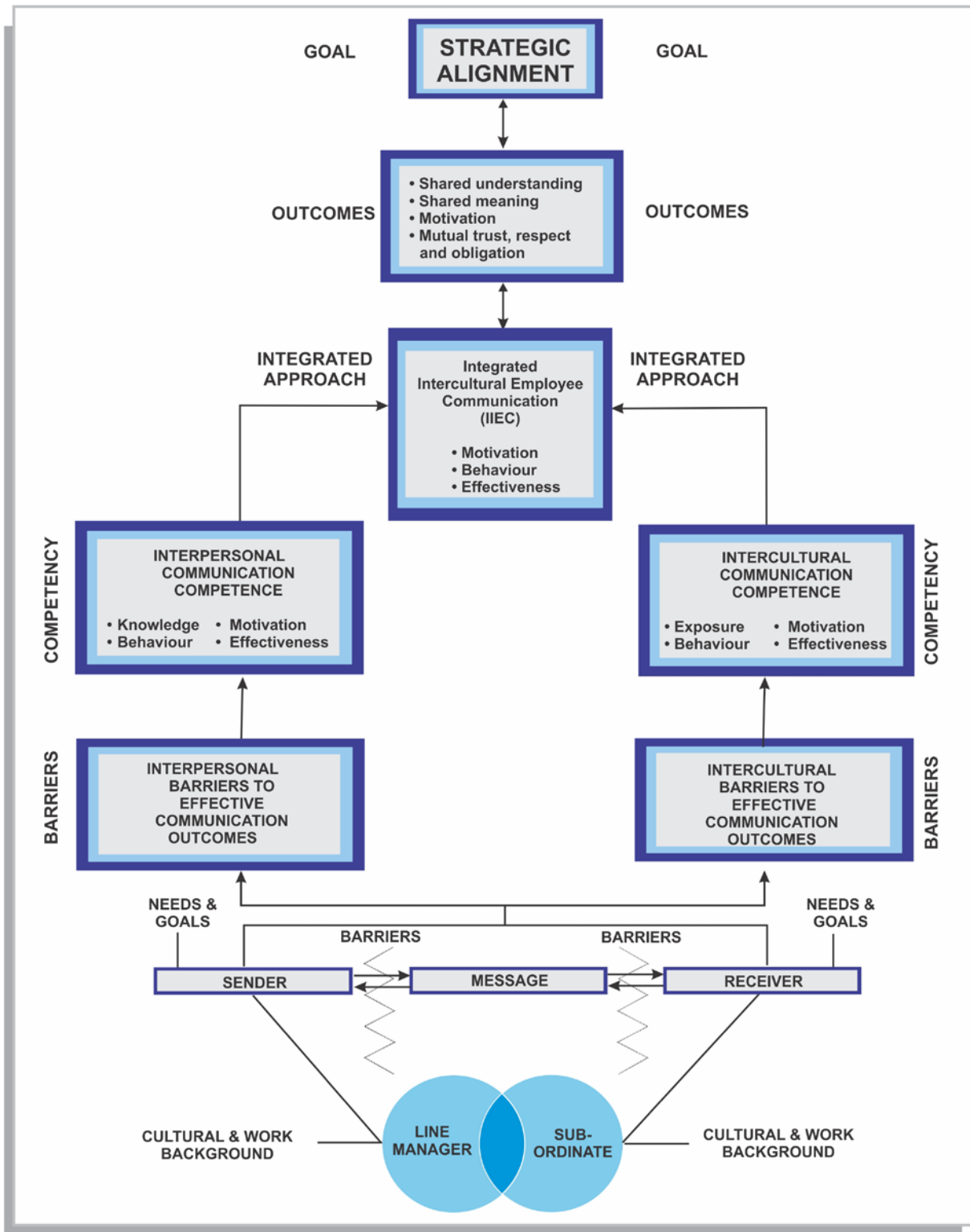


Figure 4-3: The Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication model

The third characteristic is that the IIEC model should be viewed as a skill and a prerequisite to execute the line manager’s communication model among culturally diverse subordinates. Applied appropriately and effectively when a line manager fulfils strategic alignment through

the four-step process of conversation, a strategic conversation and day-to-day operational communication with subordinates, the IIEC model will enhance the execution of strategic alignment in a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual work environment similar to the NWU, UJ and TUT.

The fourth distinguishing factor of the IIEC model is that its primary success indicators are: effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships, and high levels of alignment among culturally diverse subordinates.

4.4.2 Defining integrated intercultural employee communication

A definition of IIEC is necessary to establish an understanding of the meaning and consequences of the model for the purpose of conceptualising a framework for IIEC. Considering the aforementioned characteristics, the researcher positions IIEC as a multidimensional construct of employee communication and management communication.

A definition of IIEC is therefore formulated and advanced as follows:

A model of employee communication that recognises the degree to which one effectively adapts and integrates interpersonal and intercultural communication behaviour, motivation and effectiveness to apply to the appropriate cultural context to enable effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships that lead to strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees.

Effective communication outcomes refer specifically to shared understanding and shared meaning between a line manager and subordinates. This motivates subordinates to align their efforts with a university's strategy. A high-quality relationship means the degree to which mutual trust, respect, and obligation exist within an interpersonal line manager-subordinate relationship.

Fundamentally, the above definition advances the value of integrating intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence rather than approaching them as separated competencies. Moreover, this definition of the novel notion of IIEC attests to the fact that the construct is not only concerned with a communicator's competence, but also effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships that underpin fulfilling strategic alignment in transformed universities.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter ascertains that cultural differences between subordinates increase the importance of the prevalence of intercultural communication in transformed universities. The prevalence of intercultural communication brings about challenges that impact on effective communication outcomes when line managers attempt to fulfil strategic alignment.

The most substantial intercultural barriers to effective communication outcomes identified are: ethnocentrism; language and semantics; nonverbal communication; perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes; behaviour; stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and racism and work values. The specific emphasis on intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes is the central motivation for advancing the probable integration of certain interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication and intercultural communication for line management.

The need to obviate these barriers to realise effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and strategic alignment during intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction is the driving force compelling the hypothetical integration of intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence for line management. The IIEC models helps to expand existing theory with regard to D'Aprix's manager's communication model and similarly generate theory.

The evolution of the IIEC model for line management in transformed universities in South Africa is submitted based on theoretical perspectives on interpersonal and intercultural dimensions of effective line management communication. The IIEC model advances the value of integrating intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence to enable strategic alignment among a multicultural workforce rather than approaching them as separated competencies.

In the next chapter, the research methods applied in this study are discussed in more detail.

PART TWO



PART TWO: EMPIRICAL STUDY

The basis of the empirical study is the literature study conducted in Chapter 2 (*Best practice requirements of effective employee communication*); Chapter 3 (*The communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment*); and Chapter 4 (*Evolution of integrated intercultural employee communication*).

The literature study addresses research objectives 1.5.2.1 and 1.5.2.2 (see Chapter 1) through advancing multiple elements, assumptions and practices of Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management through the following three building blocks:

- **Building Block 1:** An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university.
- **Building Block 2:** The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication.
- **Building Block 3:** The integrated dimension of effective line management communication.

The three building blocks provide a theoretically sound basis to frame and inform the empirical study. Accordingly, the building blocks are applied in the empirical study to inform the data collection through qualitative and quantitative approaches. Furthermore, the building blocks are useful to link together the qualitative and quantitative findings with the aim of contextualising the multi-level perspectives and understandings in a trustworthy manner.

Essentially, the building blocks help to inform the processes to gather pertinent insights and to contextualise and make sense of findings reported in the ensuing empirical study. Applying the building blocks to the empirical study strengthens the conceptualisation of a framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management by giving it a theoretical grounding and more credibility.

CHAPTER 5:

MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an explanation of the selected research methods in terms of the nature, research questions and the objectives of this study. In addition, a detailed outline of the research design followed as was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1 (see section 1.8) is provided. Mixed-methods research contributes to address the general research question specified in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.1) as follows: *What are the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa?*

The general objective of this study is addressed by consolidating the different elements, assumptions and practices recommended by the three building blocks of the IIEC construct. Therefore, an exploration and understanding of such a multifaceted approach necessitates more than a single method, such as the use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For that reason, to best explore, interpret and determine the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for IIEC, this study calls for the application of multiple research approaches in the form of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Literature refers to the implementation of multiple research approaches as mixed-methods research (cf. Gilbert, 2006; Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Creswell & Garrett, 2008; Small, 2011; Stentz, Plano Clark & Matkin, 2012; Feters, Curry & Creswell, 2013).

This chapter illustrates the integration of the assumptions and techniques of the selected qualitative and quantitative methods employed in this study, and reveals how each method can be complementary for purposes of expansion and triangulation in this study.

5.2 MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH PARADIGM

In its recent history in the social and behavioural sciences, the mixed-methods movement gained recognition as researchers and methodologists more frequently started using a combination of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints and methods in a single study to explain and explore specific research questions. Mixed-methods research is becoming

increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognised as one of the major research paradigms or research approaches (Collins *et al.*, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin & Jackson, 2008; Clark & Greatbatch, 2011; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Stentz *et al.*, 2012).

The definition of mixed-methods research is not yet fully resolved in literature. Based on a comprehensive analysis, Johnson *et al.* (2007:123) offer the following general definition of mixed-methods research:

“Mixed-methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches (use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”.

As a methodology, authors explain that mixed-methods involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in different phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies to both explain and explore specific research questions. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

The aforementioned clarification provides the broadest meaning possible of mixed-methods research and it confirms that the selected research paradigm is legitimate, scientific and reliable for purposes of conducting this study. The terms “mixed-methods research”, “mixed-methods” and “mixed research” are used interchangeably in the ensuing discussion with the same meaning as explicated above.

Before designing a mixed-methods approach for this study, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) point out that there are three preliminary considerations that need attention. First, the researcher should consider what worldview or philosophical assumptions underlie the selected mixed methods. Second, the researcher should review the basics of quantitative and qualitative research, as both will be included in a mixed-methods study. Finally, the appropriateness and value of employing a mixed-methods approach should be considered. These three considerations are addressed in the following sections.

5.2.1 Philosophical assumptions of the selected mixed methods

All research needs a foundation for its inquiry. The foundation includes assumptions the researcher makes about the world (worldviews) and knowledge (paradigms) that inform and influence how the research is conducted. Worldview and paradigm refer to how researchers view the world and go about conducting research. They contain a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide inquiries. They are a philosophy deeply rooted in personal experiences, culture, and history. Therefore, the philosophical assumptions that provide the foundation for the research have to be recognised by being aware of the implicit worldviews that the researcher brings to their study and by being specific about the worldview that provides the foundation for the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

Pragmatism is recognised as the worldview that most influences mixed-methods research. Consequently, the pragmatism worldview has gained widespread acceptance as the philosophy typically associated with mixed-methods research. Pragmatism as applied in the current study draws on many ideas, including employing “what works”, using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Ravitch, 2012; Maxwell, 2013).

The pragmatist paradigm is compatible with the general objective of the current study, that is, to identify the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for IIEC for line management. Maxwell (2013:44) provides four valid reasons from the point of view of a pragmatist paradigm of why a researcher would construct a conceptual framework that are just as relevant to this study. The four main reasons are:

- the researcher’s experiential knowledge
- existing theory and research
- the researcher’s exploratory research
- thought experiments.

The pragmatist paradigm influences how the researcher conducted this study and reports the findings. Fundamentally, the focus is placed on the consequences of research, the primary importance of the questions rather than on the multiple methods of data collection that inform the problems under study. Therefore, it is pluralistic and oriented towards practice (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

The link between pragmatism and mixed-methods research is formalised by the following three key features pointed out by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) in Creswell and Plano Clark (2007):

- Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used in a single study.
- The research question is of primary importance – more important than either the method or the philosophical worldview that underlies the method.
- A practical and applied research philosophy guides methodological choices.

Making explicit which paradigm the research draws on helps to explain and justify research design decisions. Furthermore, an established paradigm allows a researcher to build on an accepted and well-developed approach to research, rather than having to construct a new one (Maxwell, 2013).

The next preliminary consideration that is addressed before tackling the mixed-methods design applicable to this study in section 5.4 is a review of the basic elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches because both of these forms of research are used in mixed-method studies.

5.2.2 The basics of qualitative and quantitative approaches

By way of summary, Table 5-1 displays the main steps in the process of research in the centre column. The left column presents the elements of a qualitative approach and the right column the elements of a quantitative approach in the process of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Such a comparison helps to illustrate the value of combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches in this study in order to increase confidence in and the validity of the findings.

Table 5-1: Elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the process of research

Elements of Qualitative Research	Process of Research	Elements of Quantitative Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to understand the meaning individuals ascribe to phenomenon inductively 	Intent of the research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tests a theory deductively to support or refutes it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor role Justifies problem 	How literature is used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major role Justifies problem Identifies questions and hypotheses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks open-ended questions Understands the complexity of a single idea (or phenomenon) 	How intent is focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks close-ended questions Tests specific variables that form hypotheses or questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words and images Uses a few participants at a few research sites Studies participants at their location 	How data are collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers Uses many participants at many research sites Sends or administers instruments to participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text or image analysis Themes Larger patterns or generalisations 	How data are analysed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerical statistical analysis Rejects hypotheses or determines effect sizes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies personal stance Reports bias 	Role of the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains in the background Takes steps to remove bias
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses validity procedures that rely on the participants, the researcher, or the reader 	How data are validated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses validity procedures based on external standards, such as judges, past research, statistics

Source: Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:29)

Table 5-1 illustrates that mixed-methods research provides strengths that can offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research is weak in understanding the context or setting within which people talk. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations of the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Beyond identifying the philosophical assumptions and reviewing the basics of qualitative and quantitative research, an additional consideration prior to designing and conducting a mixed-methods study is whether the mixed method, as compared to other designs, is best suited to address the research problem of this study. This consideration is expounded next.

5.2.3 Appropriateness and value of mixed methods

The interdisciplinary nature of the research questions guiding this study calls for a mixed-methods approach. In addition, the literature review addresses specific research questions 1.4.2.1 and 1.4.2.2 (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4) by recommending the rationales and 15 elements of the three building blocks of the IIEC construct. The empirical study subsequently requires both qualitative and quantitative forms of data to address research questions 1.4.2.1; 1.4.2.3 and 1.4.2.4 sufficiently. More specifically, the research questions suggest that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is likely to provide superior research findings.

Mixed-methods methodologists attest to the aforementioned statement and argue that mixed research can add insight, understandings and may add value that might be missed when only a single method is used. Additionally, it can produce more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002; Denscombe, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; O’Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl, 2007; O’Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl, 2010; Molina-Azorin, 2012).

A summary of the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods employed in this study is provided in Table 5-2. The summary supports the aforementioned assertion made that the research questions guiding this study cannot be answered adequately by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone. In addition, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) point out that employing qualitative and quantitative approaches is practical in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem.

Table 5-2: Mixed-methods research logic in the current study

Research questions	Research design	Research method
<p>Specific research question:</p> <p>What are the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and how do prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?</p>	<p>Literature study</p> <p>(Chapter 3 & Chapter 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic identification and analysis of literature linked to the recommended Building Block 2 & Building Block 3.
<p>Specific research question:</p> <p>What are the theoretical perspectives regarding best practice for effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?</p>	<p>Literature study</p> <p>(Chapter 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic identification and analysis of literature linked to the recommended Building Block 1.
<p>Specific research question:</p> <p>How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?</p>	<p>Qualitative approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interviews at NWU, UJ & TUT
	<p>Quantitative approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey at NWU
<p>Specific research question:</p> <p>What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?</p>	<p>Qualitative approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interviews at NWU, UJ & TUT
	<p>Quantitative approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey at NWU

Based on a comprehensive review of mixed-methods methodologies as used in diverse fields and disciplines, researchers have identified five compelling reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research (cf. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; O’Cathain *et al.*, 2010; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Stentz *et al.*, 2012; Fetters *et al.*, 2013). The five reasons identified are: (1) development; (2) expansion; (3) triangulation; (4) complementarity; and (5) initiation. A thoughtful consideration of the five reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research reveals that four of the five reasons are pertinent to this study. The four reasons are briefly elucidated next in relation to the qualitative and quantitative part of the study:

- 1) **Development:** The results from the qualitative method used in phase one of this study helped to inform the development of an instrument for the subsequent quantitative phase. So, the qualitative inquiry informed the development of a quantitative instrument (Johnson *et al.*, 2007; O’Cathain *et al.*, 2010; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Fetters *et al.*, 2013).
- 2) **Expansion:** Expansion was achieved through expanding the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods to assess different facets of the research questions as indicated in Table 5-2. Mixed-methods contributed to addressing multiple purposes and therefore to yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of a phenomenon for different inquiry components. In addition, using mixed methods facilitated thickness and richness of data, augmenting interpretation and usefulness of findings (Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Molina-Azorin, 2012).
- 3) **Triangulation:** Triangulation was realised by seeking more comprehensive findings, a more insightful understanding of the underlying problem under study, and confirmation or corroboration of results from the different methods employed. Mixed-methods research provided stronger inferences, more comprehensive findings, increased confidence in results, increased conclusion validity, and more insightful understanding of the underlying phenomenon. (cf. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Molina-Azorin, 2012).
- 4) **Complementarity:** Complementarity was accomplished in this study through integration of interpretation and reporting on empirical findings with the view of developing more complete and complimentary understandings, seeking clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method, increasing validity of results and examining contextualised understandings and multi-level perspectives. Furthermore, a major advantage of mixed-methods research is that it

enables the researcher to simultaneously generate and verify theory in the same study. The quantitative research has typically been more directed at theory testing or verification, whereas qualitative research has typically been more concerned with theory building or generation (cf. Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Stentz *et al.*, 2012).

In addition to the four abovementioned reasons applicable to this study, the researcher selected a mixed-methods design because of the following motivations (Stentz *et al.*, 2012):

- the researcher is qualitatively oriented
- the research problem is more quantitatively oriented
- the researcher identifies quantitative questions based on the qualitative results that cannot be answered with qualitative data
- the researcher has limited resources and needs a design where only one type of data is being collected and analysed at a time
- the researcher has the ability to return to participants for a second round of quantitative data collection
- mixed-methods research enriches the researcher's ability to draw conclusions about the problem under study.

Although the application of a mixed-method design is advancing across various disciplines, the extent to which mixed-method studies implement consistent guidelines on mixed-methods remains unpredictable and therefore the guidelines require clarification. For this reason, this study draws on the key assumptions and practices in mixed-methods research generated by Fetters *et al.*, (2013) to outline the extent of the integration applied in the current study. The key assumptions and practices in mixed-methods research focus on specific approaches to integrate qualitative and quantitative research procedures and data. These approaches can be implemented at the design, methods, and interpretation and reporting levels of research (Fetters *et al.*, 2013).

5.3 INTEGRATION APPROACHES AT THE DESIGN, METHODS, INTERPRETATION AND REPORTING LEVELS

There are specific approaches to integrate qualitative and quantitative research procedures and data in mixed-methods research. The ensuing discussion elaborates on the appropriate techniques employed for integration in the current study at the design, method, interpretation and reporting levels, beginning with the design level.

5.3.1 Integration at design level

The overall approach of the integration at study design level is shown in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Integration at design level

Research methods design elements	Tactic used
Basic design ○ Interaction ○ Priority ○ Timing ○ Mixing	Exploratory sequential ○ Independent ○ QUANTITATIVE ○ Sequential ○ Instrument Development Model; Interpretation & Reporting

The relevant basic design implemented in this study is the exploratory sequential design. In this specific design, the researcher first collects and analyses qualitative data to explore a phenomenon, and these findings inform subsequent quantitative data collection. This design is particularly useful to develop and test an instrument if one is not available, and identify important variables to study quantitatively when the variables are unknown. It is also appropriate to explore a phenomenon in depth and then measure its prevalence (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Fetters *et al.*, 2013). A brief summary of four additional elements central to integrating a mixed-methods design is elucidated next.

- Interaction:** The extent of interaction between the quantitative and qualitative study components is characterised by whether they are kept independent from one another or interact with one another (Greene in Stentz *et al.*, 2012). The extent of the interaction pertinent to this study is independent, which implies that the qualitative and the quantitative components were conducted separately and were only mixed during the overall interpretation and reporting stage of the study.

- **Priority:** Priority refers to the relative emphasis placed on the quantitative and qualitative components for answering a study's questions. The three possible priority options include: equal, quantitative, or qualitative (Stentz *et al.*, 2012). This study placed more emphasis on the quantitative component for answering the research questions related to the main areas of inquiry, therefore the priority option selected is quantitative. The quantitative component is also the most common priority classification in mixed-methods designs (Stentz *et al.*, 2012). For this reason, the dominant method appears in capital letters, "QUANTITATIVE", or abbreviated as "QUAN" when reference is made to this method in ensuing tables and illustrations and the complementary method is referred to in lowercase as "qualitative" or abbreviated as "qual".
- **Timing:** Sequential timing was implemented in this study. Sequential timing means that the researcher collects and analyses one type of data before collecting the other type. This timing is identified in the literature as the most common timing element in mixed-methods designs, which implies that researchers report using the results of one method to shape the implementation of the other (Stentz *et al.*, 2012).
- **Mixing:** Mixing refers to the researcher determining when and how to integrate or combine the two different types of data. Pertaining to this study, mixing was conducted by using the exploratory sequential design alluded to earlier in paragraph 5.3.1., which connects the qualitative data analysis to the collection of a second set of quantitative data. The specific tactic utilised during the exploratory sequential design is the instrument development model. In this study, the researcher first qualitatively explored the research topic with a few participants. The qualitative findings then guided the development of items and scales for a quantitative survey instrument.

In the second data collection phase, the researcher implemented and validated this instrument quantitatively. In this design, the qualitative and quantitative methods were connected through the development of the instrument items (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Molina-Azorin, 2012). Furthermore, mixing occurred during interpretation by using the recommended building blocks of the IIEC construct as a theoretical framework to bind together multiple datasets and to contextualise multi-level perspectives and understandings.

5.3.2 Integration at methods level

Method level integration commonly relates to the type of design used in a study. The design sets parameters for what methodological integration choices can be made (Fetters *et al.*, 2013). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), integration occurs by linking the methods of data collection and analysis. Linking occurs in the following two ways indicated in Table 5-4: (1) building (one database informs the data collection approach of the other); and (2) embedding (data collection and analysis link at multiple points). The two appropriate methodological choices that inform integration at methods level are summed up in Table 5-4 and briefly elucidated thereafter.

Table 5-4: Integration through methods

Approach	Description
<p style="text-align: center;">Building</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Informed by the Instrument Development Model</p>	<p>The qualitative database informs the data collection approach of the subsequent quantitative data.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Embedding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Informed by the exploratory sequential design</p>	<p>Data collection at qualitative and quantitative stages is linked at organisational (the NWU) and sampling (line managers) levels.</p>

- Building:** Integration through building in this study occurred when results from the first qualitative data collection phase informed the subsequent quantitative data collection approach and procedure, the latter phase building on the former. In addition, items for inclusion in the survey were founded upon previously collected qualitative data that identified constructs or language used by research participants (Fetters *et al.*, 2013).
- Embedding:** The second integration approach employed at methods level is embedding. Specifically, the nesting tactic was employed to link the qualitative and quantitative data collection at particular points. Nesting refers to the extent to which multiple data types are collected from the same actors, organisations, or entities (Small, 2011). Nesting allows complementary designs to penetrate deeper into individual units (people, organisations) within an overall study. The decision whether to conduct a nested study is determined by the feasibility of the study (Stentz *et al.*, 2012). The major reasons for employing embedding in this study as

suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark in Stentz *et al.*, (2012:1181) include the following:

- a) The researcher had the ability to return to participants at the NWU for a second round of quantitative data collection and to implement the planned quantitative design in a rigorous way.
- b) The researcher had limited resources, which made it difficult to place equal emphasis on both types of data collection, and also needed a design where only one type of data is being collected and analysed at a time.

In this study, nesting was applied at two points: (1) organisation; and (2) units of analysis. At the organisational level, three universities were selected for the initial qualitative data collection, namely the NWU, UJ and TUT. Thereafter, for feasibility purposes the researcher returned to one of the three selected universities, the NWU, to conduct the subsequent quantitative data collection. The reason for returning specifically to the NWU was that the researcher was employed at the university and therefore had the ability to return to participants for a second round of quantitative data collection. In addition, nesting allowed the researcher to return to academic and support line managers in order to “penetrate deeper” into line managers as units of analysis.

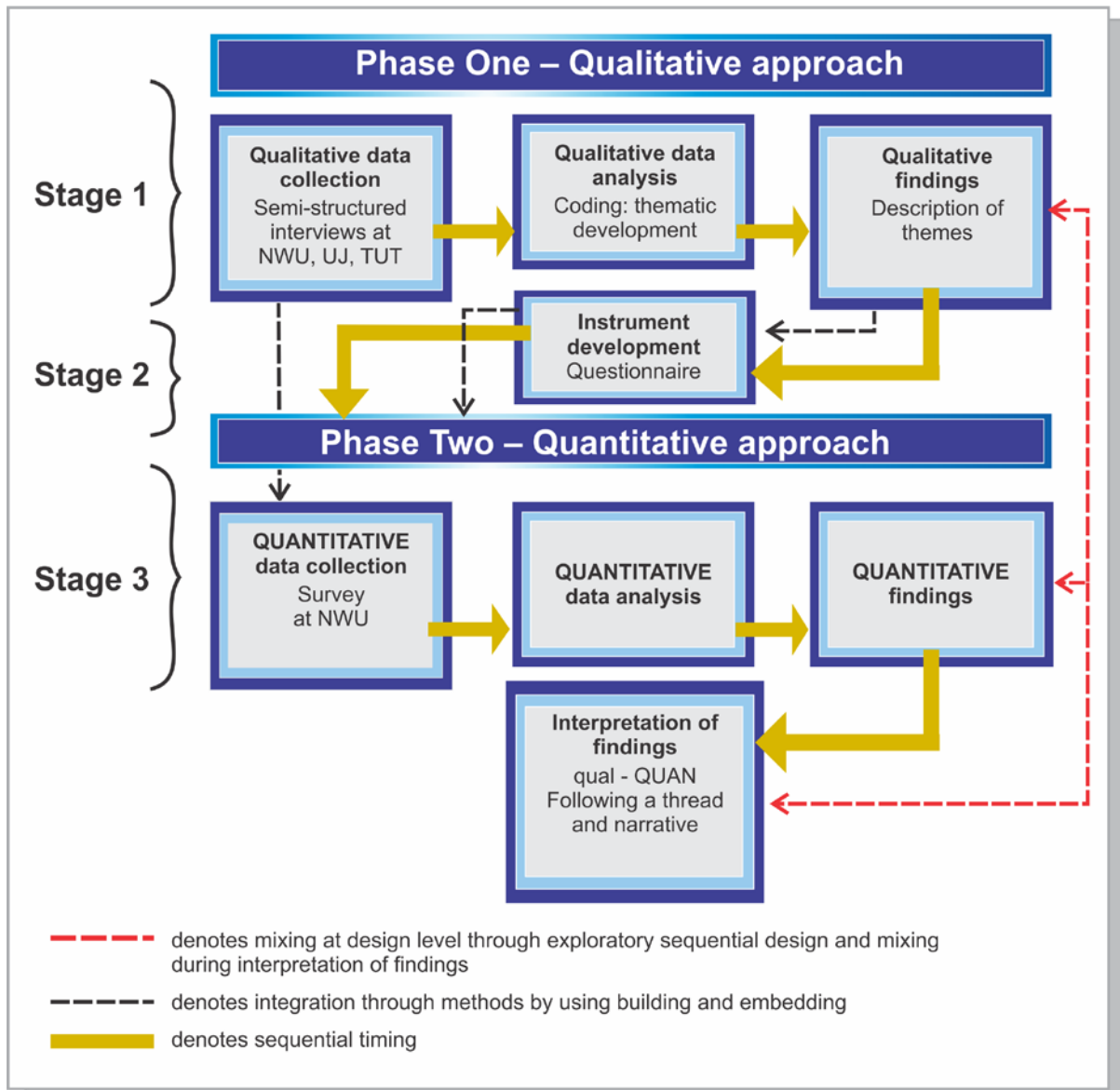
5.3.3 Integration at interpretation and reporting level

Logically, the qualitative and quantitative datasets are first analysed, then interpreted and finally reported. During data collection stages, data are collected and analysed separately for each component to produce two sets of findings. Through data analysis, quantitative data facilitates the assessment of generalizability of the qualitative data and shed new light on qualitative findings. Also, qualitative data plays an important role by interpreting, clarifying, contextualising, describing, and validating quantitative results (Johnson *et al.*, 2007; O’Cathain *et al.*, 2010).

The “*following a thread*” technique was applied to interpret and integrate findings from the qualitative and quantitative data sets. *Following a thread* as explained by O’Cathain *et al.*, (2010:1147), begins with an initial analysis of each component to identify key themes and questions requiring further exploration. Then, the researcher selects a question or theme from one component and follows it across the other components. This is referred to as the “thread”. Using this technique may give the process of integration credibility rather than leaving researchers feeling that they have “made things up”. To complement *following a*

thread, integration through narrative is also used. When integrating through narrative, researchers describe the qualitative narrative data and quantitative numeric data in a single or series of reports.

Figure 5-1 below depicts the range of integration at the three levels elucidated above, that is: design, methods and interpretation and reporting of data.



Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:122); Moeng (2010:120)

Figure 5-1: Integration in an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design: Instrument Development Model

The reason for this illustration is to demonstrate the integration approach used at the three levels to successfully combine the selected mixed-methods techniques and procedures. Based on the foregoing discussion and explication of the specific mixed-methods approach employed in this study, the ensuing section addresses the detailed plan for carrying out the study to address the specific research questions as it becomes evident in this thesis.

The plan for carrying out the study to address the specific research questions is described next in the same sequential order as illustrated in Figure 5-1.

5.4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE OVERALL MIXED-METHODS DESIGN

5.4.1 Phase One: The qualitative approach

The qualitative research technique used in this study entailed semi-structured interviews with a sample of communications professionals, human resources professionals and academic and support line managers (N=14) from NWU, UJ and TUT.

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore and determine the perceived practices and emerging challenges in relation to best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Also, the interviews explored and described any discrepancy between the current state of affairs and the ideal state as suggested by the multiple elements, assumptions and practices recommended by the three building blocks of the IIEC construct. For this reason, the nature of the qualitative study can be described as exploratory-descriptive as the researcher sought to understand and describe the perceptions of the participants.

The selection of the three universities was purposeful in that the institutions were representative of the following characteristics:

- A merger between a Historically Advantaged Institution (HAI) and a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI);
- A merger between a historically White Afrikaans-speaking institution and historically Black English-speaking institution;
- A university signifying a multicultural, multilingual and transformed institution from each of the three institutional types, namely: traditional university (NWU); comprehensive university (UJ); and a university of technology (TUT).

This selection provided a balanced representation of transformed universities that form part of the public higher education system in South Africa.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select five participants from each of the three selected institutions, which amounted to a sample of 15 participants in total. The participants were regarded as sufficiently informed and knowledgeable enough to provide meaningful information related to the research questions. This sampling method is almost always used in qualitative research and allows the researcher to select the units to be observed on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most informative or useful (Van Rensburg, 2000; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Du Plooy, 2002). From the overall sample of 15 participants, the total number of participants interviewed was 14. The reason for this is that the researcher reached a point of saturation or redundancy when interviewing line managers at the third and last university and therefore decided not to conduct the last interview with an academic line manager at TUT.

The selected participants from each institution and their respective roles were as follows:

- **Traditional University, NWU (N=5)**
 - 1) Corporate Communication: Louis Jacobs (Director)
 - 2) Internal Communication: Marelize Santana (Specialist)
 - 3) Human Resources: Ria Nel (Director)
 - 4) Line Manager: Support Department – Warren Makgowe (Director)
 - 5) Line Manager: Academic Department – Sonia Swanepoel (Dean)

- **Comprehensive University, UJ (N=5)**
 - 6) Corporate Communication: An-Li Theron (Senior Manager)
 - 7) Internal Communication: Collen Maepa (Coordinator)
 - 8) Human Resources: Helen Mogorosi (Director)
 - 9) Line Manager: Support Department – Lorraine Viljoen (Head)
 - 10) Line Manager: Academic and Support – Michael Moafuriwa (Business Partner)

- **University of Technology, TUT (N=4)**

- 11) Corporate Communication: Brenda Watson (Director)
- 12) Internal Communication: Willa de Ruyter (Manager)
- 13) Human Resources: Catherine Nel (Manager)
- 14) Line Manager: Support Department – Mari Booysen (Director).

Total participants: N=14

5.4.1.1 Stage 1: Qualitative data collection

- *Interview schedules for semi-structured interviews*

During the interviews with communication professionals (N=6), human resources professionals (N=3), support line managers (N=3) and academic line managers (N=2), a separate interview schedule was used for each of the three central roles of the participants, namely: (1) the communication role; (2) the human resources role; and (3) the line management role. Each interview schedule comprised a set of open-ended questions grouped under 14 of the 15 elements of the three building blocks of the IIEC construct. The interview schedule for a semi-structured interview contains standardised questions or a list of topics, but the interviewer is free to deviate and ask follow-up or probing questions based on the respondent's replies. This type of interview provides the interviewer with latitude to move in unanticipated directions (Du Plooy, 2000; Holliday, 2002).

In essence, the theoretical perspectives and assumptions presented in the form of the elements of the three building blocks recommended in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 were revisited to formulate a comprehensive list of open-ended questions related to specific research objectives 1.5.2.1; 1.5.2.3 and 1.5.2.4. From this comprehensive list of questions, a list of pertinent questions for each of the participants during the interviews was selected and ordered into a logical flow, grouping the constructs explored together and ensuring that introductory or high level questions come before more detailed questions so that the respondent is guided in his or her thinking.

In order to ensure consistency in the approach used for conducting the interviews, the researcher made use of an interview protocol. The interview protocol was used to: (a) make the purpose of the interview clear at the beginning of each interview; (b) clarify the definition of concepts pertinent to the interview; and (c) to make the purpose of the consent form clear

and ensure the form was signed prior to conducting an interview. In addition, if any follow-up question was asked that was not included in the interview guide, the follow-up question was noted on the relevant section of the interview protocol.

The interview schedules for each participants are attached as Appendix A¹; A²; A³ and A⁴. Each question in each interview schedule addresses a particular element and construct(s) related to the building blocks of a conceptual framework for IIEC for line management. It is important to point out that some questions may overlap with regard to the different constructs measured. The rationales for the questions and constructs explored related to the 14 elements of the three building blocks of the IIEC construct are elucidated next.

Building Block 1

An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university

- **Element 1:** Institutional strategic intent

The questions were aimed at determining the current approaches used to create awareness amongst employees and line managers regarding the university's strategic intent and to determine the perceived levels of understanding amongst the participants and employees regarding a university's strategy. Furthermore, these questions probed the nature of the working relationship between internal communication and human resources departments. The questions also explored the understanding of the concept of strategic alignment and approaches used to engage the leadership to align employees with the strategic objectives of a university.

- **Element 2:** Institutional culture

This group of questions was instrumental in establishing the prevalent culture for communication at the three transformed universities. Also, these questions probed the extent of integration between internal communication and management communication, and whether there is joint accountability with leadership, line managers and communication professionals to foster a culture for open communication. Furthermore, the questions explored the perceived extent to which line management communication is fulfilling strategic alignment.

- Element 3: Institutional communications management system

Taken together, these questions determined the status quo of the communications management system at the universities. Specific attention was paid to the role of internal communication in supporting line managers to fulfil their communication role effectively and in building communication capacity for academic and support line managers.

- Element 4: Common talking points

These questions determined the approaches used to interpret a university's comprehensive strategic plan into clear, concise and consistent common talking points and key messages. Furthermore, the focus fell on communication tools used to convey common talking points and support provided to line managers to help them to inform their subordinates about the university's strategic plans.

- Element 5: Communication activities

These questions determined communication activities in the leadership, management and employee communication spheres of communication. In addition, the questions probed to what extent the communication activities fostered two-way communication in as far as strategic alignment is concerned.

- Element 6: Effective line manager-to-employee communication

These questions focused specifically on how line managers interpret the meaning of effective line manager-employee communication and the specific role they play in communicating a university's strategy. The questions determined perceptions of communication skills, knowledge and behaviour among line managers. Furthermore, the current status quo pertaining to managerial accountability to fulfil the communication role of line managers was probed.

- Element 7: Communication performance management

These questions probed whether communication performance measurement forms an integral part of a performance appraisal system to measure the line managers' communication performance. Also, the questions enquired whether the communication appraisal process facilitates the execution of line management communication. Furthermore, it was important to also ascertain if there is recognition and rewards to encourage effective communication behaviours among line managers.

Building Block 2

The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication

- **Element 8:** Interpersonal communication competence

These questions enabled the researcher to probe into the extent to which effective interpersonal communication competence helps line managers to sustain the constant process of strategic alignment during face-to-face interaction with subordinates.

- **Element 9:** High-quality relationship outcomes

Taken together, these questions explored the extent to which perceived levels of high-quality relationship outcomes exist between line managers and subordinates.

- **Element 10:** Effective communication outcomes

By posing these questions, line managers revealed the extent to which they perceived interpersonal communication competence to contribute towards obviating potential barriers to effective communication, in this way achieving effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and ultimately, strategic alignment.

- **Element 11:** Enabling manager

These questions tested line managers' level of understanding of the notion of an enabling manager. In addition, the specific questions explored whether the universities offered educational and training resources to line managers to foster the desired communication behaviours and to hold line managers accountable for the preferred behaviour aimed at creating "enabling managers".

Building Block 3

The integrated dimension of effective line management communication

- **Element 12:** Intercultural communication competence

These questions explored the extent to which line managers perceive the importance of acquiring intercultural communication competence in terms of knowledge, exposure, motivation, behaviour and effectiveness to communicate across cultures. The questions also

probed how line managers adapt their verbal and nonverbal messages to the appropriate cultural context to ensure effective communication outcomes when communicating with a subordinate from a different cultural background. Furthermore, perceptions regarding the effect of a multicultural and multilingual environment in universities on achieving effective communication outcomes were explored.

- Element 13: Integrated approach to effective line management communication

By posing these questions, the perceived extent to which intercultural barriers impact on effective interpersonal interaction between a line managers and a subordinate from a different cultural background was explored. The extent to which line managers perceived intercultural communication competence to contribute towards obviating intercultural barriers to effective communication, and thereby achieving effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and ultimately, strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates, was determined. In addition, the nature of the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication competence for line management was explored.

- Element 14: Effective communication outcomes

The question explored to what extent line management communication, in particular interpersonal communication competence, contributed towards creating or enhancing a shared identity, shared culture and shared values among culturally diverse employees?

- Element 15: Mindful manager - No questions were posed to any of the participants.

Once the participants for the interviews were selected and the interview guides for the semi-structured interviews were finalised, the procedure for collecting data by means of interviews commenced. The data collection procedure is discussed further in the next section.

- *Data collection procedure*

The data collection process started with a formal request to the office of the Registrar at each of the three selected universities for permission to conduct the research, which is attached as Appendix B. Once permission had been granted, each university provided guidance related to ethical clearance processes and conditions for conducting the research. The conditions for conducting the research from each participating university are attached as Appendix C. Once permission to proceed was granted, the researcher ensured that each institution's specified ethical clearance process and other stated conditions for conducting the research were adhered to.

The next step that followed was an informal telephonic request to each of the selected participants to partake in a face-to-face interview. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the interview to allow them to judge whether they may be adversely affected by their participation. Once all the participants accepted the informal telephonic request, a formal and personalised email was sent to each participant to confirm the interviews. An example of the confirmation email is provided as Appendix D. The email confirmation included a formal invitation letter to participate in a semi-structured interview. This letter provided background regarding the purpose of the research, confirmation of approval by the Ethics Committee of the NWU to conduct the study, the method used for participant selection, the description of the interview, procedures and risks for participation and confirmation that all information collected during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. In addition to the letter, the relevant interview guide with the list of questions and a consent form was also attached to the email confirmation to allow the participants to prepare for the interviews beforehand. The formal letter is attached as Appendix E.

In order to develop a degree of detail regarding the participants and their workplaces, and to be familiar with their experiences, the interviews took place in the participants' natural setting as advocated by Creswell (2003) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the participants' offices, which meant that the researcher had to travel to the three universities to get to each participant's office.

Prior to commencing each interview, the researcher informed each participant that the interview would be recorded, kept confidential and used for the sole purpose of the study. Interviews were audio-recorded after each interviewee gave permission and agreed to participate in the interview voluntarily. Participants were requested to complete a consent form for record purposes and as evidence of these interviews (see consent form to participate in semi-structured interviews attached as Appendix F).

None of the participants objected to the fact that the interviews were being recorded. According to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005:66), audio-recorded interviews provide a level of detail and accuracy not obtainable from memory or by taking notes. During the interviews, the audio recorder allowed the researcher an opportunity to listen actively, to establish greater eye contact, to probe the respondents further where appropriate, to go into greater depth and to probe the reasons behind the answers, opinions, motivations or emotions in order to obtain a detailed depiction of the participants' experiences and insights. In the process of interviewing the participants, some information emerged that necessitated adjustments to the interview questions, depending on the position that each participant held

within a university. The interviews were limited to one hour and all interviews were conducted within the one hour time limit.

The researcher's position within the NWU and the Marketing, Advancement, Communication in Education (MACE) professional representative entity in the higher education sector enabled the researcher to establish rapport and trust with the participants and to engage the interviewees in an open and descriptive conversation. Once all 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted, the next stage in the interviewing process, that is transcribing, ensued. The responses of the participants were recorded and documented separately in the form of transcripts for further analysis.

- *Qualitative data analysis*

The primary aim of the qualitative inquiry was to address the specific research objectives (1.5.2.1; 1.5.2.3 and 1.5.2.4). Secondly, the qualitative findings were used to develop a quantitative instrument, a questionnaire specifically. Furthermore, the qualitative findings were used again at a later stage to enhance the interpretation of quantitative results. The summary of the overall themes derived from the qualitative study is provided in section 5.4.1.1.4. The qualitative findings pertaining to Building Block 1, Building Block 2 and Building Block 3 is addressed respectively in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

The method of reasoning applied in the qualitative analysis is inductive. This means, based on specific assumptions, the researcher would ask questions and end with descriptions, summaries, and interpretations of the responses received. In addition, since observations, questions and deductions are guided by assumptions, they are well established in the literature to avoid the risk of approaching observations based on subjective or faulty reasoning, as cautioned by Du Plooy (2002).

After all the interview data had been collected, the researcher categorised the interview recordings from NWU, UJ and TUT into three groups, namely, (1) employee communication, (2) human resources, and (3) line management. The researcher selected a category and focused on playing back the recording of each participant in the selected category while transcribing the responses to the questions according to the framework of the three building blocks and accompanying elements.

The researcher carefully read through each cluster of the transcripts, focusing on one element of a building block at a time. The process followed to analyse the transcripts started with searching for meaning and coding segments of text with similar patterns or insights. In qualitative research, analysis starts with coding the data by means of the non-numerical

examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns in the data. Once a pattern was identified, it was interpreted in terms of its meaning (Holliday, 2002; Babbie, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Babbie, 2008).

Coding involves the process of the grouping together of evidence and labelling ideas that are similar, so that they eventually provide the researcher with wider perspectives. When a researcher analyses the data by means of coding a story emerges (Creswell, 1994; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Hesse-Bieber, 2010).

Data analysis proceeded with the use of a detailed open-coding method. Open coding refers to the initial classification and labelling of concepts in qualitative data analysis. In open coding, the codes are suggested by the researchers' examination and questioning of the data (Babbie, 2008:124).

- *Qualitative results*

Three specific aspects of the qualitative findings are emphasised in this section. The three aspects are related to the development of a questionnaire for the quantitative data collection. The complete qualitative findings in relation to the three building blocks is reported in Chapters 6 to 8. The three specific aspects addressed in this section are: (1) the main themes related to the three building blocks; (2) the statements formulated in relation to the theoretical assumptions advanced in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4; and (3) the context-specific variables, items, scales and constructs used to develop a questionnaire.

These three aspects are described next, starting with the main themes of the three building blocks of IIEC.

1) Five main themes developed from qualitative results

- *Theme 1 (Building Block 1):* There is no enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority at transformed universities.
- *Theme 2 (Building Block 2):* There are inconsistent approaches amongst academic and support line managers in executing effective communication with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment.
- *Theme 3 (Building Block 3):* There are intercultural barriers that influence the extent to which the communication role of line managers achieves effective communication outcomes with multicultural subordinates.

- *Theme 4 (Building Block 3):* Line managers need to acquire and use well-developed intercultural communication competence to effectively execute the communication role of a manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.
- *Theme 5 (Building Block 3):* Interpersonal and intercultural communication competence reinforces the communication role of a line manager when facilitating strategic alignment.

2) **Statements formulated from qualitative results**

The pertinent qualitative themes were applied to the two theoretical assumptions advanced in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 to formulate statements related to the general objective of this study. This process led to the following three statements that were formulated and applied to the quantitative study to assess the generalisability of the theoretical assumptions and qualitative findings:

Statement¹: Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.

Statement²: Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment amongst multicultural subordinates.

Statement³: Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.

Statement⁴: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively.

3) **Context-specific variables, items, scales and constructs identified from qualitative data**

- Contextual variables such as years worked in a line management role, division where the person is employed at a university, line management level, gender, race, languages that can be read and written or languages that can be spoken and understood, informed demographic variables in the questionnaire. Additional

variables, including providing content, creating context, having conversation and gathering feedback, were used.

- Items and scales were established to measure how effectively line managers fulfil each task or action, how frequently each task or action occurs, to rate overall interpersonal and intercultural communication competence, and to rate the prevalence of intercultural communication barriers and the extent each barrier impacts on communication effectiveness.
- Constructs such as the phrases participants used during the interviews and the qualitative data informed the wording of individual questions and statements included in the questionnaire.

Based on the above important aspects gleaned from the qualitative data, the focus shifted towards the development of a questionnaire used in the subsequent quantitative phase of the study. The development of a questionnaire is described in the next section.

5.4.2 Developing the questionnaire

The next stage involved constructing and validating a questionnaire for the quantitative data collection, using the qualitative results, theoretical perspectives and theoretical assumptions. According to Schnetler (1989:44), a well-designed questionnaire boosts the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable levels of tolerance.

5.4.2.1 Stage 2: Questionnaire construction

The self-administered version of the online questionnaire is attached as Appendix G. The construction of the questionnaire is discussed on the basis of the purpose, the structure and the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

- *The purpose of a questionnaire*

The questionnaire in this study was used to fulfil the following objectives:

- 1) To evaluate how prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1).

- 2) To explore and determine the perceived practices and emerging challenges of line managers with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.3).
- 3) To determine the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.4).

- *Structure of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire provided background perspectives on transformation in higher education in South Africa. These perspectives are what led to the significance of conducting this study at multicultural and multilingual universities. Then, the questionnaire made reference to the purpose of the questionnaire and definitions pertinent to the study.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections, A, B, C, D and E. All items except the open-ended questions required an answer. Each section included instructions for completing that specific section of the questionnaire. Prior to commencing with the first section of the questionnaire, respondents were assured that their identity would be strictly anonymous and all the responses would be used for research purposes only. The next discussion focuses on the nature of the questions and statement of each section in the questionnaire.

Section A (Q 1-9) of the questionnaire required the respondents to provide demographic information such as line management level in academic or support divisions; number of direct reports; number of years worked in a line management role; gender; race; language proficiency.

Section B (Q 10-28) was informed by *Theme 2 of Building Block 2*, which established that there are inconsistent approaches among academic and support line managers in executing effective communication with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment. This section comprised two parts related to the communication role of line managers in aligning subordinates with the university strategy.

Section C (Q 29-48) was informed by *Theme 4 of Building Block 3*, which found that line managers need to acquire and use well developed intercultural communication competence to effectively execute the communication role of a line manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates. This

section comprised two parts related to communicating with subordinates from a cultural background that is different from a line manager's background.

Section D (Q 49-55) focused on rating intercultural communication barriers. This question specifically addressed *Theme 3 of Building Block 3*. This theme ascertained that there are prevalent intercultural barriers that influence the extent to which the communication role of line managers achieves effective communication outcomes with multicultural subordinates.

The theme of **Section E (Q 56-59)** was the perceived relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication competence for line management. This section addressed *Theme 5 of Building Block 3*. This theme established that interpersonal and intercultural communication competence reinforces the communication role of a line manager when facilitating strategic alignment.

In conclusion, respondents were asked to give an indication as to whether they would like to receive an executive summary of the results of the study. A total number of 85 positive responses were received, which represents 58.22% of respondents who took part in the survey. This response rate could possibly indicate how relevant line managers find the phenomena under study and their interest in gaining a better understanding of how to deal with this phenomena. Each respondent provided an email address to allow the researcher to share an executive summary of the findings once available.

The abovementioned construction and structure of the questionnaire facilitated the implementation of an analytical and descriptive survey technique to collect the data from a representative sample of line managers from academic and support departments at the NWU. This quantitative data collection is elucidated next.

5.4.3 Phase Two: the quantitative approach

The quantitative research technique used in this study entails a survey in the form of "a computerised self-administered" questionnaire supported by a "self-administered" questionnaire (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:259; Du Plooy, 2002:172)

The researcher used a simple random sampling technique to draw a representative sample of academic and support line managers from the four business units at the NWU. A simple random sample is drawn when a sampling frame is available and each unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected. The advantages of simple random sampling include that the possibility of selection bias is eliminated, a representative sample can be obtained,

external validity can be inferred and a sample can be drawn via a computer (Van Rensburg, 2000; Du Plooy, 2002; Collins *et al.*, 2007).

The NWU comprises a total of 3 556 permanent academic and support staff (management and non-management). Out of the total number of permanent staff, 77 are non-South African. Among the permanent staff, the majority (2 174) have opted for Afrikaans as the preferred language of correspondence, whereas 1 382 selected English. This study sampled from a population of 254 academic and support line managers at the four business units of the NWU, namely, the IO, MC, PC and VTC. From this population a sample of 195 was selected using simple random sampling based on specific population parameters, including managerial responsibility for developing, communicating and implementing operational plans informed by the university's strategic plan and day-to-day supervision of subordinates. The variables included the number of direct reports, number of years' experience in line management role, business unit and the section in which the line manager is employed (academic or support section).

5.4.3.1 Stage 3: Quantitative data collection

- *Administration of the questionnaire*

The survey was primarily administered in electronic form via email and was supplemented by a self-administered questionnaire to enhance a representative response rate. The researcher requested permission directly from the Organisational Development Department of the NWU to access the university's employee database for the purpose of drawing a complete and accurate list of the target population. Prompt feedback was given in support of this request by way of an Excel spreadsheet with the employee data.

The researcher solicited the assistance of an independent communication research consultant to convert the printed questionnaire into a programmed online questionnaire and to use their platform to administer the questionnaire online. After the questionnaire was formatted on an online platform, a unique link to access the online questionnaire was created for each respondent. The researcher compiled a communiqué explaining the purpose of the study, how the questionnaire was to be completed and requesting participation from line managers. This communiqué included a link to the online survey, which the respondents could simply click on to access the online survey.

An email was sent out to each of the 195 academic and support line managers. The researcher allowed sufficient time for the survey, which was conducted over a period of five weeks. The reason for this prolonged period is because this period included the beginning of

examinations, a school holiday, a public holiday and the beginning of a student recess. A reminder email was sent at the beginning of each week to line managers who did not yet respond to the survey. This weekly reminder contributed towards maintaining continuous and increasing responses from line managers. The researcher took into account the functional multilingual policy of the NWU, which recognises the use of three official languages and paid particular attention to line managers' specified preference for either English or Afrikaans as a language of correspondence. An exception was made to accommodate Afrikaans as preferred by some line managers from the PC by translating the communiqué to Afrikaans and sending the covering email on participation in the online survey in Afrikaans to the line managers who indicated it as their preferred language of correspondence (see Appendix H for the English and the Afrikaans email invitation to participate in the survey).

It was also ascertained that some line managers at MC and VTC preferred print communication as opposed to electronic communication. The researcher took this preference into account and converted the online questionnaire into a printed self-administered version to facilitate the manual completion of the questionnaire, subsequently enhancing the response rate. This option was also used to cater for any possibility of technical glitches, which could make access to the online survey problematic. During the data gathering, the researcher distributed a self-administered version of the online questionnaire to line managers who reported having difficulty completing the online version of the questionnaire. A total of 17 self-administered versions of the online questionnaire were completed and returned from MC, and 3 completed questionnaires were returned from VTC. These questionnaires were captured using a compatible spreadsheet to ensure seamless integration with the online data set. Thereafter the online and manual data sets were merged.

- *Questionnaire responses*

A response rate of 74.87% (N=146) was achieved from the 195 line managers sampled. The response was made up of 49 academic line managers and 97 support line managers. According to Baxter and Babbie (2004), a response rate of above 70% is regarded as very good. Therefore, the aforementioned response rate is satisfactory in terms of analysis.

Table 5-5 to Table 5-10 give an indication of the characteristics of the respondents by business unit; division; line management level; management experience; gender; race and language proficiency.

Table 5-5: Characteristics of the respondents according to business unit and section

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Business unit	Institutional Office	27	18.5
	Mafikeng Campus	31	21.2
	Potchefstroom Campus	65	44.5
	Vaal Triangle Campus	23	15.8
	Total	146	100.0
Section	Academic	49	33.6
	Support	97	66.4
	Total	146	100.0

There is a relatively representative distribution of respondents across the four business units at NWU. The highest number of responses are from PC (44.5%), followed by 21.2% respondents from MC, then 18.5% from IO, and lastly the lowest percentage (15.8%) is from VTC. The response rate corresponds with the number of line managers appointed at each business unit. NWU employee statistics confirm that the highest number of line managers are appointed at the largest campus in Potchefstroom, followed by the second largest campus Mafikeng, then IO and the fewest line managers are from the smallest of the three campuses, the Vaal Triangle Campus.

Table 5-6: Overall profile of the respondents

Levels of line managers	Frequency	Percentage
Support Section		
Executive Director	5	3.4
Campus or Institutional Registrar	2	1.4
Dean of Students	2	1.4
Chief Director or Director	34	23.3
Manager or Head	53	36.3
Support Section Total	96	65.8
Academic Section		
Executive Dean	11	7.5

Levels of line managers	Frequency	Percentage
School Director	27	18.5
Research Director	12	8.2
Academic Section Total	50	34.2
Cumulative Total	146	100.0

From the sample size of 195 line managers, an actual sample of 146 respondents was reached, indicating 74.87%. The majority of the respondents (65.8%) were support line managers, whereas 34.2% represented academic line managers. This higher response rate also corresponds with the fact that there are more line management levels established in the support section compared with levels of line management in the academic section. The five levels of line management in the support section implies that there are more line managers in the support section of the university because the academic section is mostly concerned with the core business of a university, that is, teaching and learning, conducting research and community engagement.

Table 5-7: Characteristics of the respondents according to gender and race

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	81	55.5
	Female	64	43.8
	Total	145	99.3
	System (Missing)	1	.7
	Total	146	100.0
Race	Black	30	20.5
	White	105	71.9
	Coloured	4	2.7
	Indian	1	.7
	Other	6	4.1
	Total	146	100.0

In terms of gender, there is a fair representation in the actual sample with 55.5% males and 43.8% females. According to NWU employee statistics, the demographics of the institution are such that there are more female employees (2 023) compared to male employees (1 530). The gender representation of the actual sample indicates the opposite for line management, with more male line managers compared to female line managers. This indicates that even though female employees constitute the highest number of total permanent employees, at line management level, White male line managers dominate the institution (55.5%).

The majority of respondents are White, who amounted to 105 (71.9%) followed by Blacks who amounted to 30 (20.5%). Coloured respondents within the actual sample amounted to 4 or 2.7%. Only 1 (.7%) Indian respondent was recorded and 6 or 4.1% of the respondents indicated their race as other. Even though the response rate across the racial groups corresponds with the racial demographics of employees at the NWU, 2 224 White employees; 1 117 Black employees; 175 Coloured employees and 37 Indian employees, the fact that the highest number of respondents are White (71.9%) is significant for this study because one could infer that the findings may be skewed by the majority view of a homogenous race as opposed to representative views across heterogeneous races.

Table 5-8: Characteristics of the respondents according to direct reports and line management experience

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Number of employees who report directly to line manager	None	3	2.1
	1 – 3	19	13.0
	4 – 6	33	22.6
	7 – 9	14	9.6
	More than 10	77	52.7
	Total	146	100.0

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Number of years worked in line management role	Less than 1 year	9	6.2
	1 – 3 years	27	18.5
	3.1 – 5 years	21	14.4
	5.1 – 7 years	14	9.6
	More than 7.1 years	75	51.4
	Total	146	100.0

In terms of direct reports, most line managers, who amounted to 77, or 52.7%, have more than 10 subordinates reporting directly to them. This is followed by line managers who have between 4 to 6 subordinates (33), representing 22.6% within the sample. Line managers with between 1 to 3 subordinates are 19 (13%). This is followed by 15 respondents, representing 9.6%, who are responsible for managing between 1 to 3 subordinates. The lowest respondents are those who occupy a line management position, but indicated that they do not have any subordinates who report directly to them. These line managers numbered 3, representing 2.1%. The fact that the majority of the respondents (91), representing 62.3%, manage more than 7 subordinates suggests that most line managers are managing heterogeneous teams. Therefore, the significance of line managers being skilled in effective interpersonal communication skills and intercultural communication competence is, generally, on the increase at the multilingual and multicultural university.

Line managers with more than 7 years' experience in a line management role have the highest representation in this study, amounting to 75 or 51.4%. This is followed by those who have up to 3 years' experience, numbering 27, representing 18.5% of those who responded. Line managers with between 3 and 5 years' experience have a 14.4% or 21 representation within the sample. The lowest group are those line managers with less than 1 year in a line management role (9), representing 6.2%. The experience of respondents in a line management role is significant. This confirms that most of those who responded are relatively seasoned managers.

Table 5-9: Characteristics of the respondents by language proficiency (reading & writing)

Item	Languages	Frequency	Percentage							
Out of the 11 official languages in South Africa, please indicate the number of languages that you can <u>read</u> and <u>write</u> satisfactorily	1	6	4.1							
	2	115	78.8							
	3	6	4.1							
	More than 4	19	13.0							
	Total	146	100.0							
Distribution of languages that the respondents can <u>read</u> and <u>write</u> satisfactorily (Frequency and Percentage)										
Afrikaans	English	Tswana	SeSotho	Sepedi	Zulu	Xhosa	Venda	Tsonga	Ndebele	Swazi
129 (88.4)	144 (98.6)	18 (12.3)	12 (8.2)	14 (9.6)	13 (8.9)	9 (6.2)	3 (2.1)	1 (.7)	1 (.7)	3 (2.1)

There are varying degrees of proficiency with regard to reading and writing the 11 official languages in South Africa and the 3 official languages adopted at NWU, that is, Afrikaans, English and SeTswana. Only 19 respondents, representing 13% of the actual sample, can read and write more than four languages, compared to the majority of respondents, amounting to 115 (78.8%), who can read and write two languages adequately. It is interesting to note that only 18 line managers, representing 12.3% of respondents, are able to read and write SeTswana, which one of the three official languages at the institution. The two most comprehended languages are English (98.6%) and Afrikaans (88.4%), followed by SeTswana and Sepedi representing 12.3% and 9.6% of respondents respectively, and then, isiZulu (8.9%), SeSotho (8.2%) and Xhosa (6.2%). An equal number of respondents, numbering 6 (4.1%), in a category indicated that they can read and write 3 languages in the 1 category and only 1 language in the other category. The minority languages of the respondents are Venda (2.1%); Swazi (2.1%, Tsonga (.7) and Ndebele (.7). This confirms that the respondents differ in their ability to read, write and apply communication skills in the three official languages of the NWU, and also in the other official languages in South Africa. The varying degrees of language proficiency makes the skill of communicating effectively with multilingual subordinates at the transformed university even more complex.

Table 5-10: Characteristics of the respondents by language proficiency (speaking & understanding)

Item	Languages	Frequency	Percentage							
Out of the 11 official languages in South Africa, please indicate the number of languages that you can <u>speak</u> and <u>understand</u> satisfactorily	1	3	2.1							
	2	112	76.7							
	3	12	8.2							
	More than 4	19	13.0							
	Total	146	100.0							
Distribution of languages that the respondents can <u>speak</u> and <u>understand</u> satisfactorily										
(Frequency and Percentage)										
Afrikaans	English	Tswana	SeSotho	Sepeidi	Zulu	Xhosa	Venda	Tsonga	Ndebele	Swazi
131 (89.7)	145 (99.3)	23 (15.8)	18 (12.3)	18 (12.3)	20 (13.7)	12 (8.2)	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)	4 (2.7)	6 (4.1)

In terms of overall speaking and understanding proficiency, 3 of the 4 categories indicate a shift. There are 3 fewer respondents, 112 (76.7%), who can speak and understand two languages. Six more respondents (8.2%) can speak and understand 3 languages. There are 3 fewer respondents, 3 (2.1%), who can speak and understand 1 language. In the category indicating respondents who speak and understand more than 4 languages, the response rate remained the same at 19 (13%). The language distribution indicates that respondents can speak and understand more of the official languages in South Africa. The only category that remained the same with regard to reading, writing, speaking and understanding a language is Venda, with 3 respondents, representing (2.1%). The majority of respondents are proficient in English and Afrikaans (read, write, speak and understand), which correlates with the majority of respondents who are White at 105 (71.9%). Most of the White population and Coloured population is English-speaking and/or Afrikaans-speaking. The demographic profile of respondents in terms of language proficiency confirms that the workforce in the transformed university is indeed multilingual and by implication multicultural.

- *Quantitative data analysis*

The statistical analysis was carried out with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc, 2009) by the Statistical Support Services of the NWU (Potchefstroom Campus). The analysis used for the objectives of this study produced the following statistics that summarised the collected data to make the interpretation comprehensible: frequency tables, percentages, standard deviations, means, skewness, kurtosis, factor analysis, Cronbach alpha coefficient, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, multiple regression analyses, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Standard deviations were utilised to show the dispersion of the data, while the mean was used to measure the central tendency of the data. Skewness and kurtosis were used to look at the distribution of the data. Skewness is a measure of the asymmetry of the probability distribution of the variables about the mean. The skewness value can be positive or negative, or even undefined. Kurtosis is a measure of whether the data are peaked or flat relative to a normal distribution. A brief explanation of the statistical techniques employed is offered next.

- *Reliability*

Reliability is concerned with whether the research findings are dependable, stable, consistent and repeatable over a period of time; meaning that if the research had to be repeated, the results would match (cf. Watt & Van Den Berg, 1995; Rubin *et al.*, 2000; Stacks, 2002; Rubin *et al.*, 2005). Consistency is the key to reliability; in other words if the respondents respond to the same instrument in virtually the same way, the instrument is considered to be reliable (Smith, 1988; Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). During reliability testing it is important to maximize systematic error (known error) and minimize random error (that which is unknown) (Stacks, 2002:131). Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instrument (Clark & Watson, 1995). In this study the Cronbach alpha was applied to determine the homogeneity and reliability of the variables measured. The coefficient alpha contains important information regarding the proportion of variance of the items of a scale in terms of the total variance as explained by that particular scale. The reliability coefficient can range from a value of 0 to 1.00, the latter being perfect agreement or consistency and the former indicating the total absence of agreement or consistency. Reliability should aspire to a point of 1.00, because it would signify greater reliability.

- *Factor analysis*

Factor analysis discovers patterns among the variations in values of several variables (Babbie, 2004). In other words, it simplifies the description of data by reducing the number of variables or dimensions. Factor analysis is used to determine construct validity and measures the degree of similarity in scale responses (Watt & Van Den Berg, 1995).

- *Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients*

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0.05$). Effect sizes were used to determine the practical significance of the findings. The guidelines for the interpretation of the effect size for a Pearson correlation are as follows (Steyn, 1999):

r=0.1 (small effect)

r=0.3 (medium effect)

r=0.5 (large effect)

A cut-off point of 0.3 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

- *Multiple regression analyses*

In addition to effect sizes, multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variables – Statement¹; Statement²; Statement³ and Statement⁴ – that were predicted by the independent variables – *Interpersonal Communication Factors* and *Interpersonal Communication Competence*. The effect size (which indicates practical significance) in the case of multiple regressions are given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999):

$$f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$$

A cut-off point of 0.35 (large effect, Steyn, 1999) was set for the practical significance.

- *MANOVA and ANOVA-analysis of variance*

MANOVA was used to determine the significance of differences between interpersonal communication and intercultural communication of demographic groups. MANOVA tests whether or not mean differences among groups in a combination of dependent variables are

likely to have occurred by chance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In MANOVA, a new dependent variable that maximises group differences is created from the set of dependent variables. Wilk's Lambda was used to test the likelihood of the data, on the assumption of equal population mean vectors for all groups, against the likelihood on the assumption that the population mean vectors are identical to those of the sample mean vectors for the different groups. When an effect was significant in MANOVA, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to discover which dependent variables had been affected. Seeing that multiple ANOVAs were used, a Bonferroni-type adjustment was made for inflated Type I error. Tukey tests were done to indicate which groups differed significantly when ANOVA's were performed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

5.4.3.2 Reliability and validity of the study

The validity and reliability of the qualitative and quantitative parts of this study were addressed separately. The most important criterion in research is validity and it refers to the question of whether the study is measuring or recording what it intended to measure or record (Du Plooy, 2002; Kalla, 2006). Two types of validity were examined, namely: (1) construct; and (2) external validity (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Yin, 2003). Another important criterion for research is the reliability of the study, referring to whether the results of a study are repeatable and likely to apply at other times (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Yin, 2003). These three criteria are commonly used in establishing the quality of empirical research (Kalla, 2006).

First, *construct validity*, also known as measurement validity, relates to the attributes of the collected data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Yin, 2003). More specifically, Du Plooy (2002) contends that measurement validity means that the measure must be stable and consistently produce the same measurements (or answers) over a period of time. Second, *external validity* refers to the question of whether the findings of the study can be generalised beyond a particular research context (Bryman & Bell, 2003); hence relating to the research design (Yin, 2003). Third, *reliability* refers to the repeatability of the results of the study, including issues of stability of the investigation and internal consistency measures (Bryman & Bell, 2003), an issue relevant during the data collection phase (Yin, 2003).

In this study, measurement validity and reliability were addressed through two procedures, namely: expert-jury validity, and construct validity. By claiming that a measure is valid, it is implied that it is also reliable. In other words, a measure cannot be valid unless it is also

reliable. Also, a measurement's validity depends on how closely the operational definitions overlap with the theoretical definitions of the phenomena being measured (Du Plooy, 2002).

Three individuals regarded as experts on the subject matter evaluated the merit of the measurement in the questionnaire. The promoter, co-promoter and an academic were engaged as independent assessors and requested to assess the structure, content and questions of the phenomena being measured with the aim to improve the measurement validity of the questionnaire. In addition, a meeting was convened with a statistician at the Statistical Support Services of the NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) to assess the measurement scales used and to ascertain feasibility to statistically analyse the measurements.

The second measurement validity applied is the construct validity. Du Plooy (2002) explains that this procedure is complex and involves relating a measuring instrument to some overall theoretical framework to ensure that the measurement is actually logically related to other concepts in the framework. In this study, construct validity was realised through the variable being measured against drawing from the six tasks of the manager's communication model and the definition of the four-step process of conversation, specifically; (1) providing content; (2) creating context; (3) having conversations; and (4) gathering feedback. The terminology used in the interviews and questionnaire was adjusted to concepts that the manager could relate to instead of using academic terminology to ensure that respondents knew what the phenomena referred to. Furthermore, the statements in the questionnaire are based on the theoretical assumptions derived from the LMX and AUM theories of effective communication (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). This again, confirms construct credibility.

Fundamentally, the questionnaire was constructed based on theoretical perspectives, theoretical assumptions, qualitative findings and the general objective of this study. According to Du Plooy (2002), it is advisable to pilot test the method used to collect data to determine whether it is effective. A restricted pilot test was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement employed in the questionnaire. The test-retest method was used through administering the same measure twice to a group of three line managers, but on different occasions. The scores from the first and second tests were consistent, revealing a satisfactory degree of reliability.

- *Triangulation protocol*

Earlier, triangulation was defined as using more than one method in the same study as part of a validation process to ensure that the explained variance is the result of the underlying phenomenon or trait and not the method. The convergence of findings stemming from two or

more methods “enhances beliefs that the results are valid and not a methodological artefact”. The process of triangulating findings from different methods takes place at the interpretation stage of a study when both sets had been analysed separately (Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

In recent literature, mixed methodologists have developed an alternative term for triangulation known as the “*fit of data integration*”. According to Fetters *et al.*, (2013:2143) “*fit of data integration*” refers to coherence of the quantitative and qualitative findings. However, the definitions of *triangulation* and *fit of data integration* can be confusing, as pointed out in literature. The reason for the confusion is that triangulation has two meanings, whereas fit of data has one meaning that is similar to one of the connotations of triangulation.

Triangulation can be used to describe corroboration between two sets of findings or to describe a process of studying a problem using different methods to gain a more complete picture (O’Cathain *et al.*, 2010). Conversely, both *triangulation* and *fit of data integration* refer to seeking confirmation or corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon (cf. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; O’Cathain *et al.*, 2010; Molina-Azorin, 2012).

In the context of this study, triangulation implies two connotations: first, the corroboration between two sets of findings and secondly, using different methods to gain a more complete picture.

Johnson *et al.*, (2007:114) describes the three types of triangulation applied to this study as follows:

- 1) *Data triangulation* – the use of a variety of sources in a study. In addition, the two sets of qualitative and quantitative findings complement one another at the data interpretation stage. During the data analysis stage, quantitative data can facilitate the assessment of generalisability of the qualitative data and shed new light on qualitative findings. Additionally, during the data analysis stage, qualitative data can play an important role by serving as an aid to interpreting, clarifying, describing, and validating quantitative results, and through grounding and modifying;
- 2) *Theory triangulation* – the use of multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the results of a study;
- 3) *Methodological triangulation* – the use of multiple methods to study the same phenomenon. Sequential triangulation is utilised when the results of one approach

are necessary for planning the next method. Qualitative data assists the quantitative component of the study by helping with conceptual and instrument development.

In addition, triangulation through *fit for data integration* provided stronger inferences, more comprehensive findings, increased confidence in results, increased conclusion validity, and more insightful understanding of the underlying phenomenon (Molina-Azorin, 2012). Furthermore, the following three possible outcomes were also assessed: confirmation; expansion and complementarity; and discordance (inconsistency or contradiction).

By applying the aforementioned triangulation protocol to this study, the following advantages of triangulation as pointed out by Jick in Johnson *et al.* (2007:114), were realised:

- more confidence in the empirical results
- development of creative ways of collecting data
- contribution towards thicker, richer data
- uncover contradictions; inconsistency or convergence
- contribution towards the synthesis or building of a theory.

5.5 CHALLENGES DURING THE STUDY

The qualitative and quantitative challenges encountered during this study included the following:

- Limited resources compelled the researcher to apply a design where one type of data was being collected at a time. Also, increased time demands arose from the time it took to implement phase one of the study across three universities situated in two provinces, namely, Gauteng and North West, and phase two implemented at the NWU.
- There was difficulty in specifying the procedures of the quantitative phase when applying for approval for the study at the NWU.
- The internal approval processes at two of the three participating universities proved to be very time consuming, which compelled the researcher to revise the timelines for phase one of the qualitative study. This had an impact on the timing of the subsequent phase two of this study.

- As a result of the time-consuming internal approval processes for phase one, the timing of phase two of the study at the IO and the three campuses of the NWU was a challenge because it spanned over the beginning of examinations, a school holiday, a public holiday and the beginning of a student recess.
- Limited consistent guidelines and case studies on mixed-methods studies in organisational communication posed another challenge that required the researcher to learn more about multiple methods and how to mix them appropriately.
- The functional multilingualism policy at the NWU necessitated the researcher to communicate in each line managers' preferred language of correspondence. Therefore, an email invitation to participate in the survey had to be translated to Afrikaans.
- The researcher is qualitatively oriented. However, the interpretation of the mixed-methods results required the researcher to apply a broader set of skills that span both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. Consequently, the statistical analysis and interpretation proved to be a challenge.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive explanation of the appropriateness of the selected mixed-research methods and the research design in the context of the interdisciplinary nature of the research questions and the objectives of this study. The pluralistic and practice-oriented pragmatism research paradigm underlying mixed-methods research has influenced the primary importance of the research questions studied and the selection of the specific techniques and procedures applied to conduct and report on this investigation.

The semi-structured interviews and survey used as the primary tools of investigation are described in detail, together with the steps followed from planning to implementation of the qualitative and quantitative phases in a sequential manner. In each case, the extent of interaction and integration between the qualitative and quantitative phases are highlighted to emphasise the complementary nature of these two methods in this study, which is set within a transformative, multicultural and multilingual higher education system in South Africa.

The recommended building blocks of the IIEC construct proposed in Chapter 2 (Building Block 1), Chapter 3 (Building Block 2) and Chapter 4 (Building Block 3) are used as a theoretical framework to bind together the qualitative and quantitative findings to contextualise the multi-level perspectives and understandings in a trustworthy manner. The findings of the empirical study are reported in Chapters 6 to 8.

CHAPTER 6:
PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF FINDINGS
BUILDING BLOCK ONE: AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR AN
INTEGRATED, STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE
COMMUNICATION APPROACH AT A UNIVERSITY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings pertaining to the seven elements of Building Block 1 are presented with the aim to contextualise specific research question 1.4.2.3 stated in Chapter 1 as follows: *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.*

The findings reported in this chapter are based on the following qualitative data-gathering method:

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with communication professionals (N=6), human resources professionals (N=3), support line managers (N=3) and academic line managers (N=2) at NWU, UJ and TUT during phase one of the study.

Having analysed the qualitative data from the participants in the semi-structured interviews (N=14) through *following a thread*, the researcher identified the following key theme from Building Block 1:

- *Theme 1:* There is no enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority at transformed universities.

The seven elements of Building Block 1 recommended in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.2) are used as a theoretical framework to bind together and analyse the qualitative findings. In addition, the relevant theoretical perspectives are applied to interpret and report on diverging or similar views, discrepancies or distinctive contributions in relation to the best practice requirements of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

6.2 THEME 1: THERE IS NO ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR AN INTEGRATED, STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION APPROACH THAT ADVOCATES EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY AT TRANSFORMED UNIVERSITIES

Element 1: Institutional strategic intent

- *Differing approaches to align subordinates to a university's strategic intent.*

At the time of conducting the interviews, two of the three participating universities were in a process of implementing revised strategic plans, whereas the third university was still busy with the process of reviewing its strategic plan. Notwithstanding the varying stages of implementing the universities' strategic plans, the academic (N=2) and support line managers (N=3) at NWU, UJ and TUT revealed that the frequency and approaches used to conduct a strategic conversation with subordinates to align subordinates to a university's strategy differ significantly from line manager to line manager and from institution to institution.

Across the three universities, the inconsistent approaches towards executing a strategic conversation with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment appear to be more prevalent among academic line managers compared to support line managers. The following two statements substantiate the above finding:

One academic line manager stated:

"There are four school directors and five programme leaders reporting to me. Every year in October we have a planning session. In academia, strategic planning and strategic alignment is routine. We know there is teaching-learning, research and community engagement to be conducted. Even if the university strategy is not yet communicated, we discuss our operational plan related to these three core areas. By end of November of each year all the performance agreements for the ensuing year are in place for my direct reports."

In contrast, a support line manager from the same institution responded:

"I conduct a strategic conversation with my entire team during my strategic planning session in November. Thereafter, I meet with my entire team once a month and I meet with all team leaders who report to me once a week in a combined meeting to

discuss strategy. It is imperative that I continuously remind my team leaders of the strategic intent of the university to ensure we align our efforts to the strategic intent. If we are not aligned to the strategy, management will never take us seriously.”

Another respondent commented:

“Executive management present the university’s strategy. Then academic and support line managers need to come up with operational plans and initiatives to implement the strategy. The operational plans of departments must somehow be translated into performance agreements with performance targets for each employee. Some line managers deem this specific role to be very important and practice it, whereas others do not practice this task at all.”

The differing approaches among academic and support line managers towards aligning subordinates to a university’s strategy attest to a gap that exists at transformed universities in as far as consistent communication approaches aimed at executing strategic alignment are concerned. This emphasises the relevance of conducting the current study and conceptualising a framework for IIEC to help identify assumptions that can guide line managers to fulfil this important communication role in a much more aligned and consistent manner. In the absence of such a conceptual framework, approaches among academic and support line managers towards fulfilling strategic alignment will continue to differ significantly and as a result, fall short of making an optimal contribution towards realising strategic alignment.

- *Differing perceived levels of understanding regarding a university’s strategic plan.*

The three universities use various internal communication channels to communicate the universities’ strategic plans to employees. It was, however, interesting to note that only one of the three universities communicates the university strategy to employees in the university’s three official languages, namely, English, Afrikaans and Setswana.

In all instances at the NWU, UJ and TUT, no specific communication channel(s) or communication tool(s) are used to communicate consistent and key messages specifically to academic and support line managers regarding the strategic objectives and priorities of the university. Also, internal communication does not supply materials such as common talking points, PowerPoint presentations or other appropriate tools to line managers to ensure that they are enabled to communicate consistent messages about the university’s strategic plan to their subordinates.

The interviewees demonstrated a satisfactory level of awareness of the existence of a strategic plan at their respective university. However, the level of understanding a university's strategic plan with regard to strategic objectives and strategic priorities differs from line manager to line manager. As a result, line managers portrayed inconsistent levels in their understanding of their university's strategic objectives and priorities. Conversely, the perceived levels of employee commitment towards implementing a strategic plan and employee motivation to help the university to achieve its strategic objectives differ considerably from line manager to line manager.

The differing perceived levels of understanding regarding a university's strategic plan is another indicator of a gap that exists at the universities. An effective and aligned communication plan aimed specifically at informing academic and support line managers about the strategic plan, strategic objectives and priorities will go a long way towards ensuring a shared understanding of strategic objectives and priorities among academic and support line managers. Once line managers are well informed about a university's strategic plan, then they will be in a better position to ensure that their subordinates are also well informed and aligned to the strategic objectives of the university.

- *No formal working relationship between internal communication and human resources.*

The three universities confirmed that there is no formal working relationship between internal communication and human resources in as far as communicating the university strategy to academic and support line managers and ensuring that line managers align their subordinates to the strategy. Subsequently, the senior communication professionals (N=3) and human resources professionals (N=3) all agreed that there is a need to clarify and formalise the working relationship between the two functions.

Without any doubt, the communication professionals concur that the corporate communication department should take the lead to establish a working relationship with human resources in as far as communicating a university's strategy to line managers and ensuring that line managers align subordinates to a university's strategic plan. Even though a gap exists within the universities regarding the lack of a formal working relationship between internal communication and human resources, this shortcoming is consistent with the status quo in many organisations as established in literature (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.1.2). As an illustration of the above result, a communication professional stated:

“There is no working relationship between internal communication and HR (Human Resources), but ideally there should be a relationship between internal

communication and HR. HR is responsible for the induction programme of new managers, management training, and performance management. Teaching managers to pay attention to their own communication behaviour when they manage the performance of subordinates in order to enhance employee motivation and performance is critical. Internal communication should play a bigger role in this regard.”

The establishment of a formal working relationship between employee communication or internal communication and HR is a critical prerequisite and a crucial first step towards advancing line management communication as a strategic priority and a managerial accountability. The joint responsibility between employee communication and HR should be acknowledged, clarified and endorsed by senior management to allocate the responsibility for line management communication to the appropriate custodians within universities. By so doing, employee communication and HR will be better placed to take more ownership to ensure that relevant measures are put in place for line managers to fulfil their communication role of facilitating strategic alignment.

- *Communication behaviours and values of line managers are not aligned to desired communication behaviours.*

The next common finding across the three universities is the lack of line management training to equip line managers with appropriate communication skills to inculcate aligned communication behaviours and practices that reinforce strategic alignment.

An HR director commented:

“The communication behaviours and values of line managers are not in line across the board. The majority of line managers do not understand the importance of communicating with integrity. I think that transparent and open communication should become a value that is stipulated and practiced by all line managers.”

Another HR respondent stated:

“We have the templates for completing task agreements but teaching line managers the right behaviours and practices to manage performance effectively is lacking. Managers need to understand that they are there to serve their employees so that employees can do their work.”

Another respondent reiterated:

“Support line managers tend to be more positive towards fulfilling their communication role compared to academic line managers. Support line managers are also more involved in the day-to-day running of the university. There are still many line managers who think that if I have a meeting with my staff once a month it is enough. But a meeting once a month is not establishing and maintaining a psychological contract with employees.”

A support line manager commented:

“I spend a lot of time repeating, repeating and repeating key messages to my subordinates. I compromise my own responsibilities as a director to make the time to communicate frequently. I also make an effort to coach subordinates to think strategically about their work.”

This finding points to a need for communication skills training to make line managers aware of the desired communication behaviours, and more importantly, to equip line managers with the relevant knowledge to enable them to practice the desired communication behaviours. The conceptual framework for IIEC must also aim to suggest assumptions related to appropriate communication behaviours by line managers to fulfil the communication role of line managers effectively and consistently. Fundamentally, the inconsistent and somewhat inadequate communication behaviours of line managers also point to a need for the leadership to lead by example and to model the desired communication behaviours to set an example for line managers. Additionally, line managers who practice the desired communication behaviours must be recognised and rewarded to encourage other line managers to perform accordingly.

- *Limited engagement of the university leadership to align employees to strategic objectives.*

It is noteworthy that although the three universities each communicate that university's strategic plan to employees through various internal communication channels, there is no concerted effort by internal communication at the NWU, UJ and TUT to engage the university leadership to play their part in aligning employees to the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives of the university.

Two of the three universities reported that the VCs take the lead in communicating the strategic objectives to employees. However, these universities do not engage the rest of the leadership as far as communicating the university strategy to their respective employees.

A line manager commented:

“The VC has campus visits but the attendance is poor, employees just don’t come. Then the VC sends out a video message but not many employees bother to watch it. So I do not think the current communication methods are effective. We need to find out what will work best for the leadership to engage employees in an effective way within our current climate and given environment.”

The leadership, line managers, communication professionals and human resources professionals each have a vital role to play in the strategic alignment process. These roles must be approached in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner to optimise strategic alignment and to contribute towards enhancing overall institutional performance.

- *Differing understanding of the concept of strategic alignment.*

All the respondents share an approximate understanding of the concept of strategic alignment (N=14), but there is no consistent and shared description of the meaning of strategic alignment in the context of line management level. It follows that across the three universities, there are inconsistent approaches among line managers (academic and support) to facilitating strategic alignment.

The respondents offered the following varied explanations of the concept of strategic alignment:

“The university has goals and a mission. My role is to unpack these goals into operational, doable, implementable tasks and explain the tasks in an easy language to my subordinates – that is strategic alignment.”

“Strategic alignment means aligning the services you provide as a department to support the core business of the university. What we do should support the goals of the university, otherwise it will be irrelevant and the university will never take us seriously.”

“Strategic alignment is understanding a university’s strategy, contributing to what the university wants to achieve and working towards the bigger picture.”

These connotations to the concept of strategic alignment confirm that it plays a role in the strategy execution process within universities. Furthermore, it is apparent that communication, in particular effective line management communication, plays a central role in enabling strategic alignment.

Element 2: Institutional culture

- Open, consistent and participative culture of communication versus closed, inconsistent and autocratic culture of communication.

The communication professionals (N=6) and human resources professionals (N=3) across the NWU, UJ and TUT describe the culture for communication in negative terms and use words such as “*inadequate*”, “*inconsistent*”, “*filtered*” and “*distrust*” when describing the culture of communication.

The participants concur that the institutional culture starts right at the top with the VC and executive leadership who set the tone for the whole university. Admittedly, two of the three participating universities conceded that their VCs were perceived to be leading by creating fear, and therefore the tone of fear was filtering down the levels of the institutions.

The three universities describe the overall climate within the universities as “lack of trust” and the culture of communication as “top-down”. The respondents from all three universities admit that ideally, the culture for communication should be “*transparent*”, “*clear*”, “*open*”, “*honest*”, “*two-way*” and “*consistent*”.

There is a perceived contrast between the current culture of communication and the ideal culture of communication at the three universities. This revelation substantiates the assertion made in literature (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.1.1) that organisations, including transformed universities, are faced with the critical challenge of an undeveloped culture of open communication. Considering that a culture of open communication is the most vital prerequisite for employee communication and reinforces effective employee communication (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.2), it is crucial for universities to initially foster an open culture of communication in order to create an enabling environment for effective line management communication.

- *No joint responsibility for creating a culture of open, honest and continuous communication.*

All the communication professionals (N=6) and human resources professionals (N=3) admit that there is no integrated approach involving employee communication, management communication and leadership communication in as far as fostering a culture of open communication that facilitates strategic alignment.

Ideally, the professionals all agree that employee communication should be integrated and aligned with leadership communication and management communication. However, in

practice the three universities seem to follow inconsistent and differing approaches. Two of the participating universities have started to work towards achieving an integrated approach between employee communication and leadership communication, however, integration with line management communication remains fragmented and non-existent at all three universities.

One participant responded:

“We try to make use of an integrated approach and influence the leadership to communicate consistent messages regarding the strategy and then we communicate the same messages through internal communication channels as well. But, there is a gap between internal communication and management communication. We currently do not have an approach to integrate internal communication with management communication.”

Another participant responded:

“The integration between leadership and internal communication is very good. But, there is a breakdown at management communication level.”

Establishing joint responsibility for creating a culture of open, honest and continuous communication is necessary if strategic alignment is to be realised within universities. Without a culture of open, honest and continuous communication it will remain very difficult to position line management communication as a strategic priority. The communication roles of leaders, line managers and communication professionals must be clarified and formalised as part of KPAs and KPIs to encourage each of the role players to play their respective roles to create a culture of open, honest and continuous communication.

- *Communication role of line managers is not regarded as a priority by most line managers.*

The respondents admit that line managers must communicate a university’s strategy to their subordinates and must make sure that the relevant strategic objectives and priorities form part of each subordinate’s performance agreement. However, line managers at the three universities often neglect this communication role. This implies that line management communication is not adequately fulfilling its function of strategic alignment.

A participant responded:

“Communication creates awareness of a strategy, builds understanding and facilitates strategic alignment, but line managers do not communicate adequately with their staff. We have noticed this challenge and I can assure you that it’s a problem.”

The inconsistent approach towards fulfilling the communication role of a line manager is mainly attributed to a lack of understanding of various managerial roles. The communication professionals (N=3) and human resources professionals (N=3) reveal that there is a need to teach both academic and support line managers at universities how to manage employees from day-to-day.

A human resources participant stated:

“Managerial skills are the building blocks for effective management. Often academic managers just focus on academic tasks and neglect other managerial responsibilities. Line managers should understand what it means to have a human resources role, financial management role and communication role in order to lead their teams effectively. Line managers who do not pay attention to these roles are not taking full accountability for their managerial responsibilities.”

These findings point to a need to formalise the communication role as a legitimate and important part of managerial responsibilities. The manager’s communication model could prove useful to clarify the communication tasks of a line manager to include in the line manager’s KPAs in an attempt to formalise this role and to encourage line managers to fulfil this role in a more aligned and consistent manner.

Element 3: Institutional communications management system

- *Communication policies and networks vary between inadequate to non-existent.*

The universities have some of the basic elements of the most important features of an institutional communications management system, including communication policies, communication networks and communication resources. However, these elements vary between inadequate to non-existent with regard to line management communication.

The three universities each have a communication policy, but there is no policy aimed specifically at management communication that seeks to define the communication role of line managers and establish accountability within a university for this communication role.

This indicates, once again, a gap which contributes towards the communication role of line managers not being regarded as a strategic priority.

Without any doubt, all three universities have a strategic plan in place for the entire institution. However, only two of the three institutions have developed a communication strategy aimed specifically at communicating the universities' strategic objectives and priorities in the form of key messages.

One respondent commented:

“A policy can assist to clarify the communication role of line managers and also, establish the necessary accountability for fulfilling this role. But, more importantly we need to shift the mind-set of line managers. The fact that there is a policy is not necessarily an assurance that line managers will adhere to the specific policy. If managers have not bought into the importance of communication, if managers lack communication skills or managers simply do not understand the communication process, then these managers will still find it very difficult to communicate effectively even when a policy is in place.”

Communication policies and networks are at the core of fostering an enabling environment to fulfil effective line management communication. For this reason, it is vital to pay attention to drafting and putting in place the necessary policies, networks and resources to support and uphold effective line management communication. Without the appropriate communication policies and networks, instilling effective and consistent communication behaviours and practices among academic and support line managers will remain a challenge. Moreover, a lack of appropriate policies and networks will make it difficult to hold line managers accountable to fulfil this important role.

- *Communication training and communication capacity building for line managers is important.*

In terms of communication training, the current role of employee communication does not put emphasis on supporting line managers with communication training. In addition, across the three universities, no dedicated training and support are offered to line managers to help them to improve their communication performance. This result contrasts strongly with the assertion in literature that training is the single most important factor in improving communication skills and competence (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.1.2). This implies that there is a gap with regard to communication training for line managers that should be addressed.

Almost without exception, the communication participants (N=6) acknowledged that there is no shared understanding and consensus as to who should be responsible for providing communication training and communication capacity building to line managers. The participants all agreed that internal communication ideally has an important role to play.

One communication professional responded:

“Internal communication has a role to play in improving the communication skills of line managers but this role is not clearly defined or understood.”

Another participant responded:

“Currently, internal communication plays no role in helping to improve the communication skills of line managers. Ideally, I think internal communication would be better placed at HR. When HR becomes aware of grievances against line managers who are disrespectful or those who neglect their communication role, then HR would be in a better position to intervene by providing communication training with the necessary support of internal communication.”

The next participant stated:

“As the communication department, we don’t have the power to approach line managers who fail to communicate effectively in their departments and instruct them to attend communication training. Internal communication is not involved in improving communication skills of line managers. There is a gap and this gap must be addressed.”

The communication professionals (N=3) from the three universities agree that improving the communication skills of line managers should be the joint responsibility of internal communication and human resources.

A communication professional suggested:

“Internal communication should not do the actual communication training or coaching but rather bring in an external service provider to offer training. Developing a plan or strategy for communication training should be a joint effort together with HR and internal communication.”

Although communication skills training is considered to be important, there are no planned communication training interventions aimed at addressing the communication needs of line managers and building communication capacity of academic and support line managers. A

noticeable challenge within the three universities is that human resources and internal communication have done a poor job of telling managers and supervisors about their communication responsibilities, training line managers to communicate effectively, measuring how well line managers communicate and rewarding the ones who communicate effectively.

Element 4: Common talking points

- *Inconsistent approaches towards delivering key messages and common talking points regarding a university's strategic plan.*

Only one of the three universities reported following a structured approach to identify and develop key messages related to the strategic objectives and priorities of the university. The other two universities seem not to link their communication messages to the overarching strategies of the universities.

A communication professional responded:

"Our focus is to communicate stories that highlight our strategic priorities. We rely on line managers and internal communication channels to communicate developments regarding the university's strategy to the rest of our employees. Internal communication does not communicate the detail of the strategy with line managers. What we do communicate with line managers is the golden thread through the strategy in the form of key themes that we identify and formulate."

Another communication professional responded to the contrary:

"Line managers develop their own key messages or communication agendas from the overarching university strategy. We do not formulate key messages and common talking points. We do not even support line managers with communication tools for communicating the strategy of the university."

These differing approaches attest once again that there are inconsistent approaches to delivering key messages and common talking points about a university's strategic plan to line managers and employees. The lack of delivering these key messages and common talking points to line managers implies a considerable communication gap at line management level. The gap provides an opportunity for employee communication within universities to understand and acknowledge that the line management level has an important role to play in facilitating strategic alignment through disseminating consistent and

accurate information about a university's strategy to employees and in turn gathering feedback from employees and conveying it to senior management.

Element 5: Communication activities

- *There is no integration of communication activities between the leadership, management and employee communication.*

It is apparent that the three universities make use of limited and varied communication activities within the leadership, management and employee communication domains aimed specifically at communicating the strategic plans. However, there is clearly no integration of the communication activities to ensure that the various communication activities reinforce consistent messages about strategic objectives and priorities.

All three universities indicated that they do not measure the effectiveness of the various communication activities used to convey key messages about strategic plans. Therefore, it is difficult for the universities to ascertain the effectiveness of the communication activities they use.

A human resources participant commented:

"There is no proper communication strategy that ensures that the university strategy is communicated at all levels within the university. We did spot checks and found that there are still employees who use the old strategy document who were not aware of the new strategy. What often happens in the institution is that you have the executive team with the heads of departments who are well informed of the strategy. But, they do not cascade the information to the next line management level."

With regard to the communication activities of line managers, both academic and support line managers highlighted various challenges they face when they attempt to create awareness and build understanding among subordinates regarding the strategic objectives of the universities. The challenges mentioned include time pressures, top-down communication channels and inconsistent messages.

In one instance a line manager stated:

"There is no bottom-up channel to convey feedback from line managers and subordinates to senior and executive management regarding the implementation of the university strategy."

Another line manager remarked:

“Communication is still top-down. Management decides on strategy and that strategy is communicated top-down instead of a two-way participative communication process.”

In another instance to the contrary, a line manager commented:

“Feedback from line managers regarding the implementation of a university’s strategy is sent to HR. Internal communication does not know what HR does with the feedback. There should be a link to internal communication to help us identify internal issues that need to be addressed through communication.”

There must be communication activities used by leaders, line managers and communication professionals that help to disseminate key messages and common talking points regarding a university’s strategy. Ideally, these communication activities must be aligned and integrated and ensure that the key messages are communicated timeously, consistently and effectively.

- *The communication role of line managers as conceptualised by D’Aprix’s model is implemented in an unstructured, uncoordinated and inconsistent manner.*

The academic (N=2) and support (N=3) line managers from NWU, UJ and TUT do not have a shared understanding of their communication role in as far as facilitating strategic alignment amongst subordinates is concerned. As a result, the line managers do not fulfil this communication role consistently and adequately. Line managers expressed differing views, understandings and approaches towards fulfilling their communication role compared to the ideal role explicated by the manager’s communication model.

There is a need to clarify the communication role of line managers as defined by D’Aprix’s model. In addition, this role needs to be contextualised as part of the day-to-day operational communication and strategic conversation conducted by line managers with their subordinates.

The human resources respondents concur that the communication role of line managers should be part of each manager’s job description, but that is not currently the case. This finding is consistent with the prevalent challenge pointed out in the literature, namely that line managers are not held accountable for their communication role and that this communication role does not form part of line managers’ KPAs or performance appraisal (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1). This finding is elaborated further in the subsequent Element 6.

A participant commented:

“The implementation of the communication role of a line manager is below average. There are inconsistent approaches amongst line managers towards fulfilling the day-to-day operational communication with subordinates. Internal communication should collaborate with HR and define this communication role as a first step towards fostering a shared understanding of this role.”

Another respondent remarked:

“Some managers just copy and paste operational plans into performance agreements and do not make them relevant to each employee’s responsibilities and KPAs. Effective communication should help managers to explain each subordinate’s role and provide continuous performance feedback.”

The manager’s communication model conceptualised by D’Aprix is at the heart of explicating the tasks of the communication role of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment. This model could serve as the best suited prototype to clarify the specific tasks of the communication role of line managers as suggested in the literature (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). Furthermore, it is imperative that universities should adopt and adapt the manager’s communication model as a step towards creating a shared understanding of the communication role among academic and support line managers. In addition, the model can serve as guide to universities to implement the line managers’ communication role in a more structured, coordinated and consistent manner.

Element 6: Effective line manager-to-employee communication

- *Effective communication is considered to be important, but its meaning in the context of line manager-employee communication differs significantly.*

Very few participants seem to link their comprehension of effective communication to the six tasks of a manager’s communication model and the four-step process of conversation elucidated in Chapter 3 (see paragraph 3.2.2.3). However, all the respondents agree that effective communication by line managers is important.

The following statements support the above finding:

“Effective communication is conveying messages but more importantly, listening to get feedback because that feedback helps you to adjust your messages to make sure that you are understood. If you keep on communicating and not listening,

sometimes you will miscommunicate. So just sending an email is not communicating effectively. Allowing feedback is key and listening is critical.”

“Effective communication is important for optimum performance. It is about repeating, repeating, listening, listening and once your expectations are clear in your employee’s minds, then they will be able to execute their responsibilities.”

“Effective communication means that the message is well understood... Effective communication is essential. The important thing is that managers must walk the talk. You can’t say one thing and do something else.”

“I think effective communication is the key to any organisation’s success. If you cannot communicate effectively, you will not be able to achieve your objectives. There is sometimes a disjuncture between where management is and where employees are. Management often thinks they communicate but I do not think they communicate at the right level. The communication does not come through to employees on the ground.”

Human resources and communication professionals perceive the communication satisfaction levels of employees as unfavourable. This could be attributed, once again, to the inconsistent approaches and practices to day-to-day operational communication and strategic conversation among academic and support line managers. Also, this could be indicative of the probability that some subordinates experience the line manager-to-employee communication as ineffective.

An HR respondent remarked:

“Clearly, there is a lack of consistent communication among line managers. Managers tend to send a lot of emails and face-to-face communication is sometimes lacking. Face-to-face communication is what is needed to unpack what is written in an email to make sure that the message is understood. The assumption often made is that when I have sent you an email and you have read it, then you should understand it. Sometimes the intended meaning and the interpretation and understanding of the message may differ.”

The standard for day-to-day operational communication differs significantly from line manager to line manager. Some line managers use weekly status meetings with their subordinates, while others conduct one-on-one meetings on a regular basis. Other managers have conversations and provide feedback to subordinates on a monthly basis.

The primary contributing factor that causes limited or unfulfilling day-to-day operational communication with subordinates cited by line managers is time pressures.

- *No measures are in place to hold managers accountable for effective communication.*

At the three participating universities, line managers are not held accountable for effective communication with employees. Effective communication aimed at facilitating strategic alignment is not a specific KPA on which line managers are measured to determine communication effectiveness. Interestingly, although line managers are not held accountable for effective communication, a difference was reported in terms of how support line managers' communication behaviours are perceived compared to academic line managers.

Human resources and communications respondents both reported that support line managers are generally perceived to be better communicators than academic line managers. The main reason provided was that academic line managers are mostly researchers who became managers. They are regarded as experts in their respective subject fields, but they possess limited management, people and communication skills and experience. Overall, the communication skills of support and line managers are perceived to vary from a few who are fairly good to the majority who do not seem to take their communication role seriously and or who implement this function inconsistently and in an unstructured manner. This implies that line managers could play a much bigger role in fulfilling strategic alignment and contributing to the performance of universities.

Element 7: Communication performance measurement

- *Measuring the communication performance of line managers should become a priority for HR and Corporate Communication.*

Human resources participants (N=3) agree that communication performance measurement must be included as part of a performance management policy and internal communication policy or management communication policy. Ideally, the relevant policy should spell out that HR should measure the communication behaviour of each line manager as part of conducting a performance appraisal. A human resources respondent maintains that if such a policy statement remains absent, line managers' focus will be drawn to other managerial tasks instead of their communication role and behaviour.

A human resources respondent elaborated:

“Currently there are no KPIs included in the task agreements of line managers, therefore, there is no criteria put in place to measure communication performance. Until such time that we include communication KPIs, it will be very difficult to hold managers accountable for effective communication.”

Another respondent remarked:

“Currently, there are no KPI’s set for managers related to their communication role. Line management communication is measured in general terms by climate and culture surveys but we do not measure specific line manager’s communication skills in practice. This is definitely a gap.”

A human resources director commented:

“Every manager has more or less the following role - managing their production function and this role is included in their KPAs. Ideally, a manager should also have other KPAs as part of their performance agreement including financial management, staff management and communication management. I have yet to see a task agreement where communication forms part of the formal performance task agreement. I am so convinced that communication has never featured as a KPA in a task agreement of a manager in academia. The task agreement should include communication management within a university and even outside the university and measure how this task is fulfilled by each line manager.”

Currently, the universities do not offer recognition or incentives for good and effective communication behaviours by line managers. The respondents support the idea of a reliable recognition and rewards programme to encourage the desired communication behaviours among line managers.

A respondent motivated her statement by commenting that:

“Good communication skills go hand-in-hand with a good manager and a good leader. Line managers who communicate effectively and set a good example for others to follow should be recognised and rewarded but that is not the case”.

The foregoing discussion sheds light on some obvious gaps and challenges identified pertaining to best practice requirements of employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. These gaps

and challenges thwart the prospect of inculcating an enabling environment for a culture of open communication that reinforces employee communication at transformed universities. Furthermore, the identified gaps inhibit the possible fostering of an enabling environment for effective line management communication that can enhance employee understanding and employee commitment towards achieving the strategic objectives and goals of a university.

The communication role of line managers is at the core of the IIEC model. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that in principle the communication role of line managers must be approached from a premise that it requires an enabling environment, first and foremost, in order to be enhanced within the heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual university work environment.

In the absence of such an enabling environment, managers find it difficult, if not impossible, to execute their communication role consistently and effectively as part of their day-to-day line management role and as part of the strategic management process of the institutions.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The semi-structured interviews enhanced the insight of the researcher regarding the execution of effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment at transformed universities. What is evident from the overall findings is that employee communication is not adequately fulfilling its function with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment within universities. Two key discoveries provide compelling empirical evidence in support of this result.

First, the status quo within transformed universities reveals a few best practices in support of an optimal enabling environment. Simultaneously, there are numerous gaps and challenges that inhibit an enabling environment and the achievement of an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority.

Second, the findings also attest that ideally the transformed universities should acknowledge the significance of the communication role of line managers in as far as facilitating strategic alignment is concerned. In practice, this role is seriously undermined by a lack of a shared understanding of this role and the lack of an enabling environment that advocates the communication role of line managers as a core managerial accountability.

This contrast between the ideal and the status quo substantiates that there is very little information about how the South African public higher education sector in particular applies employee communication assumptions and best practices within the specific context of strategic alignment in order to enhance institutional performance. For communication to become an effective strategic alignment enabler, it has to be practiced and applied effectively and consistently by both academic and support line managers within universities.

A conceptual framework for IIEC will make a distinct contribution by providing a common basis for universities to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices that can help advocate effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a managerial accountability. Moreover, the conceptual framework could stimulate a discourse on the joint accountability of the leadership, line managers, communication professionals and human resources professionals in facilitating strategic alignment through an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach within universities.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 report on the qualitative and quantitative findings of Building Block 2 and Building Block 3 respectively.

CHAPTER 7:
PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF FINDINGS
BUILDING BLOCK 2: THE INTERPERSONAL DIMENSION OF
EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings pertaining to the four elements of Building Block 2 are presented with the aim to answer specific research question 1.4.2.3, stated in Chapter 1 as follows: *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

The findings reported in this chapter are based on the following data-gathering stages:

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with communication professionals (N=6), human resources professionals (N=3), support line managers (N=3) and academic line managers (N=2) at NWU, UJ and TUT during phase one of the study.
- A survey conducted among academic (N=49) and support (N= 97) line managers at the NWU during phase two of the study.

Having analysed the qualitative data from the participants in the semi-structured interviews (N=14) through *following a thread*, the researcher identified the following key theme pertaining to Building Block 2:

- *Theme 2:* There are inconsistent approaches amongst academic and support line managers in executing effective communication with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment.

The analyses, reporting and interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative datasets are presented through a narrative utilising Building Block 2 as recommended in Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.2) as a theoretical framework to bind together the qualitative and quantitative findings in a contextualised and trustworthy manner. In addition, the aim of using both datasets is to further describe, validate, complement or indicate any discrepancies in pertinent findings from both datasets.

7.2 THE INTERPERSONAL DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

7.2.1 Interpersonal communication competence

One of the key elements of the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication is *interpersonal communication competence* (Building Block 2: element 8). According to the theoretical assumption advanced in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3.2), the six steps of the manager's communication model conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) necessitate interpersonal communication competence to provide content, create context, have conversations and gather feedback among subordinates through day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation. The outcome of the specific line manager-subordinate communication is to realise effective communication outcomes that enable strategic alignment. It was assumed in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.3.2) that:

Interpersonal communication competence leads to effective communication outcomes. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes enhance high-quality relationships. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates.

In order to gather the perspectives of line managers regarding interpersonal communication competence, quantitative and qualitative questions were posed. Quantitatively, three specific questions were asked (see questionnaire section B: questions 25 to 27). The first question rated the line managers' perceived level of interpersonal communication competence. The second question assessed the extent to which line managers thought interpersonal communication competence enhance high-quality relations. The third question measured the opinion of participants as to whether the NWU considers this competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role of a line manager satisfactorily.

Table 7-1 summarises the frequencies of the responses of line managers to the three specific questions.

Table 7-1: Frequencies of interpersonal communication competence

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Overall interpersonal communication competence when you convey day-to-day work instructions and provide feedback to subordinates.		
Outstanding	9	6.50
Very Good	90	65.20
Good	34	24.60
Fair	4	2.90
Poor	1	0.70
Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with my subordinates.		
Strongly Agree	105	76.10
Agree	26	18.80
Uncertain	2	1.40
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly Disagree	3	2.20
The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil my communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.		
Strongly Agree	52	37.70
Agree	50	36.20
Uncertain	25	18.10
Disagree	3	2.20
Strongly Disagree	5	3.6

Table 7-1 indicates that overall, 96.30% (N=133) of the participants rated their competence as between outstanding and good. The majority of line managers were of the opinion that their overall interpersonal communication competence when they convey day-to-day work instructions and provide feedback to subordinates was very good (65.20%, N=90), and good (24.60%, N=34). A handful of participants 6.50% (N=9) felt that their interpersonal communication competence was outstanding. A few, 2.90% (N=4), decided that their competence was fair, while only 0.70% (N=1) rated their competence as poor. This result indicates that the majority of line managers regard their interpersonal communication competence to be up to standard.

With regard to the perspectives of line managers about their approaches in executing effective communication with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment, the quantitative results discussed above and the ensuing qualitative results corroborate. The results indicate that even though interpersonal communication is considered important in fulfilling strategic alignment, there are inconsistent approaches among line managers when it comes to fulfilling day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation.

The qualitative results show that the prevailing perception amongst participants from the NWU, UJ and TUT was that, overall, the line managers' interpersonal communication competence was "good" or "satisfactory". However, some line managers acknowledged that there is room for improvement. These views are somewhat consistent with the rating of the line managers' interpersonal communication competence reported in Table 7-1.

Furthermore, line managers (N=5) conceded that they regard effective interpersonal communication competence as a key prerequisite to fulfilling the communication role of a line manager specifically aimed at achieving strategic alignment. The respondents used words such as '*critical*', '*very important*', and '*vital*' to describe how important effective interpersonal communication competence is in fulfilling the communication role of a line manager.

In terms of the specific outcome of interpersonal communication competence, that is, high-quality relations with subordinates, an overwhelming 105 line managers (76.10%) strongly agreed with the statement that good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates. Another 18.80% (N=26) of participants also agreed with this statement. Some 2.20% (N=3) answered in the negative and strongly disagreed, while 1.40% (N=2) remained uncertain.

The qualitative perspectives of line managers expand further on the quantitative findings and provide some context. Even though there seems to be overwhelming consensus that good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist, line managers concede that they find it difficult to have high-quality relations with all subordinates, mainly due to time constraints. As a result, line managers (N=5) acknowledge that they have high-quality (in-group) and low-quality (out-group) relationships with subordinates mainly due to time pressures, which is regarded as a dominant barrier to fulfilling equally effective interpersonal communication with all subordinates. One respondent commented:

"I try to be fair all the time and to involve all employees equally. If I give a subordinate my time, they must realise that they too must come to the party and reciprocate. If I spend time with a subordinate and I do not see the response I desire especially when I am under pressure, I will take their responsibility and give it to someone else so that we execute our work and meet the set deadlines."

It was interesting to note a slight contrast in the views of the participants with regard to the third statement indicated in Table 7-1. The responses to the third statement indicated a noteworthy split of the views regarding the perceived importance that the NWU places on good interpersonal communication competence as a critical prerequisite for line managers to fulfil their communication role satisfactorily. A total of 37.70% (N=52) of participants strongly agreed that the NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role of a line manager satisfactorily. Some 36.20% (N=50) of participants also agreed with this statement. Some 18.10% (N=25) of the participants were uncertain, while 2.20% (N=3) disagreed and 3.6% (N=5) strongly disagreed.

This result points to a key finding. In essence, even though the majority of the participants rated their interpersonal communication competence positively (N=133) and the majority (N=131) acknowledged that interpersonal communication competence enhances high-quality relations among subordinates, a notable number of participants (N=33) were of the view that this competence is not considered as critical to fulfil a line manager's communication role satisfactorily at the NWU. Only 37.70% (N=52) of the participants strongly agree and 36.20% (N=50) of the participants agree that the NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil a line manager's communication role satisfactorily. In comparison to the first two statements indicated in Table 7-1, this means that more line managers regard interpersonal communication competence to be critical compared to their perception of the importance that the NWU as an institution places on the criticality of this competence.

Out of the 33 participants who are of the view that interpersonal communication competence is not considered as critical to fulfil a line manager's communication role satisfactorily at the NWU, N=25 indicated that they are uncertain, N=3 disagree and N=5 strongly disagree with the statement. These participants (N=33) point to a need that exists across the NWU to advocate interpersonal communication competence as a prerequisite to fulfil the communication role of line managers adequately in as far as strategic alignment is concerned. The perceived lack of valuing interpersonal communication competence perpetuates the long-held view within universities that the communication role of line managers is a "nice to have" managerial competency instead of a core managerial

accountability. Also, this may be regarded as a contributing factor to the difficulty experienced within universities to hold line managers accountable for line management communication. This key finding was also confirmed by open-ended responses to question 28 of Section B and pertinent qualitative results.

When comparing the qualitative findings of line managers' (N=5) responses and of the open-ended responses to question 28 of Section B with the quantitative results of the third statement in Table 7-1, the findings corroborate that universities generally regard good interpersonal communication competence to be implicitly important. However, this competence is nowhere explicitly stated, nor monitored, recognised or rewarded.

To contextualise and expand on this finding, the following pertinent open-ended responses are highlighted:

“Due to the large and complex operational environment of the university, effective interpersonal communication is essential to inform staff of important and strategic information in order to keep them informed, motivated and feeling part of the organisation... It seems that senior management does not regard it important to communicate clearly, regularly and sincerely with employees.”

“Good interpersonal communication competence is critical to building trust among peers, subordinates and senior line managers in order to fulfil the vision and mission of the NWU... I think the NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence extremely important but the way top management goes about being the example is sad.”

“Interpersonal communication competence should be critical, but I do not think it is critical in the university at this stage... I do not experience interpersonal communication as a shared value – it is recognised at a cognitive level but not lived to any significant level.”

“Interpersonal communication competence of line managers is not measured to determine effectiveness. Good interpersonal communication is not measured and recognised. No training is offered to line managers to help them to improve their interpersonal communication competence. Interpersonal communication is critical but some line managers do not realise this.”

“No positive constructive performance is possible without constructive interpersonal relationships. Not enough emphasis is being placed on constructive interpersonal relationships. No sufficient time is available for development of interpersonal skills whilst the need for excellent communication is recognised.”

“There is no monitoring and evaluation to see if interpersonal communication competence is taking place. There is not enough training on interpersonal communication for managers or staff members.”

The aforementioned responses reiterate that a gap exists within universities. This gap presents an opportunity to develop a conceptual framework for IIEC that seeks to recognise interpersonal communication competence as a key prerequisite to fulfil the line manager's communication role.

It is important to point out that the above findings are mainly based on the participants' perceptions and therefore these results comprise an element of self-report bias (Uriel, 2013). The strength of the Likert scale used is that it gives an idea of how strongly the participants feel about the three statements posed regarding interpersonal communication competence. Hence it could be confirmed that the participants' perceptions related to interpersonal communication competence were largely subjective as the NWU employs no scientific measuring method or instrument to determine the communication effectiveness of line managers within the specific context of strategic alignment. For this reason, recommendations are made in Chapter 9 to counter the element of self-report bias in future studies.

7.2.2 Interpersonal communication items

7.2.2.1 Factor analysis of interpersonal communication items

A principal component factor analysis was performed on the items used to measure interpersonal communication practices in terms of the communication role of line managers in aligning subordinates with the university strategy (Section B of the questionnaire). Analysis of the eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the screen plot indicated that four factors could be extracted, explaining 58.13% of the total variance in questions 10 to 24 of section B. These factors were labelled: (1) *Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication*; (2) *Frequency of Interpersonal Communication*; (3) *Frequency of Context and Content provided*; and (4) *Effectiveness of Context and Content provided*.

Table 7-2 indicates the results of the principal component factor analysis. The loading of variables on factors, as well as the communalities and percentage of variance, is indicated. Variables are ordered and grouped by size of loading to facilitate interpretation. Labels for each factor are indicated in a footnote.

Table 7-2: Factor loadings, communalities (h²), percentage variance for principal factors extraction and direct oblimin rotation on interpersonal communication task or action items

Items	F ₁	F ₂	F ₃	F ₄	h ²
I listen actively to each subordinate – Effectiveness	0.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71
I communicate with each subordinate as a unique and valuable person – Effectiveness	0.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.69
I foster two-way communication with each subordinate – Effectiveness	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.65
I adapt my communication style to suit a subordinate during an interaction – Effectiveness	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.61
I gather feedback from each subordinate – Effectiveness	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.59
I establish trust with my subordinate – Effectiveness	0.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.56
I adapt my communication style to suit a subordinate during an interaction – Frequency	0.00	0.91	0.00	0.00	0.79
I consider my body language to make it consistent with my message when I communicate with my subordinates – Frequency	0.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	0.78
I establish trust with my subordinates – Frequency	0.00	0.84	0.00	0.00	0.71
I listen actively to each subordinate – Frequency	0.00	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.69
I gather feedback from each subordinate – Frequency	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.62
I foster two-way communication with each subordinate – Frequency	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.70
I communicate with each subordinate as a unique and valuable person – Frequency	0.00	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.62
I build employee commitment to the university strategy – Frequency	0.00	0.58	0.00	0.00	0.47
I indicate to my subordinates our division's current position in relation to the strategic direction of the university – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.00	0.69
I discuss current issues within our university to link the issues to my subordinate's context – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.81	0.00	0.65
I guide my subordinates to think about their role in relation to the university strategy – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.30

Items	F ₁	F ₂	F ₃	F ₄	h ²
I ensure that my subordinates clearly see how they can contribute to the success of the university – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.64
I give my subordinates clear messages about the university strategy – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.42
I give my subordinates clear work instructions – Frequency	0.00	0.00	0.59	0.00	0.42
I indicate to my subordinates our division's current position in relation to the strategic direction of the university – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.87	0.70
I guide my subordinates to think about their role in relation to the university strategy – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.69
I discuss current issues within our university to link the issues to my subordinate's context – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.63
I ensure that my subordinates clearly see how they can contribute to the success of the university – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.58
I give my subordinates clear messages about the university strategy – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.69	0.61
I build employee commitment to the university strategy – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.56
I use the university's performance management system to align my subordinates with the university strategy – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.58	0.36
I give my subordinates clear work instructions – Effectiveness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.39	0.32
Percentage Variance Explained	24.80	15.60	10.50	7.15	

Factor labels: F₁ Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication; F₂ Frequency of Interpersonal Communication; F₃ Frequency of Context and Content provided; F₄ Effectiveness of Context and Content provided

Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication (F_1) referred to the face-to-face communication between a line manager and a subordinate aimed at exchanging messages and influencing one another's behaviour and relationship to achieve effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning, motivation and trust and a high-quality relationship, specifically, mutual trust, respect and obligation (discussed in Chapter 2, paragraph 2, 2.2.1.2 and Chapter 3, paragraph 3.3.1).

Frequency of Interpersonal Communication (F_2) referred to the frequency of conducting day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation to create a shared understanding of a university's strategy, to provide feedback and to motivate employees to align with the university's strategy and thus, build trust (discussed in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2.1).

Frequency of Context and Content Provided (F_3) referred to the regularity of providing relevant content and creating context pertaining to the specific role of a subordinate in relation to the strategic objectives of a university's strategy (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.3).

Effectiveness of Context and Content Provided (F_4) referred to translating issues to make sense to a subordinate's context and to help subordinates to think about their role and work in relation to the strategic objectives of a university (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.3).

Table 7-2 reveals from the listed variables on F_1 , F_2 , F_3 , and F_4 that the specific tasks with the most significant impact on the effectiveness and frequency of practising the communication role of line managers aimed at aligning subordinates with a university's strategy, are varied. These variables support the statement made that the communication role of a line manager entails varied communication tasks or actions; therefore this communication role is multidimensional, as argued in Chapter 3 (see paragraph 3.2.2.1). Also, the four factors suggest that in order to fulfil each of the varied communication tasks, the ability to communicate frequently in ways that are effective and appropriate is essential (stated in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2.2.3.2).

Furthermore, the items listed attest that the meaning of effective communication in the context of the communication role of a line manager implies a four-step process of conversation between a line manager and a subordinate, which entails: (1) providing content; (2) creating context; (3) having a conversation; and (4) gathering feedback. This four-step process of conversation is enabled through effective interpersonal communication competence from a line manager aimed at exchanging messages and influencing one another's behaviour and relationship.

7.2.2.2 Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of interpersonal communication factors

The descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of interpersonal communication factors F₁; F₂; F₃; and F₄ are indicated in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of the interpersonal communication factors

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
F ₁ Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication	26.06	3.07	-1.90	0.41	0.88
F ₂ Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	32.47	8.68	-1.08	0.42	0.91
F ₃ Frequency of Context and Content	19.22	5.75	0.35	0.42	0.83
F ₄ Effectiveness of Context and Content	32.86	4.61	-1.52	0.42	0.86

Table 7-3 indicates that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients of between 0.83 and 0.91 were obtained. These coefficients compare reasonably well with the guideline of 0.70 (0.55 in basic research), demonstrating that a large portion of the variance is explained by internal consistency of the dimensions (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). It is evident from Table 7-3 that most of the scales of the measuring instruments have relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis, except for *Effective Interpersonal Communication* and *Effectiveness of Context and Content*, which were negatively skewed. The negative skewness is an indication that participants answered more in the negative or had lower scores on these factors.

7.2.2.3 Product-moment correlation coefficients between interpersonal communication factors

The product-moment correlation coefficients between the four interpersonal communication factors discussed in section 7.2.2 and the three specific questions asked pertaining to interpersonal communication competence (Section B: Questions and statement 25 to 27) are given in Table 7-4.

Table 7-4: Product-moment correlation coefficients between the interpersonal communication factors and questions and statement 25 to 27

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	0.21 [*]
3. Frequency of Context and Content provided	0.14	0.36 ⁺
4. Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.45 ⁺⁺	0.12	0.28 [*]	.	.	.
5. Overall interpersonal communication competence rated in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates	0.58 ⁺⁺	0.09	0.23 [*]	0.48 ⁺⁺	.	.
6. Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates	0.51 ⁺⁺	0.18 [*]	0.08	0.29 [*]	0.37 ⁺	.
7. The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.	0.23 [*]	0.10	0.09	0.18 [*]	0.25 [*]	0.34 ⁺⁺

* $p \leq 0.05$ – statistically significant

+ $r > 0.30$ – practically significant (medium effect)

++ $r > 0.50$ – practically significant (large effect)

From Table 7-4 it is evident that Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication has statistically significant positive correlations (practically significant, large effect) with the rating of an individuals' overall interpersonal communication competence in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates and with the perception that good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations with subordinates exist. Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication has statistically significant positive correlations (practically significant, medium effect) with Effectiveness of Context and Content Provided. Frequency of Interpersonal Communication has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant, medium effect) with the Frequency of Context and Content Provided.

Effectiveness of Context and Content provided has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant, medium effect) with the rating of an individuals' overall interpersonal communication competence in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates. The overall interpersonal communication competence rating has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant, medium effect) with the perception that good interpersonal communication enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates. The perception that good interpersonal communication enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates has a statistically significant positive correlation (practically significant, medium effect) with the perception that the NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to satisfactory fulfilment of the communication role as a line manager.

The product-moment correlation coefficients between the interpersonal communication factors and the three specific questions asked pertaining to interpersonal communication competence show that effectiveness of interpersonal communication, and by implication competence of interpersonal communication, is a significant driver in conveying day-to-day work instructions, providing feedback to subordinates and enhancing the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates.

7.2.3 Multiple regression analysis between dependent variables (theoretical statements) and independent variables (interpersonal communication factors)

Based on theoretical assumptions proposed in the literature review (Chapter 3, section 3.3.2 and Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.2) together with the findings of pertinent elements of the building blocks of the IIEC construct explored in phase one of the empirical study, four statements were formulated in relation to the general research objective of the study (see Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1). These four statements were applied to phase two of the empirical study to assess the generalizability of qualitative findings. With the use of multiple regression analysis, the statements were analysed from a more rational perspective. The approach followed for testing the generalizability of these statements comprised using more than one predictor variable to determine a probability. This probability, which is called probability value (p -value), is also known as the critical or exact level of significance or the probability at which a statement can be supported or rejected (Uriel, 2013).

Multiple regression analysis were conducted to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variables, namely Statement¹; ²; ³; and ⁴ (Section E, questions 56 to 59), that were predicted by the independent variables, namely Interpersonal Communication Factors

identified in section 7.2.2. Participants were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on the following statements:

- Statement¹: Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.
- Statement²: Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.
- Statement³: Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.
- Statement⁴: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university such as the NWU to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively.

The results of a multiple regression analysis with the above statements as dependent variables and the interpersonal communication factors as independent variables are reported in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5: Multiple regression analyses with Statement¹; 2; 3; and 4 as dependent variables and interpersonal communication factors as independent variables

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
	B	SE	Beta						
Dependent Variable: Statement ¹									
(Constant)	1.83	0.50		3.65	0.00*	7.80 [†]	0.45	0.21	0.21
Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.07	0.02	0.33	3.52	0.00*				
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.16	1.83	0.07				
Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.12	0.01	-0.14	-1.48	0.14				
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.02	0.02	0.14	1.44	0.15				
Dependent Variable: Statement ²									
(Constant)	1.59	0.53		3.04	0.00*	7.54 [†]	0.45	0.20	0.20
Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.06	0.02	0.30	3.12	0.00*				
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.18	2.09	0.04*				
Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.01	0.01	-0.08	-0.90	0.37				
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.03	0.02	0.16	1.64	0.10				

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
	B	SE	Beta						
Dependent Variable: Statement ³									
(Constant)	1.88	0.62		3.03	0.00*	4.05*	0.34	0.12	0.12
Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.06	0.02	.025	2.49	0.01*				
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.12	1.31	0.19				
Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.01	0.01	-0.06	-0.65	0.52				
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.02	0.02	0.11	1.06	0.29				
Dependent Variable: Statement ⁴									
(Constant)	1.59	0.80		2.00	0.05	2.93*	0.30	0.09	0.09
Effective Interpersonal Communication		0.03	0.28	2.78	0.00*				
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	-0.00	0.01	-0.03	-0.27	0.79				
Frequency of Context and Content provided	0.02	0.02	0.09	0.97	0.34				
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.08	0.94				

* p < 0.05

Table 7-5 shows that 21% of the variance explained in Statement¹ (i.e. Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment) was predicted by the interpersonal communication factors ($F = 7.80, p < 0.05$). Effective interpersonal communication competence was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement¹. This finding indicates that when line managers experience effective interpersonal communication, their perception of whether interpersonal communication enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment is more favourable. Based on this probability, Statement¹ is supported.

In Statement² (i.e. Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates) 20% of the variance explained was predicted by the interpersonal communication factors ($F = 7.54, p < 0.05$). Effective interpersonal communication competence and the frequency of interpersonal communication were noted to be significant predictors of Statement². This finding indicates that when line managers experience effective and frequent interpersonal communication, their perception of whether intercultural communication enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates is more favourable. This probability has a significant implication, that is, both effective and frequent interpersonal communication enable line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees. Statement² is therefore supported with the element of frequency of interpersonal communication as an additional enabling factor for effective communication with culturally diverse subordinates.

In Statement³ (i.e. Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees), 12% of the variance explained was predicted by the interpersonal communication factors ($F = 4.05, p < 0.05$). Effective interpersonal communication was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement³. This finding indicates that when line managers experience effective interpersonal communication, their perception that integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees is more favourable. Based on this probability it can be established that Statement³ is supported by the independent variable of effective interpersonal communication.

In Statement⁴ (i.e. A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university such as the NWU to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively), 9% of the variance explained was predicted by the interpersonal communication factors ($F = 2.93, p < 0.05$).

Effective interpersonal communication was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement⁴. This finding indicates that when line managers practice effective interpersonal communication, their perception that a Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively is more favourable.

Taken together, Statement^{1; 2; and 3} support the theoretical assumption advanced in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3.1.) that interpersonal communication competence will lead to strategic alignment among subordinates. This implies that a line manager with interpersonal communication competence will be more likely to be perceived as an effective communicator. Likewise, a line manager with interpersonal communication competence who communicates effectively will be more likely to achieve effective communication outcomes and similarly, high-quality relationships. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates.

Multiple regression analysis was further conducted to understand the relationship between specific questions asked pertaining to interpersonal communication competence in the execution of strategic alignment with subordinates. The results of a multiple regression analysis with Statement^{1; 2; 3; and 4} as dependent variables and interpersonal communication competence as independent variables are reported in Table 7-6.

Table 7-6: Multiple regression analyses with Statement¹; 2; 3; and 4 as dependent variables and interpersonal communication competence as independent variable

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
	B	SE	Beta						
Dependent Variable: Statement ¹									
(Constant)	2.34	0.38		6.21	0.00*	9.99*	0.44	0.19	0.19
Overall interpersonal communication competence rated in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates	0.16	0.08	0.16	1.90	0.06				
Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates	0.23	0.08	0.27	3.00	0.00*				
The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.	0.09	0.05	0.14	1.67	0.10				
Dependent Variable: Statement ²									
(Constant)	2.54	0.40		6.28	0.00*	6.91*	0.37	0.14	0.14
Overall interpersonal communication competence rated in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates	0.12	0.09	0.12	1.37	0.17				
Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates	0.26	0.08	0.29	3.14	0.00*				
The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.	0.03	0.06	0.05	0.51	0.61				

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
	B	SE	Beta						
Dependent Variable: Statement ³									
(Constant)	2.78	0.47		5.93	0.00*	4.35*	0.30	0.09	0.09
Overall interpersonal communication competence rated in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates	0.05	0.10	0.04	0.48	0.63				
Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates	0.29	0.09	0.30	3.11	0.00*				
The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	-0.37	0.71				
Dependent Variable: Statement ⁴									
(Constant)	2.60	0.61		4.30	0.00*	2.31	0.23	0.05	0.05
Overall interpersonal communication competence rated in conveying day-to-day work instructions and providing feedback to subordinates	0.21	0.13	0.15	1.57	0.12				
Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.06	0.96				
The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role as a line manager satisfactorily.	0.13	0.08	0.14	1.51	0.13				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 7-6 shows that 19% of the variance explained in Statement¹ (i.e. Interpersonal Communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment) was predicted by the specific questions in measuring interpersonal communication competence ($F = 9.99, p < 0.05$). The specific independent variable - good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates - was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement¹. This probability supports and reinforces the finding acknowledged in Table 7-5 with regard to Statement¹ which indicated that effective interpersonal communication competence is a significant predictor of Statement¹. This confirmation strengthens the generalisation of Statement¹.

In Statement² (i.e. Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates), 14% of the variance explained was predicted by the specific questions in measuring the interpersonal communication competence ($F = 6.91, p < 0.05$). The specific independent variable - good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates - was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement². This probability supports and reinforces the finding acknowledged in the preceding multiple regression analysis in Statement², which indicated that both effective and frequent interpersonal communication enables line managers to facilitate alignment among multicultural employees. Based on this confirmation, the generalisation of Statement² is strengthened.

In Statement³ (i.e. Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees) 9% of the variance explained was predicted by the specific questions in measuring the interpersonal communication competence ($F = 4.35, p < 0.05$). This probability reinforces the significant finding acknowledged in Table 7-5 related to Statement³, which indicated that Statement³ is supported by the independent variable of effective interpersonal communication.

None of the specific questions in measuring the interpersonal communication competence were noted to be significant predictors of Statement⁴ (i.e. A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university such as the NWU to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively).

The results of a multiple regression analysis with Statement¹; ²; ³; and ⁴ as dependent variables and the two independent variables - interpersonal communication factors (Table 7-5) and

interpersonal communication competence (Table 7-6) – support the specific statement associated with the interpersonal dimension of line management communication, that is, strategic alignment is enabled through effective interpersonal communication competence of line managers. This acknowledgement is significant in relation to the specific research question: *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?* The reason for this significance is that in as far as the perspectives of academic and support line managers are concerned with regard to executing strategic alignment, there is an acknowledgement of a perceived correlation between interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes (mutual understanding, shared meaning and motivation), high-quality relations (mutual trust, respect and obligation) and consequently, strategic alignment.

The qualitative findings corroborate with the above results and assertion. Both line managers (N=5) and Directors: corporate communication (N=3) concur that effective interpersonal communication competence allows line managers to be able to create shared understanding, shared meaning, motivation and trust among subordinates. Without effective communication, the respondents reported that it would be very difficult to build trust among subordinates. A line manager stated:

“Effective interpersonal communication starts with communicating with one person. If I am not effective in communicating with one person, it would be difficult to influence a group of subordinates. Effective interpersonal communication is critical because it also touches the issue of trust. By first starting with communicating effectively that is where trust is ultimately built”.

The above findings are significant to the specific research question 1.4.2.3 pertinent to Building Block 2 and the general research question. Fundamentally, this implies that a line manager with interpersonal communication competence will be perceived as an effective communicator. Likewise, a line manager with interpersonal communication competence who communicates effectively will enhance effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships, and as a result realise strategic alignment.

7.2.4 Differences in interpersonal communication factors

7.2.4.1 MANOVA analysis

MANOVA analysis was conducted to further determine how line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment in terms of differences between demographic variables including business unit, section employed, managerial level, tenure in line management position, gender and ethnicity. The results of interpersonal communication factors were first analysed for statistical significance using Wilk's Lambda statistics. Then ANOVA was used to determine specific difference whenever statistical differences were found. The results of the MANOVA and ANOVA analysis are given in Table 7-7 to 7-10.

Table 7-7: MANOVA – Differences in interpersonal communication factors

Variable	Value	F	Df	P	Partial Eta squared
Business unit	0.94	0.64	12.00	0.81	0.02
Section	0.97	1.10	4.00	0.36	0.03
Managerial level	0.85	0.73	28.00	0.84	0.04
Tenure in line management position	0.80	1.76	16.00	0.03*	0.05
Gender	0.86	5.40	4.00	0.00*	0.15
Ethnicity	0.77	2.16	16.00	0.01	0.06

* $p < 0.05$

In analysis of Wilk's Lambda values, no statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) regarding interpersonal communication factors could be found between business unit (i.e. IO; MC; PC; VTC), section (i.e. Academic and Support), and managerial level (i.e. Executive Dean; School Director; Research Director; Executive Director; Campus or Institutional Registrar; Dean of Students; Chief Director or Director; Manager or Head). However, statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found for tenure in line management position (i.e. less than 1 year; 1-3 years; 3.1-5 years; 5.1-7 years; more than 7.1 years), gender (i.e. male or female), and ethnicity (i.e. Black; White; Coloured; Indian; Asian or Other).

7.2.4.2 ANOVA analysis

Based on the statistically significant differences found, the relationship between Interpersonal Communication Factors (i.e. Effective Interpersonal Communication,

Frequency of Interpersonal Communication, Frequency of Context and Content provided and Effectiveness of Context and Content provided) and tenure, gender and ethnicity groups were further analysed using ANOVA. The Games-Howell procedure was used to determine whether there were any statistical differences between the groups.

The results of the ANOVA based on tenure regarding line management positions are given in Table 7-8.

Table 7-8: ANOVA - Differences in interpersonal communication factors based on tenure

Item	< 1 year	1 – 3 years	3 – 5 years	5 – 7 years	>7 years	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Effective Interpersonal Communication	27.67	25.96	26.20	26.50	25.76	0.48	0.03
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	34.25	34.74	33.65	35.79	30.49	0.09	0.06
Frequency of Context and Content provided	17.13	18.33	21.30	21.21	18.75	0.17	0.05
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	30.13	31.83	33.45	33.43	33.25	0.29	0.04

* Statistically significant difference: $p < 0.05$

^a Group differs statistically significantly from type (in row) where ^b is indicated

Table 7-8 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between interpersonal communication factors based on tenure levels.

The results of the ANOVA based on gender groups are given in Table 7-9.

Table 7-9: ANOVA - Differences in interpersonal communication factors based on gender

Item	Male	Female	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Effective Interpersonal Communication	26.37	25.72	0.22	0.01
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	30.83 ^b	34.37 ^a	0.02*	0.04
Frequency of Context and Content provided	19.86	18.49	0.17	0.01
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	34.03 ^a	31.56 ^b	0.00*	0.07

* Statistically significant difference: $p < 0.05$

^a Group differs statistically significantly from type (in row) where ^b is indicated

Table 7-9 shows that female participants tend to practice more frequent interpersonal communication than male participants. Male participants, however, tend to provide more effective context and content when they communicate compared to female participants. This

result is perhaps consistent with the assertion established in literature (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2) that men and women communicate differently. It was stated that the communication approach of a man remains linear, logical and sectioned, while a woman's expression is a combination of logic and emotion.

The results of the ANOVA based on ethnicity are given in Table 7-10.

Table 7-10: ANOVA - Differences in interpersonal communication factors based on ethnicity

Item	Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Other	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Effective Interpersonal Communication	27.57 ^a	25.97	23.50 ^b	24.00	22.50 ^b	0.00*	0.13
Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	33.12	32.67	31.75	40.00	25.67	0.33	0.04
Frequency of Context and Content provided	21.38	18.79	20.25	29.00	15.50	0.05	0.07
Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	34.39 ^a	32.85	27.00 ^b	32.00	31.17	0.04*	0.08

* Statistically significant difference: $p < 0.05$

^a Group differs statistically significantly from type (in row) where ^b is indicated

Table 7-10 shows that Black participants tend to have more effective interpersonal communication than coloured participants and participants from other ethnicity groups. Black participants also tend to provide more effective context and content when they communicate than coloured participants. This interesting result is possibly indicative of the assertion made in the literature that people from different cultures communicate differently. As mentioned previously in section 7.2.1, the quantitative results are mainly based on the participants' perceptions and therefore the results comprise an element of self-report bias. It is important in this instance to also note that Table 7-10 is based on largely subjective perspectives, therefore the validity of this specific result should be tested further.

Differences in Interpersonal communication factors were found in two variables: (1) gender; and (2) ethnicity. The ethnicity variable is particularly significant for the current study because it suggests that ethnicity may have an influence on interpersonal communication factors. This suggestion supports the specific emphasis placed on intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes, which is the central motivation for advancing the probable integration of certain interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management (discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.7). This purported integration is the

principal motivation for advancing the novel IIEC concept, and it forms part of the discussion of Building Block 3 findings in the next chapter.

7.3 CONCLUSION

In answering the specific research question stated in the introduction of this chapter, it is evident that in as far as the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment is concerned, there are inconsistent approaches and practices amongst academic and support line managers. The inconsistent communication practices pose challenges to executing the line manager's communication role adequately and to accomplishing strategic alignment. The inconsistent practices can be attributed to a lack of an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that advocates effective line management communication as a strategic priority at the transformed universities as reported in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the inconsistent approaches point to a lack of a framework to clarify this communication role for line managers at universities and to help to implement best practices consistently across universities. This challenge presents an opportunity to cultivate a more effective management culture through adopting an integrated approach to executing strategic alignment as part of the strategic management process within the transformed universities.

It also became evident from the four interpersonal communication factors that the specific tasks or actions that form part of the communication role of a line manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) are varied, so the communication role is multidimensional. The specific tasks or actions of this important communication role are currently practised inconsistently and are not supported by all academic and support line managers across the transformed universities. This challenge points to the need to develop a consistent criterion to clarify the tasks or actions related to the line managers' communication role, to instil shared practices and to measure the effectiveness of the communication tasks or actions when line managers fulfil strategic alignment. More importantly, a consistent criterion will begin to put measures in place to hold line managers accountable for fulfilling this important role.

Since the line manager executes a university's strategy by managing employees, the majority of line managers endorsed the assumption that effective interpersonal communication competency is a critical prerequisite to interacting with subordinates and to building their commitment towards a university's strategy through effective face-to-face communication. A noteworthy result evident from the quantitative findings was the reported differences in interpersonal communication factors based on gender and ethnicity. This

result suggested that female line managers tend to practice more frequent interpersonal communication, while male line managers tend to provide more effective context and content when they communicate. Also, Black line managers were reported to have more effective interpersonal communication than line managers from other ethnic groups. This interesting result is possibly indicative of the assertion that people from different cultures communicate differently.

Fundamentally, the majority of line managers believed that when they fulfil interpersonal communication effectively and frequently, and they provide clear context and content effectively and frequently, strategic alignment may be achieved. Interestingly, a noteworthy number of line managers at the NWU did not perceive the university to place the same level of importance on this competence as they do. This perception signals a need at the NWU and other transformed universities for a more concerted effort to advocate interpersonal communication competence as a prerequisite to fulfil the communication role of line managers in as far as strategic alignment is concerned. It is apparent that interpersonal communication competence is of utmost importance for the adequate fulfilment of the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment satisfactorily.

A significant result evident from the views of the majority of line managers is that effective communication, and by implication interpersonal communication competence, will lead to effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning, motivation and trust. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes lead to high-quality relations, specifically, mutual trust, respect and obligation. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high quality relations enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates. This finding is significant because it supports a perceived relationship between interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning and motivation; high-quality relations, specifically mutual trust, respect and obligation and strategic alignment. Also, this finding indicates and corroborates the theoretical assumption that there is a perceived link between the concepts of employee communication, management communication, interpersonal communication and strategic alignment. Furthermore, this finding supports Statement¹ pertinent to the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication which suggests that interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.

The next chapter presents and reports on the qualitative and quantitative findings pertaining to Building Block 3 recommended in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 8:
PRESENTATION AND REPORT OF FINDINGS
BUILDING BLOCK 3: THE INTEGRATED DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE
LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings pertaining to Building Block 3 are presented with the aim to answer specific research question 1.4.2.4 stated in Chapter 1 as follows: *What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

The findings reported in this chapter are based on the following data-gathering stages:

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with communication professionals (N=6), human resources professionals (N=3), support line managers (N=3) and academic line managers (N=2) at NWU, UJ and TUT during phase one of the study.
- A survey conducted among academic (N=49) and support (N= 97) line managers at the NWU during phase two of the study.

Having analysed the qualitative data from the participants in the semi-structured interviews (N=14) by *following a thread*, the researcher identified the following additional key themes relating to Building Block 3:

- *Theme 3:* There are prevalent intercultural barriers that influence the extent to which the communication role of line managers achieves effective communication outcomes with multicultural subordinates.
- *Theme 4:* Line managers need to acquire and use well developed intercultural communication competence to be able to effectively execute the communication role of a manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.
- *Theme 5:* Interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies reinforce the communication role of a line manager when facilitating strategic alignment.

An approach similar to the one applied in the preceding chapter is followed to analyse, report and interpret the qualitative and quantitative datasets utilising Building Block 3 proposed in Chapter 4 (see section 4.3) as a theoretical framework to bind together the qualitative and quantitative findings.

8.2 THE INTEGRATED DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE LINE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

8.2.1 Intercultural communication competence

One of the key elements of the integrated dimension of effective line management communication is *intercultural communication competence* (Building Block 3: element 12). According to the theoretical assumption advanced in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.2.2) there are intercultural barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes when line managers facilitate alignment between culturally diverse subordinates' work contributions and a university's goals and outcomes. Therefore, line managers who are mindful and possess both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies will achieve effective communication outcomes. Such line managers are able to build trust and facilitate strategic alignment across a variety of cultural orientations among subordinates. It was assumed in Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.2.2.2) that:

Intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence leads to effective communication outcomes among culturally diverse subordinates. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes enhance high-quality relationships. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.

In order to gather the perspectives of line managers regarding intercultural communication competence, quantitative and qualitative questions were posed. Quantitatively, three specific questions were asked (see questionnaire section C: questions 45 to 47). The first question rated the line managers' perceived level of intercultural communication competence. The second question assessed the extent to which intercultural communication competence enhances high-quality relations with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. The third question measured the opinion of the participants as to whether the NWU considers this competence to be critical to fulfilling the communication role of a line manager satisfactorily with multicultural subordinates.

Table 8-1 summarises the frequencies of the responses of line managers to the specific questions.

Table 8-1: Frequencies of intercultural communication competence

Response	Frequency	Percentages
Overall intercultural communication competence when you interact from day-to-day with subordinates from a cultural background that is different from your own.		
Outstanding	9	6.50
Very good	71	51.40
Good	48	34.80
Fair	4	2.90
Poor	1	.70
Good intercultural communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.		
Strongly Agree	70	50.70
Agree	58	42.00
Uncertain	2	1.40
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly Disagree	3	2.20
The NWU considers good intercultural communication competence to be critical to fulfil my communication role as a line manager satisfactorily with multicultural subordinates?		
Strongly Agree	28	20.30
Agree	68	49.30
Uncertain	29	21.00
Disagree	3	2.20
Strongly Disagree	4	2.90

Table 8-1 indicates that overall, 92.70% (N=128) of the participants rated their competence as outstanding to good. The majority of line managers were of the opinion that their overall intercultural communication competence when they convey day-to-day work instructions and provide feedback to subordinates was very good (51.40%, N=71), and good (34.80%, N=48). A few participants N=4 (2.90%) decided that their competence was fair, while N=1 participant rated their competence as poor. It was interesting to note that a few participants

(N=5) did not answer this specific question. This may imply that these line managers were uncertain as how to rate their overall intercultural communication competence or perhaps this competency may not be applicable to their current context as they are currently managing homogeneous teams. This result indicates that the majority of line managers regard their intercultural communication competence to be up to standard.

In terms of the specific outcome of intercultural communication competence, that is, high-quality relations with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds, the majority of participants, N=70 line managers (50.70%) strongly agreed and N=58 line managers (42%) agreed with the statement that good intercultural communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with culturally diverse subordinates. Some 1.40% (N=2) remained uncertain, while 2.20% (N=3) answered in the negative and strongly disagreed.

It was submitted that there are intercultural barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes when line managers facilitate alignment between culturally diverse subordinates' work contributions and a university's goals and outcomes (discussed in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.1). Therefore, line managers who are mindful and possess both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies will achieve effective communication outcomes. Such line managers are able to build trust and facilitate strategic alignment across a variety of cultural orientations among subordinates.

The above results related to intercultural communication competence speak to the theoretical assumption advanced in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.2.2). First, the majority of the participants, 92.70% (N=128), endorse the assumption that good intercultural communication competence of line managers may lead to effective communication outcomes and influence the extent to which high-quality relationships exist with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. Considering that the majority of participants in Table 7-1, 94.90% (N=131), also supported the assumption that good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with subordinates, the results in Chapter 7 concerning interpersonal communication competence and the results related to intercultural communication competence point to the implied relationship between intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence in as far as facilitating effective communication outcomes, high-quality relations and strategic alignment for line management. The implied and perceived relationship between these theoretically linked concepts supports the assumption that both intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence enable strategic alignment,

specifically with regard to the communication role of a line manager in fulfilling strategic alignment.

The aforementioned results give a clear indication of the importance that line managers attach to using intercultural communication competence to fulfil strategic alignment and the extent to which good intercultural communication enhances high-quality relations with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.

With regard to the perspectives of line managers on their approaches in executing effective communication with subordinates aimed at facilitating strategic alignment, the quantitative results discussed above and the ensuing qualitative results corroborate. The results indicate that even though intercultural communication is considered important in building mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual trust, line managers need to acquire and use well developed intercultural communication competence to effectively execute the communication role of a manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates (see qualitative theme 4 reported in Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1).

From the qualitative results, the prevailing perception amongst participants from the NWU, UJ and TUT was that good intercultural communication competence yields effective communication outcomes. However, some line managers acknowledged that there is a need for cultural diversity training to equip line managers with the necessary skills to communicate effectively and to build trust with subordinates from different racial groups. These views are somewhat consistent with the rating of the line managers' intercultural communication competence reported in Table 8-1.

The qualitative perspectives of line managers expand further on the quantitative findings and provide some context. The following open-ended responses substantiate the above finding.

"Good intercultural communication competence makes it easy to build a strong relationship with all my colleagues. Good intercultural communication ensures that all subordinates feel safe and experience a sense of belonging. Improved intercultural communication will lead to better understanding and mutual respect."

"Sometimes if an employee with a different culture communicates a need for service to a service delivery department the department does not respond. However, when an employee of the same culture contacts the same service delivery department they respond immediately. Intercultural communication competence is important because it can help to establish understanding of different cultures and to eliminate biases."

It was interesting to note a slight contrast in the views of the participants with regard to the third statement indicated in Table 8-1. This contrast is almost similar to the views the participants indicated regarding interpersonal communication competence in Table 7-1. The responses to the third statement indicated a noteworthy split of the views regarding the perceived importance placed by the NWU on good intercultural communication competence as a critical prerequisite for line managers to fulfil their communication role satisfactorily with culturally diverse subordinates. A total of 20.30% (N=28) of participants strongly agreed that the NWU considers good intercultural communication competence to be critical to fulfil the communication role of a line manager satisfactorily. Some 49.30% (N=68) of participants also agreed with this statement. Some 21% (N=29) of the participants were uncertain, while 2.20% (N=3) disagreed and 2.90% (N=4) strongly disagreed.

This result points to a key finding. In essence, even though the majority of the participants (N=128) rated their intercultural communication competence positively and the majority (N=128) acknowledged that intercultural communication competence enhances high-quality relations among culturally diverse subordinates, three more participants (N=36) compared to those (N=33) reported in Table 7-1 are of the view that this competence is not considered as critical to fulfilling a line manager's communication role satisfactorily with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. Only 20.30% (N=28) of the participants strongly agree and 49.30% (N=68) of the participants agree that the NWU considers good intercultural communication competence to be critical to fulfilling a line manager's communication role satisfactorily with culturally diverse subordinates. In comparison to the first two statements indicated in Table 8-1, this means that more line managers regard intercultural communication competence to be critical compared to their perception of the importance that the NWU as an institution attaches to the criticality of this competence. The 36 other participants who are uncertain (N=29), disagree (N=3) and strongly disagree (N=4) point to a need that exists across the NWU and other institutions of higher learning to advocate intercultural communication competence as a prerequisite to fulfilling the communication role of line managers adequately among culturally diverse subordinates.

This finding was also confirmed by open-ended responses to question 48 of section C and qualitative results. Moreover, this finding confirms that the current approach towards fulfilling employee communication and strategic alignment at the transformed universities should also take into account the significance of intercultural communication competence for line management in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. With regard to perspectives of line managers as to whether the NWU considers intercultural communication competence to be critical to fulfilling the communication role of a line

manager satisfactorily, the prevailing perception amongst participants from the NWU, UJ and TUT was that, ideally, universities regard intercultural communication competence to be important, however, this competence is nowhere explicitly stated, nor is any training offered to line managers to equip them with the skill.

Overall, the qualitative findings of the responses of line managers (N=5), communication professionals (N=3), human resources professionals (N=3) and open-ended responses to question 48 of Section C, when compared with quantitative results of the third statement in Table 8-1, confirm that a need exists across the NWU and by implication at other institutions of higher learning to advocate intercultural communication competence as a prerequisite to fulfilling the communication role of line managers adequately among culturally diverse subordinates. In other words, the current approach towards fulfilling employee communication and strategic alignment at the transformed universities should also take into account the relevance of intercultural communication competencies of line managers when they attempt to execute strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates.

The following open-ended responses attest to the above sentiment and findings.

“It is crucial to have good intercultural communication competence to be able to deal with intercultural challenges. It is nowhere explicitly stated that the NWU considers good intercultural communication to be critical to fulfil my communication role as a line manager satisfactorily with multicultural subordinates.”

“I have not seen any statement made regarding intercultural communication competence of managers. I have to communicate effectively across cultures as I work with many employees of different cultures daily, but I think that some of my colleagues are having problems with this specific aspect.”

“A manager whose intercultural communication skills are not good will struggle to be a good manager in the NWU of today. Multicultural subordinates are the realities of our country and the world and we need to embrace it.”

“Although communicating well interculturally is part of my basic communication “rules”, nowhere is this indicated, prescribed or explained within my role as a manager. The NWU could provide more information and tools to line managers regarding intercultural communication. I am not aware of any such material.”

“Transformation is very important to the NWU and to transform effectively, intercultural communication skills are crucial. Transformation of the workplace takes place on various levels of which cultural integration takes precedence. Open and

honest communication takes place only when there is mutual understanding and respect for each other's' background, beliefs and traditions. The more one knows about the other cultures, the better the understanding."

"The NWU talks a lot about multiculturalism, but gives no training on intercultural communication. This is something I feel we as NWU can focus more on. We as managers never received any training on how to communicate effectively in our intercultural environment. As a manager it is important to embrace cultural diversity and show understanding and care for other people's cultures when communicating."

"I am not aware of efforts being made, for example, courses or cultural events. I am not sure if the NWU understands the importance of such efforts. I don't know what the NWU expects from me as a manager. Problems between a manager and a worker caused by none performance is usually interpreted as racism. It makes communication very difficult in this regard."

"I may have missed it but I do not recall seeing a workshop or training session for managers regarding intercultural communication. No training is offered to line managers to help them to improve their intercultural communication competence. If there is no intercultural communication competence, confusion and conflict may arise."

The overall aforementioned finding corroborates the result pertaining to interpersonal communication competence reported in Chapter 7 (section 7.2.1). This puts yet another emphasis on the gap that exists within universities. It furthermore highlights the opportunity to conceptualise a framework for IIEC that seeks to recognise not only interpersonal communication competence, but also intercultural communication competence as legitimate enabling factors towards fulfilling the line manager's communication role.

8.2.2 Intercultural communication items

8.2.2.1 Factor analysis of intercultural communication items

A principal component factor analysis was performed on the items used to measure intercultural communication in terms of a line manager communicating with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds (Section C of the questionnaire). An analysis of the eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that two factors could be extracted, explaining 46.94% of the total variance in questions 29 to 44 of section C. These factors

were labelled: (1) *Intercultural Communication*; and (2) *Experience of Intercultural Interaction*.

Table 8-2 indicates the results of the principal factor analysis. The loading of variables on factors and the communalities and percentage of variance are indicated. Variables are ordered and grouped by size of loading to facilitate interpretation. Labels for each factor are indicated in a footnote.

Table 8-2: Factor loadings, communalities (h²), percentage variance for principal factors extraction and direct Oblimin rotation on intercultural communication items

Item	F ₁	F ₂	h ²
I communicate verbally with ease with subordinates from different cultures	0.79	0.00	0.70
I am able to listen enthusiastically to the opinions of my culturally different subordinates	0.71	0.00	0.63
I know how to show respect for my culturally different subordinates when we communicate	0.71	0.00	0.53
I feel comfortable when I communicate with each of my subordinates from a different culture	0.71	0.00	0.59
I know how to start a conversation with a subordinate from a different culture	0.63	0.00	0.50
I find it easy to sense when culturally different subordinates do not understand what I say	0.60	0.00	0.35
I find it easy to sense an emotional reaction from a subordinate from a different culture	0.60	0.00	0.35
I am capable of answering questions from my subordinates effectively	0.56	0.00	0.32
I am capable to discuss current issues within our university with subordinates from different cultures	0.48	0.00	0.35
I use suitable facial expressions and gestures when I communicate with subordinates from different cultures	0.35	0.00	0.11
I find it difficult to build commitment to the university strategy with culturally different subordinates – Experience	0.00	0.81	0.61
I experience difficulties to foster mutual trust with culturally different subordinates – Experience	0.00	0.75	0.56

Item	F ₁	F ₂	h ²
When I communicate with my subordinates from different cultures to implement my instructions I have difficulties to make myself clear – Experience	0.00	0.73	0.55
I experience difficulties with my choice of words when I communicate with subordinates from different cultures about the university strategy – Experience	0.00	0.69	0.54
I experience difficulties to foster mutual respect with subordinates from different cultures – Experience	0.00	0.56	0.35
Percentage Variance Explained	35.19	11.76	

Factor labels: F₁ Intercultural Communication; F₂ Experience of Intercultural Interaction.

Intercultural Communication (F₁) refers to the process of exchanging and interpreting verbal and nonverbal messages and negotiating meanings with subordinates from differing cultural backgrounds (discussed in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.1). The ultimate goal of this process is to ensure shared understanding and shared meaning between a line manager and culturally diverse subordinates with the aim of fostering and sustaining high-quality relationships. This factor supports the assertion that in the context of intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, the onus is on a line manager to use appropriate intercultural communication skills in addition to effective interpersonal communication skills (as reported in Table 7-1) to navigate intercultural interaction effectively.

Experience of Intercultural Interaction (F₂) refers to the application of a set of behavioural, motivational and effectiveness skills to adjust oneself to the changes of new patterns of interaction among culturally diverse subordinates including language ability, behavioural flexibility, interaction management, identity maintenance and relationship cultivation (discussed in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.1.2). This factor supports the assertion that in the context of intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, the onus is on a line manager to use appropriate intercultural communication skills in addition to effective interpersonal communication skills (as reported in Table 8-1) to manage his or her own communication behaviour appropriately.

Table 8-2 indicates that when line managers practice their communication role aimed at achieving strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates, they also experience certain elements of intercultural communication. This implies that in addition to fulfilling interpersonal communication effectively and frequently, and providing clear and context and content effectively and frequently as reported in section 7.2.2 (in Chapter 7), line managers

also practice intercultural communication when they fulfil strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. This finding is significant because it endorses the assertion made that line managers need to utilise both interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence when they fulfil strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates. Additionally, the variables regarding F_2 listed in Table 8-2 indicate that when line managers interact face-to-face with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds they experience some difficulties as a result of the presence of cultural inconsistency. The difficulties experienced point to the qualitative theme that there are intercultural barriers that influence the extent to which the communication role of line managers achieve effective communication outcomes with multicultural subordinates. This could perhaps denote that culture has certain influences on what is communicated, how the message is communicated and what meanings are attached to messages by both a line manager as a primary communicator and a subordinate as a recipient in the communication process.

Table 8-2 shows that line managers need to practice effective intercultural communication in addition to effective interpersonal communication as reported in Table 7-2 to obviate the dominant intercultural barriers to effective communication and to maintain the reliability and validity of D'Aprix's model of the manager's communication role in the multicultural and multilingual work environment at transformed universities. This endorses that in the context of the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates, both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies are essential.

On the basis of the aforementioned findings, a factor analysis was conducted on intercultural communication barriers to effective communication outcomes. The results of the factor analysis are discussed next.

8.2.2.2 Factor analysis of intercultural communication barriers to effective communication outcomes

Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.1) submitted that there are intercultural barriers that impact on interpersonal communication competence and effective communication outcomes when line managers facilitate alignment among culturally diverse subordinates' work contributions and the strategic goals of a university. In addition, the qualitative results indicated that there are intercultural barriers that influence the extent to which the communication role of a line manager achieves effective communication outcomes with multicultural subordinates (see theme 3 in Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1).

One has to consider prevalent intercultural communication barriers to get a complete picture of the impact of intercultural communication barriers on the communication role of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment. These barriers emphasise the specific intercultural influences that may be detrimental to accomplishing effective communication outcomes during a formal line manager-subordinate interaction. As a result, this may lead to low-quality relationships.

In order to understand the perspectives of line managers specifically with regard to intercultural communication barriers to achieving effective communication outcomes, a principal component factor analysis was performed on the items used to rate the extent to which participants experienced each of the listed barriers when communicating with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. Analysis of the eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that one factor could be extracted, explaining 66.87% of the total variance in questions 49 to 55 of Section D. This factor was labelled: *Extent of Intercultural Communication Barriers*.

Table 8-3 indicates the results of the principal factor analysis. The loading of variables on factors and the communalities and percentage of variance are indicated. Variables are ordered and grouped by size of loading to facilitate interpretation. Labels for each factor are indicated in a footnote.

Table 8-3: Factor loadings, communalities (h²), percentage variance for principal factors extraction and direct oblimin rotation on the extent of intercultural communication barriers

Item	F ₁	h ²
Lack of trust – when subordinates from a different culture do not believe that you know enough or you are competent to give clear, unbiased instructions and feedback	0.90	0.81
Selective listening – when you or a subordinate from a different culture distorts a message when the information contained in a message is in conflict with his or her beliefs	0.90	0.81
Prejudice and discrimination – when different cultures treat each other unequally or unfairly based on stereotypes, unreasonable beliefs and perceptions	0.85	0.73
Language and semantics – when different cultures assign a different meaning to the words used	0.82	0.68
Stereotyping – when a culture assigns a belief, an attitude, an assumption or a generalization that ignores true identity and characteristics	0.81	0.66

Item	F ₁	h ²
Body language – when different cultures assign a different meaning to nonverbal messages expressed through facial expression and gestures	0.80	0.65
Xenophobia – when you experience extreme negative attitudes, feelings and beliefs about non-South African employees within the NWU	0.75	0.57
Percentage Variance Explained	66.87	

Factor label: F₁ Extent of Intercultural Communication Barriers

Table 8-3 indicates that when a line manager communicates with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds to execute strategic alignment, he or she may experience certain intercultural barriers (such as a lack of trust; selective listening; prejudice and discrimination; language and semantics; stereotyping and body language) that may distort or block effective communication and achieving effective communication outcomes. Therefore, variables pertinent to F₁ indicate and support the statement made that there are dominant intercultural communication barriers (such as a lack of trust; selective listening; prejudice and discrimination; language and semantics; stereotyping and body language) that come into play during a formal interpersonal interaction between a line manager and a subordinate from differing cultural backgrounds. This result was also confirmed by qualitative findings.

Extent of Intercultural Communication Barriers (F₁) referred to the degree to which line managers experience overt and hidden intercultural barriers formed during the communication process with subordinates from differing cultural backgrounds. The seemingly simple interpersonal communication process can get very complex when the communication partners involved struggle to attribute the same meaning to the verbal and/or nonverbal messages because of intercultural barriers or other intercultural influences revealed during an intercultural interaction (discussed in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.1).

In addition, a principal component factor analysis was performed on items used to measure the impact of each intercultural communication barrier on achieving communication effectiveness when line managers facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees at the NWU. Analysis of the eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that one factor could be extracted, explaining 67.91% of the total variance in questions 49 to 55 of Section D. This factor was labelled: *Impact of Intercultural Communication Barriers*.

Table 8-4 indicates the results of the principal factor analysis. The loading of variables on factors and the communalities and percentage of variance are indicated. Variables are

ordered and grouped by size of loading to facilitate interpretation. Labels for each factor are indicated in a footnote.

Table 8-4: Factor loadings, communalities (h²), percentage variance for principal factors extraction and direct oblimin rotation on the impact of intercultural communication barriers

Item	F ₁	h ²
Lack of trust – when subordinates from a different culture do not believe that you know enough or you are competent to give clear, unbiased instructions and feedback	0.88	0.77
Selective listening – when you or a subordinate from a different culture distorts a message when the information contained in a message is in conflict with his or her beliefs	0.88	0.77
Prejudice and discrimination – when different cultures treat each other unequally or unfairly based on stereotypes, unreasonable beliefs and perceptions	0.84	0.71
Stereotyping – when a culture assigns a belief, an attitude, an assumption or a generalization that ignores true identity and characteristics	0.84	0.71
Language and semantics – when different cultures assign a different meaning to the words used	0.80	0.64
Body language – when different cultures assign a different meaning to nonverbal messages expressed through facial expression and gestures	0.78	0.61
Xenophobia – when you experience extreme negative attitudes, feelings and beliefs about non-South African employees within the NWU	0.74	0.55
Percentage Variance Explained	67.91	

Factor label: F₂ Impact of Intercultural Communication Barriers

Table 8-4 indicates that certain intercultural barriers that may distort or block effective communication, may also impact on achieving effective communication outcomes and by extension, high-quality relationships during an intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction. These intercultural barriers include lack of trust; selective listening; prejudice and discrimination; stereotyping; language and semantics; body language; xenophobia. This result was also confirmed by qualitative findings.

Impact of Intercultural Communication Barriers (F₂) referred to the extent to which line managers perceived the intercultural barriers as having an impact on communication effectiveness when line managers facilitate strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates at the NWU.

The qualitative findings corroborate with the quantitative findings and further contribute towards contextualising this finding. Without exception, line managers (N=5) conceded that certain intercultural aspects impact on an effective interpersonal conversation between a line manager and subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. The respondents indicated that key intercultural aspects include the following: *race; language (especially Afrikaans) and semantics; communication styles; ethnicity, nonverbal communication; perceptions and biases; stereotyping and discrimination; xenophobia; generation gap; and victimisation*. The respondents felt that addressing intercultural aspects that tend to impact on effective communication is still a “thorny issue” at their respective institutions.

A line manager explained:

“There are cultural nuances that impact on intercultural interactions, for example, in the African culture; people tend to speak louder compared to the white culture. Sometimes managers don’t understand employees who come from a different cultural background. At times, they don’t even try to find out what the cultural nuances mean.”

Another respondent elucidated:

“One of the things that stand out as an obstacle in intercultural interactions is respect. Because employees who come from different cultural backgrounds do not respect one another, there is no trust. There are certain things that hinder us from getting to that point. For example, some employees are still caught up in their own view points, their backgrounds and their European mind-set. There are so many managers that still come from a Eurocentric viewpoint and we can’t seem to be able to pass that barrier.”

A respondent from another institution reiterated the preceding view and commented:

“Respect should be a core value. There are basic differences in how different cultures communicate and show respect. Showing respect in the South Africa culture is different to showing respect in the American culture. If you do not understand the subtle cultural nuances from different cultures, it becomes a problem when you interact across cultures. Teaching managers to be aware of these cultural differences will alleviate a lot of uncertainty and anxiety.”

In an effort to further expand on this important findings, the following responses to open-ended question 48 (section C) from academic and support line managers are presented.

“Non-verbal communication is one of the biggest problems experienced when communicating across cultures. When I look at you and I expect you to react in a certain way, but you do not react as expected, this can create problems. For example, the body language is more reserved in the African culture. Line managers need to be very sensitive to how other cultures use body language and do their homework about cultures that are different from their own.”

“Our university has four official languages – English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho sa Lebowa. Most of the formal communication is in the four official languages. In the context of intercultural communication, we have to take cognisance of the fact that for most managers English is not their first language. So managers should pay special attention when communicating to make sure they are understood.”

“Employees have accepted that Afrikaans is in a minority at this university and cannot be used for the daily work environment. The equity profile has also changed considerably, 70% of administrative staff are non-white. So, communication here is mainly in English. But there are still incidents related to the use of language. Last week a senior manager sent an email written in Afrikaans to an employee. In response the employee replied in isiZulu. Last year there was a similar incident of an email written in Afrikaans and the recipient who did not understand the email requested an explanation of the email from the writer but the employee who wrote the Afrikaans email refused to give an explanation saying Afrikaans is one of the official languages of the university. Effective intercultural communication first starts with being culturally sensitive, being culturally aware and then behaving appropriately. To communicate effectively interculturally requires a high level of emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence.”

“Incidentally, at this university you have departments with a White manager and White subordinates. Then there are other departments with an Indian manager and Indian subordinates. We do not tend to experience intercultural barriers within such departments and this situation is not regarded as multiculturalism. We need to break down those tendencies of managers who want to keep to their own kind. The challenges we experience is within departments with mixed races. You will often find that the minority races are not engaged and this impacts on the overall performance of the department.”

“We have diverse employees from other African countries on our academic staff compliment. The South African academics generally do not like the foreigners. If you appoint a foreigner, the first thing they will ask you is why you did not appoint a South African.”

“Employees have also identified stereotyping, verbal abuse; back stabbing, humiliation or being patronised by other employees of different races as barriers. In most instances these barriers are unintentional because the people who are accused are unaware of the consequences caused by the manner in which they communicate and behave.”

The aforementioned key findings are significant for the general objective of this study. In essence, these findings support the central premise submitted in Chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.2.1.1) that the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment can no longer be addressed or managed adequately in multicultural universities by only applying interpersonal communication competencies. What is now required is an integrated approach that concentrates on combining both interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies to ensure effective line management communication that can yield effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships between line managers and culturally diverse subordinates.

Furthermore, this gives a preliminary indication of the nature of the relationship between intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence in the context of the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment. The following findings of the product-moment correlation coefficients explicate the nature of the relationship between intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence in an attempt to answer the specific research question 1.4.2.4.

8.2.2.3 Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of intercultural communication factors and intercultural communication barriers factors

The descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of the intercultural communication F_1 and F_2 and the intercultural communication barriers F_1 and F_2 are indicated in Table 8-5.

Table 8-5: Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of the intercultural communication factors and the intercultural communication barrier factors

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
F ₁ Intercultural Communication	43.00	4.80	-0.56	1.21	0.83
F ₂ Experience of Intercultural Communication	20.12	3.20	-0.62	0.68	0.77
F ₁ Extent of Intercultural Communication Barriers	16.61	7.22	0.89	0.06	0.93
F ₂ : Impact of Intercultural Communication Barriers	14.39	5.24	0.92	0.59	0.92

Table 8-5 indicates that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0.77 to 0.93 were obtained. These alpha coefficients compare reasonably well with the guideline of 0.70 (0.55 in basic research), demonstrating that a large portion of the variance is explained by internal consistency of the dimensions (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). It is evident from Table 8-5 that most of the scales of the measuring instruments have relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis.

8.2.2.4 The nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence

The specific research question pertaining to Building Block 3 of the conceptual framework for IIEC is: *What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

The product-moment correlation coefficients between the four interpersonal communication factors identified in Table 7.2; intercultural communication factors identified in Table 8.2; and the intercultural communication barriers factors identified in Table 8.3 and Table 8.4 are given in Table 8.6 to indicate the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence, with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment.

Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.1) states that intercultural communication and interpersonal communication should be approached from an integrated perspective if they are to yield effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships among culturally diverse subordinates. This statement is the central premise and key motivation for advancing the

IIEC construct that forms the core of the conceptual framework of this study. This study therefore seeks to determine whether there is a perceived association between effective intercultural communication competence, effective interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and accomplishing strategic alignment. A relationship between the aforesaid concepts could imply that both intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence are both essential to enabling strategic alignment, specifically with regard to the communication role of a line manager in fulfilling strategic alignment.

Table 8-6: *Product-moment correlation coefficients between interpersonal communication factors, intercultural communication factors and intercultural barriers to effective communication outcomes*

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1) Effective Interpersonal Communication	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2) Frequency of Interpersonal Communication	0.20 ⁺
3) Frequency of Context and Content provided	0.14	0.36 ⁺⁺
4) Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.45 ⁺⁺	0.12	0.37 ⁺⁺
5) Intercultural Communication	0.42 ⁺⁺	0.21 ⁺	0.19 ⁺	0.36 ⁺⁺	.	.	.
6) Experience of Intercultural Interaction	0.16	0.03	0.15	0.31 ⁺⁺	0.45 ⁺⁺	.	.
7) Extent of Intercultural Communication Barriers	-0.14	0.10	0.04	-0.00	-0.10	-0.23 ⁺	.
8) Impact Intercultural Communication Barriers	-0.20	0.10	0.03	-0.39	-0.10	-0.30 ⁺	0.92 ⁺⁺⁺

* $p \leq 0,05$ – statistically significant

+ $r > 0,30$ – practically significant (medium effect)

++ $r > 0,50$ – practically significant (large effect)

From Table 8-6 it is evident that Effective Interpersonal Communication has statistically significant positive correlations (practically significant, medium effect) with the Effectiveness of the Context and Content provided and Intercultural Communication. This implies that the more effective interpersonal communication is, the better intercultural communication competence will be perceived. The Effectiveness of Context and Content provided has statistically significant correlations (practically significant, medium effect) on Intercultural

Communication and the Experience of Intercultural Interaction. This implies that the more effective the context and the content that is provided during interaction, the more positively the intercultural interaction will be experienced.

The product correlation coefficients between the four interpersonal communication factors, the intercultural communication factors, and the intercultural barriers to effective communication outcomes show that effectiveness of interpersonal communication, and by implication competence in interpersonal communication, is an enabling factor for effectiveness of context and content provided and positive intercultural interaction. This key finding points to the supposition that suggests that intercultural communication competence builds on interpersonal communication competence. In other words, interpersonal communication competence forms the foundation to develop and improve on intercultural communication competence. In the context of this study this means that a line manager should first possess well-developed interpersonal communication competence to be able to develop and enhance his or her intercultural communication competence. Once developed, the two competencies should go hand-in-hand.

This finding is very significant because it attempts to answer the specific research question mentioned earlier in this section. It also provides some explanation of the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence, with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Essentially, a key quantitative finding suggests that intercultural communication competence builds on interpersonal communication competence. Furthermore, it was established that interpersonal communication competence forms the foundation to developing and improving on intercultural communication competence. In the context of this study this means that a line manager should first possess well-developed interpersonal communication competence to be able to develop and enhance his or her intercultural communication competence. Once developed, the two competencies become mutually reinforcing. This result was also confirmed by qualitative findings, which are summed up in theme 5 of the qualitative findings: "Interpersonal and intercultural communication competence reinforce the communication role of a line manager when facilitating strategic alignment" (see Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1).

To substantiate the quantitative findings, the following qualitative quotations related to the aforementioned key finding are submitted.

A line manager commented:

“Intercultural and interpersonal communication go hand-in-hand. If you are good at interpersonal communication skills, I believe you would be able to communicate effectively interculturally as well because you tend to be accepted by multicultural employees. Without effective interpersonal communication, managers will find it very difficult to function in a multicultural environment. If your interpersonal communication is up to standard, you will be able to convey your ideas, you will be able to listen to ideas, you will be perceived to understand other people’s perspectives and cultures.”

A communication professional mentioned:

“Interpersonal communication competence is the foundation that leads to intercultural communication competence. If you have mastered interpersonal communication first, then you’re in a better position to master intercultural communication.”

Another communication professional responded:

“I do not think you can separate interpersonal and intercultural communication. Interpersonal communication is associated with confidence and assertiveness while intercultural communication is associated with understanding other cultures. Line managers need to be aware of their communication behaviour when they interact with employees from different cultures.”

A line manager stated:

“I am not sure if you can differentiate between interpersonal and intercultural communication because interpersonal interaction must include the intercultural aspect in an intercultural interaction. You first need to make a connection interpersonally so that you can understand the culture and better connect. When I meet people of different races, I will adapt how I communicate to make sure that when I express myself, I am understood. I am far more conscious when I speak to a culturally diverse person that they should understand the meaning of what is discussed.”

Another line manager remarked:

“You can have good interpersonal skills when dealing with similar persons. It might be the opposite when dealing with people of different cultures. A manager who has great personality, great attitude will cut across most cultural barriers. Line managers need to realise that interpersonal communication is an important skill to have. The moment a manager is confronted with someone from a different culture and they lack understanding of that culture that is when their intercultural skills are challenged.”

A corroboration between qualitative and quantitative findings regarding the perceived nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence has been established, with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. The qualitative findings validate and confirm that interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies are very important to fulfil the communication role of a line manager. Furthermore, the respondents accept that interpersonal communication competence precedes intercultural communication competence. Also, the respondents report a definite distinction between interpersonal and intercultural communication skills. This key finding supports the theoretical assumption advanced in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.2.2) and a central argument in this study which posits that an integrated approach that combines interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies will help to address the shortcomings of the manager’s communication model when applied to a multicultural and multilingual environment at the transformed universities.

8.2.3 Multiple regression analysis between dependent variables (theoretical statements) and independent variables (intercultural communication factors)

In Chapter 7 (see section 7.2.3) the rationale for using multiple regression analysis for testing the generalisability of four statements formulated in relation to the general research objective of the current study (see Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1) is elucidated. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variables, namely Statement¹; 2; 3; and 4 (Section E, questions 56 to 59), that were predicted by the independent variables, namely the Interpersonal Communication Factors identified in paragraph 7.2.2. The independent variables are related to the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication

In this section, multiple regression analysis was used to test the generalisability of the same theoretical statements in terms of the integrated dimension of effective line management

communication. The approach followed took into account one of the key findings in paragraph 8.2.3 that supports the premise that both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies are essential in the context of the communication role of a line manager in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates.

Therefore, multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variables, namely Statement¹; 2; 3; and 4 , which were predicted by the independent variables, namely Interpersonal Communication Factors identified in paragraph 7.2.2. and Intercultural Communication Factors identified in paragraph 8.2.2. The variables on Intercultural Communication F_1 indicated in Table 8.2 illustrate that in the context of intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction, the onus is on a line manager to use appropriate intercultural communication skills in addition to effective interpersonal communication skills as reported in Table 7.2 to navigate intercultural interactions effectively. Participants were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on the following statements:

- *Statement¹*: Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.
- *Statement²*: Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.
- *Statement³*: Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.
- *Statement⁴*: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university such as the NWU to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively.

The results of a multiple regression analysis with the above statements as dependent variables and Interpersonal Communication Factors as well as Intercultural Communication Factors as independent variables are reported in Table 8-7.

Table 8-7: Multiple regression analyses with Statement¹; 2; 3; and 4 as dependent variables and interpersonal communication factors and intercultural communication factors as independent variables

	Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
		B	SE	Beta						
Dependent Variable: Statement¹										
1	(Constant)	2.79	0.55		5.12	0.00*	2.49	0.28	0.08	0.08
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.02	0.02	0.11	1.11	0.27				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.15	1.61	0.11				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.01	0.01	-0.10	-0.98	0.33				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.03	0.02	0.18	1.70	0.09				
2	(Constant)	1.42	0.57		2.50	0.01*	6.42*	0.50	0.25	0.17
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.38	0.71				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.10	1.16	0.25				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.01	0.01	-0.10	-1.15	0.25				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.61	0.55				
	Intercultural Communication	0.04	0.01	0.31	3.13	0.00*				
	Experience of Intercultural Interaction	0.04	0.02	0.23	2.42	0.02*				
Dependent Variable: Statement²										
1	(Constant)	2.54	0.57		4.43	0.00*	2.98*	0.30	0.09	0.09
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.81	0.42				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.18	1.88	0.06				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.00	0.01	-0.04	-0.39	0.70				

	Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
		B	SE	Beta						
2	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.03	0.02	0.20	1.95	0.05				
	(Constant)	0.92	0.58		1.57	0.12	17.08*	0.55	0.30	0.21
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.11	0.91				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.12	1.38	0.17				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.56	0.57				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.01	0.01	0.08	0.83	0.41				
	Intercultural Communication	0.05	0.01	0.36	3.85	0.00*				
Experience of Intercultural Interaction	0.04	0.02	0.22	2.41	0.02*					
Dependent Variable: Statement ³										
1	(Constant)	2.88	0.69		4.20	0.00*	1.19	0.20	0.04	0.04
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.43	0.67				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.10	1.08	0.28				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.00	0.01	-0.02	-0.20	0.85				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.03	0.02	0.15	1.35	0.18				
2	(Constant)	1.69	0.76		2.22	0.03*	2.62*	0.35	0.12	0.08
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	-0.01	0.03	-0.02	-0.17	0.86				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	0.01	0.01	0.07	0.68	0.50				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	-0.00	0.01	-0.03	-0.30	0.77				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.67	0.51				
	Intercultural Communication	0.04	0.02	0.24	2.31	0.02*				

	Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
		B	SE	Beta						
	Experience of Intercultural Interaction	0.02	0.02	0.11	1.13	0.26				
Dependent Variable: Statement 4										
1	(Constant)	2.40	0.91		2.65	0.01*	1.18	0.20	0.04	0.04
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.04	0.04	0.12	1.19	0.24				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	-0.01	0.01	-0.43	-0.45	0.66				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	0.02	0.02	0.13	1.26	0.21				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.23	0.82				
2	(Constant)	1.81	1.03		1.76	0.08	1.36	0.26	0.07	0.03
	Effective Interpersonal Communication	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.68	0.50				
	Frequent Interpersonal Communication	-0.01	0.01	-0.07	-0.72	0.48				
	Frequency of Context and Content provided	0.02	0.02	0.11	1.07	0.29				
	Effectiveness of Context and Content provided	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.32	0.75				
	Intercultural Communication	0.04	0.02	0.19	1.77	0.08				
	Experience of Intercultural Interaction	-0.03	0.03	-0.11	-1.10	0.27				

* $p < 0, 05$

Chapter 7 (Table 7-5) notes that Effective Interpersonal Communication was a significant predictor of Statement¹. When the regression analysis was done with both the interpersonal communication factors and intercultural factors as independent variables, the impact of Effective Interpersonal Communication were weighted out. Table 8-7 shows that 25% of the variance explained in Statement¹ (i.e. Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment) was predicted by the Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural Communication Factors ($F = 6.42, p < 0.05$). In other words, Intercultural Communication and the Experience of Intercultural Interaction were also noted to be the significant predictors of Statement¹. This finding indicates that when line managers experience that intercultural communication and intercultural interaction is effective, this will contribute to the perception that interpersonal communication enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment. Based on this probability it can be acknowledged that Statement¹ is supported by the additional element of intercultural communication factors, that is, intercultural communication and the experience of intercultural interaction. This probability is significant because it supports a key finding stated in paragraph 8.2.2.4, which recognises that in the context of executing a line manager's communication role as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996), both interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence are essential and mutually reinforcing.

Effective Interpersonal Communication and the Frequency of Interpersonal Communication were both noted to be significant predictors of Statement² as indicated in Chapter 7 (see section 7.2.3). When the regression analysis was done with both the interpersonal communication factors and intercultural factors as independent variables, the impact of Effective Interpersonal Communication and Frequent Interpersonal Communication were weighted out. Table 8-7 indicated that 26% of the variance explained in Statement² (i.e. Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates) was predicted by the Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural Communication Factors ($F = 8.22, p < 0.05$). Intercultural Communication and the Experience of Intercultural Interaction were also noted to be the significant predictors of Statement². This finding indicates that when line managers experience intercultural communication and intercultural interaction as effective, this contributes to the perception that intercultural communication enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural employees. Based on this probability it can be acknowledged that in addition to Effective Interpersonal Communication and Frequent Interpersonal Communication, Statement² is well supported by Intercultural Communication Factors.

Effective Interpersonal Communication was noted to be a significant predictor of Statement³, as indicated in Chapter 7 (see section 7.2.3). When the regression analysis was done with both the interpersonal communication factors and intercultural factors as independent variables, the impact of Effective Interpersonal Communication was weighted out. Table 8-7 indicates that 12% of the variance explained in Statement² (i.e. Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates) was predicted by the Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural Communication Factors ($F = 2.62$, $p < 0.05$). Intercultural Communication is therefore also a significant predictor of Statement³. This finding indicates that when line managers experience effective intercultural communication, this will contribute to their perception that integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees. Based on this probability it can be established that in addition to Effective Interpersonal Communication, Statement³ is also supported by the intercultural communication factors.

There were no significant predictors from Interpersonal Communication Factors and Intercultural Communication Factors of Statement⁴ (i.e. A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively).

A significant contribution of the results of the multiple regression analysis reported above is that there is an indication of a perceived association between effective intercultural communication competence, effective interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relationships and accomplishing strategic alignment. This association supports the presumed integrated nature of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence in the context of the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Based on these results, there seems to be considerable empirical support of the central premise and key motivation for advancing the IIEC construct that forms the core of the conceptual framework of this study. This study has determined that interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence are mutually reinforcing, and also the two competencies go hand-in-hand in as far as the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment is concerned. This result implies that both intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence are essential enabling factors in fulfilling strategic alignment, specifically with regard to the communication role of a line manager in fulfilling strategic alignment.

8.3 CONCLUSION

By applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study has been able to uncover new insights regarding the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Also, the researcher was able to determine the extent to which line managers experience prevailing intercultural communication barriers and how these barriers impact on achieving effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning, motivation and trust among culturally diverse subordinates.

Primarily, the findings related to Building Block 3 confirm that when line managers practice their communication role aimed at achieving strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates, they also experience and practice intercultural communication. This finding is significant because it confirms that in addition to fulfilling interpersonal communication effectively and frequently and providing clear context and content effectively and frequently, line managers also experience intercultural interaction, in which case they require intercultural communication competence to communicate effectively with culturally diverse subordinates. It also became evident that verbal and nonverbal appropriateness and effectiveness are important qualities of intercultural communication competence. Furthermore, it was supported that when line managers adapt their verbal and nonverbal communication appropriately and effectively, strategic alignment may be achieved. This finding is imperative because it supports the assumption pertinent to the integrated dimension of effective line management communication, specifically, intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.

The majority of line managers conceded that good intercultural communication competence may lead to effective communication outcomes and influence the extent to which high-quality relations exist among subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. This acknowledgement validates the perceived relationship between intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, high-quality relations and strategic alignment for line management. This association is significant as it advances the value of integrating intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence to enable strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates instead of approaching them separately.

The views of academic and support line managers reveal that there are prevailing intercultural barriers that may distort or block effective communication with culturally diverse subordinates. These barriers include *lack of trust; selective listening; prejudice and discrimination; language and semantics; stereotyping; body language* and *xenophobia*. These barriers may impact on achieving effective communication outcomes, and by extension enhance high-quality relationships when line managers communicate with culturally diverse subordinates. The need to obviate these barriers to effective communication outcomes during intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction is the main driving force compelling the convergence of intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence in order to yield effective communication outcomes, high-quality relations and strategic alignment. This convergence forms part of the rationale and the value of the IIEC model.

With regard to the nature of the relationship between intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment, results show that intercultural communication competence builds on interpersonal communication competence. Once developed, the two competencies become mutually reinforcing. The validation of the nature of this relationship supports the rationale to integrate intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence when line managers execute strategic alignment. More importantly, this validation is in support of the theoretical statement³, namely, integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.

The findings of the three building blocks of the IIEC concept presented thus far expand the existing theory with regard to the communication role of line managers in fulfilling strategic alignment and help to generate theory in the form of a Conceptual Framework for IIEC for line management. The empirical findings and literature review serve as a basis to conceptualise and recommend a framework for IIEC in the subsequent chapter.

PART THREE



PART THREE:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section is the culmination of the iterative process of working back and forth between the 15 elements of the three building blocks with the aim to review, revise and ultimately construct a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management.

In the preceding literature review (Part I) and empirical investigation (Part II), the three building blocks were applied to determine and to explore pertinent concepts, practices and assumptions of an Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication approach for line management communication aimed at executing strategic alignment. Accordingly, in this section the three building blocks are applied to frame and make sense of the conclusions of the overall theoretical and empirical findings and to identify the key assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management that is suited to the heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual work environment at transformed universities.

In the context of this study, the term '*conceptual*' refers to ideas based on preconceived concepts, while '*framework*' implies a particular set of prerequisites, assumptions or practices referred to in order to solve a problem in relation to the main objective of the study. In other words, the envisaged conceptual framework implies a combination of the researcher's experiential knowledge and prior theory and research as explicated by Maxwell (2013).

The foreseen conceptual framework offers universities a common basis to comprehend the communication practices and approaches of line managers within academic and support departments when they strive to attain strategic alignment.

CHAPTER 9: **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the review of the literature in Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 and the findings of the empirical study in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. The conclusions on the theoretical and empirical findings provide a basis for the researcher to conceptualise a framework for IIEC for line management. In order to frame the conceptual framework for IIEC in a contextualised and trustworthy manner, the conclusions are first presented according to the three building blocks. Thereafter, the assumptions motivating IIEC for line management level in transformed universities in South Africa are presented in the form of a conceptual framework. Then, the recommendations are made with a specific focus on implementing IIEC at line management level in a transformed university. The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are also provided. A synopsis of the study is first outlined in the next section.

9.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

In **Chapter 1**, the introduction and motivation for the study was outlined. The problem statement was discussed and the research objectives and the guiding theoretical approaches were elucidated. The research methods to be followed, ethical measures for conducting the study and the outline of the study were briefly discussed. This study was guided by the following general research question:

What are the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa?

This general research question was divided into the following four specific research questions:

- What are the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and how do prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment? (research question 1.4.2.1)

- What are the theoretical perspectives on and best practices for effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment? (research question 1.4.2.2)
- How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment? (research question 1.4.2.3)
- What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment? (research question 1.4.2.4)

Chapter 2 focused on the theoretical perspectives on effective employee communication in terms of current best practice, challenges and assumptions of effective employee communication. The rationale and the elements of the initial building block of a conceptual framework for IIEC that concentrates on an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university were recommended.

In Chapter 3, the dimensions of line management communication were discussed by means of segmenting line managers in the university workplace. This was followed by a discussion of the manager's communication model and the assumptions of effective line manager-subordinate communication. The communication role of line managers was examined through the LMX theory of effective communication; a theoretical assumption of the interpersonal dimension of line management communication was submitted; and the rationale and the elements of Building Block 2 were recommended.

Chapter 4 focused on the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and intercultural communication barriers that impact on effective communication outcomes. The AUM theory of effective communication was applied to intercultural line manager-subordinate interaction. The chapter thereafter continued to submit a theoretical assumption of the integrated dimension of line management communication, and the rationale and the elements of Building Block 3 were recommended. Based on the above, the novel construct of IIEC was advanced.

Chapter 5 discussed the appropriateness and value of employing the selected mixed-methods approach; the integration approaches at the design, methods, interpretation and reporting levels; and the research design in terms of the specific qualitative and quantitative

techniques and procedures used for collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting the findings were outlined in detail.

Chapter 6 covered the reporting and presentation of the qualitative research results pertaining to Building Block 1: An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university.

Chapter 7 reported and presented the quantitative and qualitative research results pertaining to Building Block 2: The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication.

Chapter 8 reported and presented the quantitative and qualitative research results pertaining to Building Block 3: The integrated dimension of effective line management communication.

9.3 CONCLUSIONS

9.3.1 Building Block 1: An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university

Building Block 1 offers an answer to research questions 1.4.2.2 and 1.4.2.3 stated respectively in Chapter 1 as follows:

- *What are the theoretical perspectives regarding best practice for effective employee communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?; and*
- *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

The above two questions find answers in the following:

9.3.1.1 Element 1: Institutional strategic intent

- In practice, it was found that the understanding of the concept of strategic alignment differs amongst line managers. Also, the approaches used by line managers to align subordinates to a university's strategic intent differ from line manager to line managers, and additionally, from institution to institution (refer to Chapter 6, section

6.2, Element 1: *Differing understanding of the concept of strategic alignment; Differing approaches to align subordinates to a university's strategic intent*). As a result, strategic alignment as understood within the context of this study, is approached in an unstructured, uncoordinated and inconsistent manner amongst academic and support line managers. This undermines the contribution that strategic alignment could make to the successful execution of the strategic management process at the transformed universities.

- Ideally, the success of achieving and sustaining strategic alignment at the transformed universities depends, in part, on generating communicating leaders at all levels and especially at line management level as found in theory (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.1.4). Therefore, there is a need to establish a formal working relationship between employee communication and human resources departments to address the proper structures, systems, processes and tools needed to empower and support line managers to fulfil their communication role aimed at facilitating strategic alignment (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 1: *No formal working relationship between internal communication and human resources*).
- The majority of line managers believed that when they fulfil interpersonal communication effectively and frequently, and provide clear context and content effectively and frequently, strategic alignment may be achieved (refer to Chapter 7, section 7.3).
- The differing perceived levels of understanding amongst line managers and employees regarding a university's strategic plan is perhaps indicative of a need for an effective and aligned communication plan aimed specifically at informing academic and support line managers about the strategic plan, strategic objectives and priorities of a university, and common talking points (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 1: *Differing perceived levels of understanding regarding a university's strategic plan*).

9.3.1.2 Element 2: Institutional culture

- Within the transformed universities, more emphasis is placed on employee communication and leadership communication in as far as strategic alignment is concerned. Management communication could play a more central role in the strategic alignment process within transformed universities (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 2: *No joint responsibility in creating a culture of open, honest, and continuous communication*).

- The line manager's communication role as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) is a key responsibility of line management communication (refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). However, academic and support line managers do not take full accountability for this communication role (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 2: *Communication role of line managers is not regarded as a priority by most line managers*). More communication training is necessary to equip line managers with the relevant communication skills to enable them to fulfil the line manager's communication role satisfactorily.

9.3.1.3 Element 3: Institutional communications management system

- The policies, networks, resources and training in support of management communication within the context of this study are inadequate (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 3: *Communication policies and networks vary between inadequate to non-existent*).
- The inadequate institutional communications management system undermines the contribution such an effective system could make in establishing an enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach within universities, as described in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3 and 2.3.1).

9.3.1.4 Element 4: Common talking points

- The inconsistent approaches towards delivering key messages and common talking points regarding a university's strategic plan can be attributed to the finding that the interpretation of a university's comprehensive strategic plan into clear, concise and consistent common talking points does not form part of the responsibilities of communication professionals. Communication professionals do not empower line managers with clear, concise and consistent common talking points. This has a direct impact on the extent to which line managers apply communication to facilitate strategic alignment (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 4: *Inconsistent approaches towards delivering key messages and common talking points regarding a university's strategic plan*).

9.3.1.5 Element 5: Communication activities

- A need exists to align communication activities in the three main spheres of organisational communication, that is, employee, management and leadership

communication, to improve and sustain effective communication that contributes towards achieving and sustaining strategic alignment. Employee, management and leadership communication activities should be integrated to ensure that various communication activities reinforce consistent messages about a university's strategy (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 5: *There is no integration of communication activities between the leadership, management and employee communication*).

9.1.3.6 Element 6: Effective line manager-to-employee communication

- Line managers are the most employee-preferred communication channel within transformed universities (refer to Chapter 1, section 1.3). Line managers are also the primary communicators with employees, particularly within the context of strategic alignment. The role that line managers play in ensuring that employees' efforts are aligned to the university's strategic objectives and goals is critical (refer to Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2.2.1).
- The line manager's primary communication role aimed at fulfilling strategic alignment is not properly executed or managed. This is indicative of a lack of a common understanding of the communication role of a line manager. Consequently, this central role, as elucidated by D'Aprix's (1996) manager's communication model, is executed in an uncoordinated, unstructured, inconsistent and unsystematic manner among academic and support line managers across transformed universities. The communication role of a line manager needs to be clarified, articulated and contextualised to the day-to-day operational communication and strategic conversation conducted by line managers within universities (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 6: *Effective communication is considered to be important, but its meaning in the context of line manager-employee communication differs significantly*).
- No measures are in place to hold line managers accountable for effective communication (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 6). A criterion that would entail standards, practices, tasks or actions that should form part of the day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation practised by line managers is essential if the line manager's communication role is to be understood and implemented in a structured, coordinated, systematic and consistent manner.

- Support line managers are perceived to be better communicators than academic line managers. Academic line managers are mostly researchers who became managers, so they are regarded as experts in their subject fields with limited management, people skills and communication experience (refer to finding in Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 6).

9.3.1.7 Element 7: Communication performance measurement

- The HR practitioners acknowledge that measuring the communication performance of line managers should become a priority for HR and Corporate Communication (refer to Chapter 6, section 6.2, Element 7). Regular measurement of the line managers' communication performance is a key success factor in establishing accountability for effective communication with subordinates as established in the literature (see Chapter 2, section 3.2.3). Therefore, communication performance management of line managers should be an integral part of the appraisal system with KPIs to measure the line managers' communication performance.

On the strength of the above conclusions, a key assumption related to Building Block 1 can be formulated as follows:

ASSUMPTION 1

An enabling environment is the foundation for effective employee communication by line managers in executing strategic alignment.

9.3.2 Building Block 2: The interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication

This building block is based on research question 1.4.2.3 stated in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.2) as follows:

- *How do line managers perceive the practices and emerging challenges with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

Building Block 2 can be understood as follows:

9.3.2.1 *Element 1: Interpersonal communication competence*

- In practice, the majority of line managers regard their interpersonal communication competence to be up to standard. In addition, the majority of line managers regard interpersonal communication competence to be critical compared to their perception of the importance that the institutions place on the criticality of this competence (refer to Chapter 7, section 7.2.1 and 2.2.3). Even though interpersonal communication is considered important in fulfilling strategic alignment, there are inconsistent approaches among line managers when it comes to fulfilling day-to-day operational communication and a strategic conversation (see Chapter 7, paragraph 7.2.1). This suggests that a conceptual framework for IIEC could offer universities a common basis to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices of line managers when they strive to attain strategic alignment.

9.3.2.2 *Element 2: Effective communication and high-quality relationship outcomes*

- A significant result evident from the views of the majority of line managers is that effective interpersonal communication competence, will lead to effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning, motivation and trust. Accordingly, effective communication outcomes lead to high-quality relations, specifically, mutual trust, respect and obligation. Consequently, effective communication outcomes and high quality relations enable a line manager to facilitate and accomplish strategic alignment among subordinates (refer to Chapter 7, section 7.3).
- The aforementioned finding is significant because it supports a perceived relationship between interpersonal communication competence, effective communication outcomes, that is, mutual understanding, shared meaning and motivation; high-quality relations, specifically mutual trust, respect and obligation and strategic alignment. Also, this finding indicates and corroborates the theoretical assumption that there is a perceived link between the concepts of employee communication, management communication, interpersonal communication and strategic alignment. Furthermore, this finding supports Statement¹ pertinent to the interpersonal dimension of effective line management communication which suggests that interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment (refer to Figure 3.4 in Chapter 3).

9.3.2.3 *Element 3: Enabling manager*

- There is a need to create “enabling managers” in transformed universities by appointing line managers with effective interpersonal communication competencies, providing the relevant educational and training resources to line managers, describing the kind of communication behaviours expected and holding the managers accountable for the desired behaviour (refer to Figure 3.4 in Chapter 3).

On the strength of the above, a key assumption related to Building Block 2 is identified as follows:

ASSUMPTION 2
Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.

9.3.3 **Building Block 3: The integrated dimension of effective line management communication**

Based on research questions 1.4.2.1 and 1.4.2.4 stated respectively in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.2) as follows:

- *What are the theoretical perspectives regarding intercultural communication and how do prevalent intercultural communication barriers impact on effective communication outcomes with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment? and;*
- *What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment?*

Building Block 3 involves the following:

9.3.3.1 *Element 1: Intercultural communication competence*

- When line managers practice their communication role aimed at achieving strategic alignment among culturally diverse subordinates, they also experience and practice intercultural communication (refer to finding in Chapter 8, paragraph 8.3).
- In theory, intercultural communication competence is considered important in building mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual trust, among culturally diverse subordinates (see Figure 4-3 in Chapter 4).
- In practice, even though the majority of line managers perceive their intercultural communication competence to be up to standard (refer to finding in Chapter 8, paragraph 8.2.1), line managers also concede that they need to acquire and use well developed intercultural communication competence to effectively execute the communication role of a manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) and to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates (see qualitative theme 4 reported in Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.1). In addition, line managers acknowledge that there is a need for cultural diversity training to equip line managers with the necessary skills to communicate effectively and to build trust with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.
- Line managers agree with the statement that good intercultural communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with culturally diverse subordinates (refer to findings in Chapter 8, paragraph 8.2.1).
- Line managers need to practice effective intercultural communication in addition to effective interpersonal communication to obviate the dominant intercultural barriers to effective communication and to maintain the reliability and validity of D'Aprix's manager's communication model when used in a multicultural and multilingual work environment such as the transformed universities. This implies a convergence of motivational and behavioural elements of interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies for line managers (see Figure 4-3 in Chapter 4).

9.3.3.2 *Element 2: Integrated intercultural employee communication*

- The nature of the relationship between intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence finds expression in theory in the IIEC concept. The IIEC concept advances the value of integrating intercultural communication competence and interpersonal communication competence rather than approaching them as separate competencies. IIEC suggests that interpersonal

communication competence and intercultural communication competence are mutually reinforcing at line management level (see Figure 4-3 in Chapter 4).

- The IIEC concept recognises the degree to which one effectively adapts and integrates interpersonal and intercultural communication motivation, behaviour and effectiveness to the appropriate cultural context to enable effective communication outcomes and to foster high-quality relationships that lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.
- The IIEC model is an extension of D'Aprix's manager's communication model. The model involves an integration of interpersonal and intercultural communication motivational, behavioural and effectiveness elements to enable effective communication outcomes and high-quality relationships that lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.
- The IIEC model implies a skill and a prerequisite to execute the communication role of a line manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996) adequately in a multilingual and multicultural work environment.
- If applied appropriately and consistently through the four-step process of conversation, a strategic conversation and everyday operational communication with subordinates, IIEC will lead to strategic alignment, the ultimate goal of IIEC.

9.3.3.3 Element 3: Mindful manager

- The views of academic and support line managers reveal that there are prevailing intercultural barriers that may distort or block effective communication with culturally diverse subordinates. These barriers include *lack of trust; selective listening; prejudice and discrimination; language and semantics; stereotyping; body language* and *xenophobia*. These barriers may impact on achieving effective communication outcomes, and by extension enhance high-quality relationships when line managers communicate with culturally diverse subordinates (discussed in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.1; finding in Chapter 8, section 8.2.2.2).
- Therefore, line managers who are mindful and possess both intercultural and interpersonal communication competencies will achieve effective communication outcomes. Such line managers are able to build trust and facilitate strategic alignment across a variety of cultural orientations among subordinates.

- There is a need to create “mindful managers” at transformed universities through appointing line managers who are sensitive to the multicultural and multilingual university environment, providing the relevant educational and training resources to line managers, describing the kind of communication behaviours expected and holding line managers accountable for the desired behaviour.

On the strength of the above, the ensuing assumptions for Building Block 3 are formulated as follows:

<p>ASSUMPTION 3</p> <p>Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.</p>
<p>ASSUMPTION 4</p> <p>Interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level leads to effective communication outcomes that enhance the extent to which high-quality relations exist among multicultural subordinates.</p>
<p>ASSUMPTION 5</p> <p>Integrated intercultural employee communication at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.</p>

9.4 ASSUMPTIONS MOTIVATING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATED INTERCULTURAL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following five key assumptions are offered as being essential for IIEC for line management in transformed universities in South Africa:

- **ASSUMPTION 1:** An enabling environment is the foundation for effective employee communication by line managers in executing strategic alignment.
- **ASSUMPTION 2:** Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.

- **ASSUMPTION 3:** Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.
- **ASSUMPTION 4:** Interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management leads to effective communication outcomes that enhance the extent to which high-quality relations exist among multicultural subordinates.
- **ASSUMPTION 5:** Integrated intercultural employee communication at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.

The principal significance of this study is the motivation of a framework for IIEC for line management level. Figure 9.1 illustrates a conceptual framework for IIEC based on the five key assumptions motivating IIEC for line management. The proposed framework enriches the extensive research conducted on D'Aprix's (1996) model of the manager's communication role by advancing the notion of IIEC to enhance the reliability and validity of this model when applied within a multicultural and multilingual work environment. Fundamentally, the framework recognises that interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies are a key prerequisite to fulfilling the communication role of a line manager aimed at executing strategic alignment.

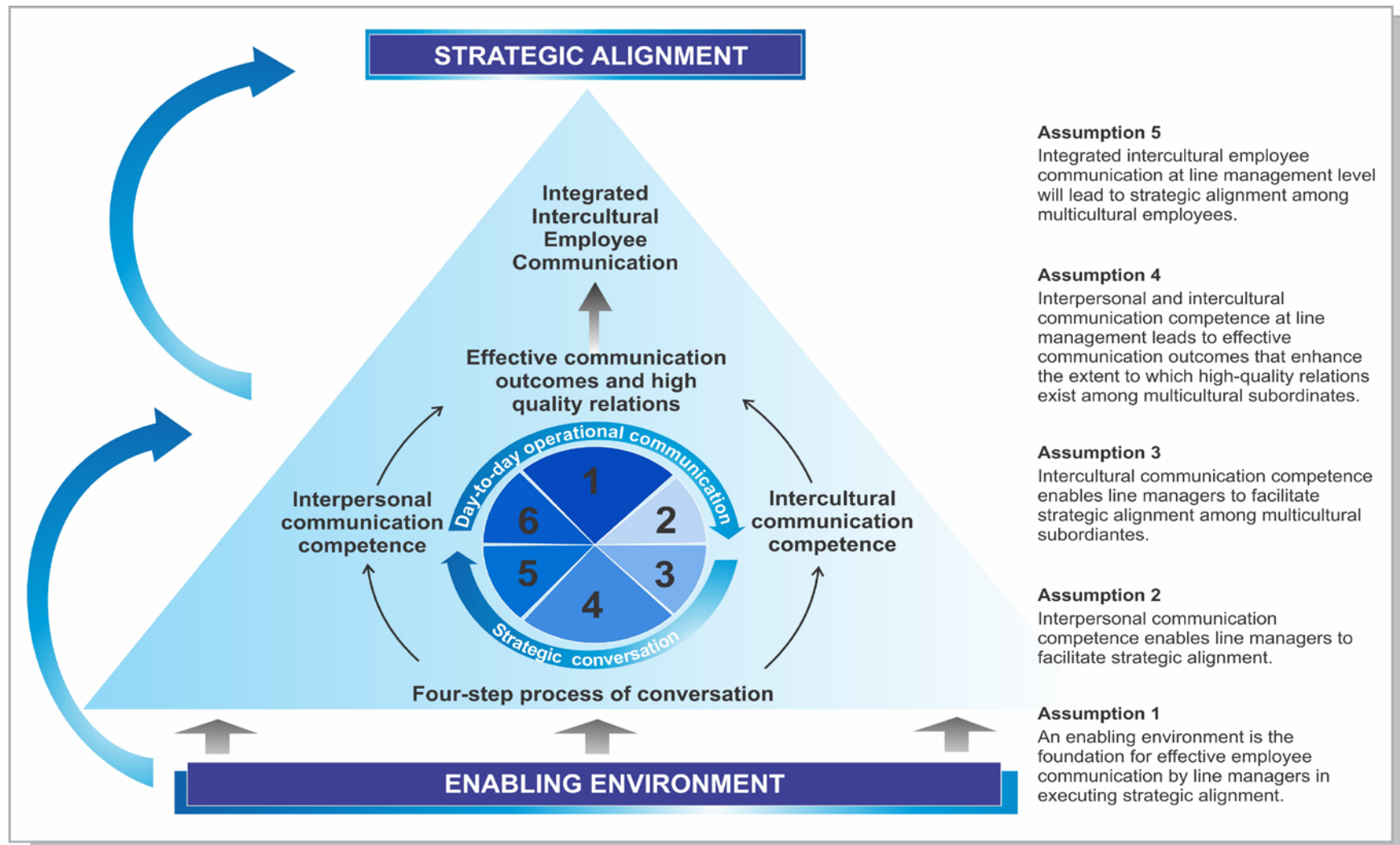


Figure 9-1: The assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication

The study has indicated that a shared understanding of the prerequisites and assumptions motivating IIEC for line management can contribute towards effective and consistent practices of the communication role of line managers when executing strategic alignment in transformed universities in South Africa.

In addition to the latter findings, the suggested framework will provide a basis for articulating best practice requirements for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach that facilitates strategic alignment at the transformed universities by contributing the following:

- A common basis for universities to comprehend, implement, monitor and improve communication practices and approaches of line managers when they strive to attain strategic alignment.
- A shared understanding of the nature of the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management.
- Inculcation of best practices for effective communication that can help to advocate effective line management communication as a strategic priority and a managerial accountability.
- Stimulation of a discourse in higher education on the joint accountability of the leadership, line managers, communication professionals and human resources professionals in facilitating strategic alignment through an integrated intercultural employee communication approach in a university.

In practice, the value of this study is that it could make the following contributions:

- It can assist to identify role players and responsibilities to establish the accountability of specific role players in executing effective employee communication and strategic alignment at line management level.
- It can offer a clearer articulation, comprehension and endorsement of prerequisites for an integrated, strategic and effective university communications management system to ensure that managers practice and fulfil their communication role in a controlled manner that can be measured to determine communication effectiveness.

- It provides compelling empirical evidence to motivate for the establishment of an enabling environment that supports effective line management communication as a strategic priority.

The preceding findings, the motivating assumptions together with some recommendations are discussed in the next section.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.5.1 Recommendation 1: Create an enabling environment for an IIEC approach for line management

In the history of transformed universities, the strategic role and value of line managers in facilitating and executing strategic alignment has not been regarded as a top priority by executive or senior management.

The custodian of the employee communication function should first understand and acknowledge the importance of the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment. Furthermore, this individual should take the first step to bring the need for an enabling environment for an IIEC approach within a university to the attention of the executive or senior management by placing this matter on the agenda of senior management. The primary aim of placing this discussion point on the agenda of senior management should focus on soliciting the support and buy-in of management in making effective line management communication a priority. Additionally, senior management should be convinced to understand that an effective IIEC approach to line management communication necessitates time, budget and human resources.

Once the support and buy-in of management is solicited, a task team with the relevant communication professionals and human resources professionals should be convened to discuss and develop a proposal in the form of an implementation plan to create an enabling environment for an IIEC approach for line management. The enabling environment must take into account the seven elements of an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach in a university as proposed in Building Block 1. These seven elements can be used as a guide and criteria to identify and address the fundamentals for creating an enabling environment.

The task team should follow a participative approach as a guiding principle. This implies that other key internal role players such as academic and support line managers, the strategy planning office, the language directorate and the transformation office should be identified

and involved because they have a direct and/or indirect bearing on the successful implementation of the proposed plan. This proposal should also entail a request for funding and appropriate resources to address the above.

The proposal should be tabled at the highest management decision-making structure for approval. Once such a proposal has been approved and endorsed by the executive or senior management, it would signal a first step towards ensuring that universities foster and strengthen an enabling environment for an IIEC approach for line management.

The following aspects should also be addressed and form part of the plan aimed at creating an enabling environment for an IIEC approach:

- The development of a communication policy to identify role players, clarify roles and responsibilities, outline processes, procedures and guidelines for the function of line management communication as opposed to corporate communication, electronic communication and other sub-disciplines of corporate communication that exist within a university. This policy would also assist to establish accountability for fulfilling the communication role among support and academic line managers. In addition, this policy must put an emphasis on intercultural communication practices to ensure appropriate communication behaviours among line managers.
- The improvement and/or implementation of appropriate communication networks and infrastructure to support timeous dissemination of relevant information related to a university's strategy to support and academic line managers.

The custodian of the employee communication function should drive the development of a plan and the implementation of the plan once it has been approved. The development and implementation processes must be approached in close collaboration with other role players, in particular, the human resources department. In addition, the shared roles and responsibilities between employee communication and human resources must be clarified and endorsed by senior management to formally assign the responsibility for line management communication to employee communication and human resources functions within transformed universities.

9.5.2 Recommendation 2: Content, context, conversation and feedback

In order for university employees to be aligned to a university's strategy, it is important that all support and academic line managers take on the role of communicating the vision, mission, values, objectives, strategic messages and important information relating to a

university's strategic priorities and core business. This requires common talking points and appropriate communication tools to support line managers to fulfil the four-step process of conversation with their subordinates.

A gap that became evident from the empirical study is a lack of common talking points about a university's strategy for line managers. The formulation of clear, concise and consistent common talking points should become part of the responsibilities of communication professionals and it should be specified in their KPAs in a job description.

Communication professionals should play a crucial role in formulating the key messages and identifying the correct communication tools to convey key messages regarding a university's strategy consistently to academic and support line managers. An opportunity exists for the task team to think creatively and come up with unconventional methods that can be utilised to effectively communicate common talking points to both support and academic line managers. As part of the recommendation to support and develop line managers in fulfilling their communication role and executing strategic alignment, a monthly manager update, intranet page with a blog for comments and inputs and discussion points for managers should be developed and disseminated by the relevant communication professionals.

The communication professionals should also set up regular forums or meetings to discuss and formulate a unitary picture of what should be communicated by support and academic line managers. This information should be written and conveyed in a monthly manager update and on the dedicated intranet page with the aim to create a conversation between academic and support line managers and their subordinates.

In addition to the suggested communication channels, discussion and facilitation guides should be developed for line managers to ease dialogue, discussion and debate between line managers and subordinates regarding identified and specific issues of strategic importance. It is important for the discussions to be conducted in such a way that they also help to identify and define critical problems, suggestions and solutions.

As part of ensuring the employees are informed about the vision, mission, values, objectives, strategic messages and important information relating to a university's strategic priorities, formal upward communication channels must also be developed and put in place. The upward communication channels should be linked in a carefully structured approach to the suggested monthly manager, intranet, blog and/or discussion guides to solicit constructive feedback from line managers and employees. The collated feedback should be analysed to

identify trends related to a university's strategy to relay the identified trends back to the relevant decision makers or management structures.

9.5.3 Recommendation 3: Education, development, accountability and measurement

It is proposed that effective communication should be one of the core managerial competencies that managers are appraised on at the university. A three-pronged intervention comprising of: (1) a practical expression of the IIEC model; (2) adequate interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies of line managers to give effect to the IIEC model; and (3) Measurable KPAs and KPIs, must form part of the implementation plan of the communication role of line managers.

Effective communication capacity building for support and academic line managers must be included as part of a shared responsibility of employee communication and human resources. Through the task team, the two divisions must discuss and create an IIEC development programme together. The programme should aim to improve interpersonal and intercultural communication skills of line managers and to create a shared understanding of the IIEC approach towards practicing the specific communication role of a line manager as conceptualised by D'Aprix (1996).

The task team comprising of the relevant communication professionals and human resource professionals should customise the development programme to the IIEC model. In other words, the scope, content and focus of the specific communication development programme must give theoretical and practical expression to the notion of IIEC as a skill and a prerequisite to execute the line manager's communication model among culturally diverse subordinates in a multilingual and multicultural university environment. Applied appropriately and effectively when a line manager fulfils strategic alignment through the four-step process of conversation, a strategic conversation and day-to-day operational communication with subordinates, the IIEC model will enhance the execution of the communication role of line managers and lead to strategic alignment.

Once the communication development programme is available, it must be compulsory for all newly appointed academic and support line managers to attend training sessions specifically focussing on the IIEC development programme as part of an induction or orientation programme. The managers who are already employed at the universities could first be assessed to determine the level of their communication aptitude and then invited to take part in a suitable module of the communication development programme.

The non-negotiable interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies required to practice an IIEC approach to line management communication must be identified and included in all advertisements for support and academic line management positions. This will ensure that the right managers who possess the prerequisite communication competencies are appointed from the start.

Furthermore, the identified and defined communication responsibilities of the managers should be included as part of the line managers' job description and KPAs. This would ensure that all line managers know what is expected from them regarding communication with their subordinates, and additionally, that they are held accountable for fulfilling their communication role. This will also facilitate the spontaneous inclusion of specific interpersonal and intercultural competencies in the performance agreement with clear KPIs to monitor and measure the communication performance of line managers and to hold line managers accountable for fulfilling this communication role.

A communication appraisal system should be included as an integral part of the overall institutional performance management system to facilitate the execution of line management communication in a coordinated, structured and systematic manner that can be measured to determine communication effectiveness and the extent to which managers meet the measures of an enabling and a mindful manager.

Although it is irrefutable that an appropriate implementation plan will lead to improved, consistent and shared practices and behaviours among support and academic line managers, the role of monitoring, measuring and recognising the desired communication behaviours is also crucial to reinforce the communication role of line managers. A possible intervention aimed at recognising the desired communication behaviours could be in the form of introducing a competition among departments and to award a floating trophy for 'A Communicating Leader'. The winning department could be rewarded with a financial incentive for the entire department. The criteria for selecting a winner must be based on elements including communication effectiveness, high-quality relationships with subordinates and cultural sensitivity.

9.5.4 Recommendation 4: Roll-out of IIEC for line management

Presently, none of the transformed universities have attempted a dedicated and concerted effort to advocate line management communication as a strategic priority. The IIEC framework presents an opportunity for the universities to advocate line management communication from a common basis.

The implementation of the IIEC framework should be structured in a series of smaller, manageable steps and preferably rolled-out over a three-year period to gain traction and credibility within the support and academic sections of universities. The IIEC approach as guided by the proposed framework should be carefully planned and executed, taking into account the complex university environment and the level of readiness among support and academic line managers to embrace and align their communication behaviours to the IIEC approach.

Ideally, a limited number of support and academic line managers should be selected as part of a pilot phase of the implementation of the IIEC framework over a one-year period. During the course of the pilot, feedback sessions must be convened with the selected academic and support line managers to assess the implementation of the programme and to make adjustments where necessary. Subsequently, an additional and bigger cohort of support and academic line managers must be included in the second year of the roll out. Each of the additional departments must be assigned a coach from the previous years' participants to offer advice and guidance should the need arise.

Following the roll-out over a suggested three-year period, this would lead to IIEC forming an integral part of the institutional strategic management and performance management processes. A phase-in approach will provide an opportunity to make necessary adjustments to ensure that the assumptions motivating IIEC for line management are adapted accordingly to suit the complex and unique dynamics of each transformed university's multilingual and multicultural contexts.

9.5.5 Recommendation 5: Cultural diversity awareness

Public universities are a part of South Africa. For this reason, the IIEC framework cannot be implemented in isolation. A broad social cohesion and cultural integration process should be initiated at all transformed universities to equip its leaders, line managers and entire workforce with a shared understanding of shared values in support of a multilingual and a multicultural South African society. An emphasis should be placed on healthy interpersonal communication and intercultural practices to nurture an inclusive and welcoming environment for all. In addition, line managers must be made more sensitive to the influence of cultural diversity on facilitating strategic alignment. An institutional culture that embraces cultural diversity is needed in order for IIEC for line management to be supported and implemented successfully. Line managers along with senior management's support must rather create a culturally diverse environment in which South African's diverse cultures can interact, learn from one another and innovate.

9.6 GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study identifies and describes the assumptions motivating a conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa.

The proposed conceptual framework will provide a basis to begin for the inculcation of best practice for effective and integrated employee communication that can help to reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority, a core managerial accountability and an enabling factor for fulfilling strategic alignment at the transformed universities.

In addition, the proposed framework postulates the probable integration of the interrelated aspects of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence for line management within the specific context of strategic alignment by motivating and advancing the novel concept of IIEC.

In theory, the consequent advancement of the concept of IIEC contributes to the existing body of knowledge. In practice, the conceptual framework for IIEC will assist line managers at multicultural and multilingual universities to communicate more effectively with culturally diverse subordinates when they strive to execute strategic alignment.

9.7 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

9.7.1 Limitations of this study

The researcher had limited resources to place equal priority on both qualitative and quantitative data collection, and consequently a design was employed where only one type of data is being collected and analysed at a time. This could be considered a limitation of this study bearing in mind that a more representative sample for the qualitative and quantitative data collection could have enhanced the richness of findings.

Although the research sample for the qualitative data collection was valid, the sampling technique might have allowed the researcher to interview subjects who are more knowledgeable about aspects pertinent to this study. Therefore the sample's perceptions may not necessarily be a comprehensive, representative and valid depiction of the perspectives of support and academic line managers who fulfil the specific responsibility of strategic alignment on the communication practices and challenges for line management.

The findings of the quantitative data collection are mainly based on the participants' perceptions and therefore these results comprise an element of self-report bias. The perceptions of subordinates regarding the communication practices of their line managers did not form part of this study. This could be considered a shortcoming of this study given that subordinates' opinion regarding interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies of their respective line manager, and the extent of their effect on the communication role of line managers in executing strategic alignment among culturally diverse employees might have differed.

The researcher was an executive director at NWU. This position may have influenced the manner in which the researcher retrieved the information. However, since the researcher was aware of her involvement she exercised the utmost care.

The demographics of the quantitative sample indicated that the number of participants was not representative of all racial categories of line managers for the study. This could be considered a shortcoming as the findings may have yielded a somewhat skewed view according to racial categories who were represented in the study.

The researcher is qualitatively oriented, however, the interpretation of the mixed-methods results required the researcher to apply a broader set of skills that span both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. Consequently, the statistical analysis and interpretation proved to be a challenge.

9.7.2 Recommendations for future research

The opportunities for continuing research based on the proposed conceptual framework for IIEC for line management in transformed universities are extensive for the communication scholar.

In the event of a replication of this study it would be advisable for the researchers to ensure the subjects include the subordinates of the support and academic line managers in order to validate or refute the line managers' perceptions.

Follow-up studies could be conducted to explore the recommendations that were made with the aim to measure the effect of each of the recommendations on the implementation of the IIEC framework.

Another study could be dedicated to using the IIEC framework to develop the content and modules to form part of an IIEC development programme for support and academic line managers.

Another suggestion for future research is to determine the communication responsibilities, communication tasks and communication performance indicators in order to set a criteria and the standards to determine and measure effective line management communication.

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APPENDICES A - I



APPENDIX A1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE PARTICIPANT: DIRECTOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Building Block 1:

An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university

Element 1: Institutional Strategic Intent

1. How do you use employee communication to ensure that all employees are aware of the university strategy?
2. What do you do to determine if the strategic objectives of the university are understood by all line managers (academic and support) and communicated by the line managers to their employees in a clear and consistent manner?
3. How would you describe the level of understanding of the university's strategy among all employees?
4. What is the nature of the working relationship with human resources in as far as communicating the university strategy to line managers (academic and support)?
5. How do you engage the university leadership (both executive and middle management) to play their part in aligning employees to the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives of the university?
6. Are the communication behaviours and values of line managers (academic and support) in line with the behaviours that are desired to help to achieve the university strategy?

Element 2: Institutional Culture

7. How would you describe the culture of communication between management and employees at this university? Would you describe the communication culture as

positive, open, participative and consistent or closed, hierarchical, autocratic and inconsistent? Please explain why?

8. What does the culture of communication at this university need to look like in order for the university strategy to be implemented successfully?
9. What are the key communication challenges you face at line management level? How are you addressing these challenges?
10. How important is the communication role of line managers to top management; human resources and corporate communications?
11. How do you approach internal communication, management communication and leadership communication in as far as strategic alignment is concerned? Are they integrated? Do you have differing implementation approaches?

Element 3: Institutional Communications Management System

12. How do you communicate the communications policy to line managers?
13. How does the strategic communications management system compare to best practices in terms of policies, networks and resources?
14. Describe your current role in improving the communication skills of line managers? How do you feel about providing communication skills training to line management at the university? Do you perceive this as the role of corporate communication or human resources?
15. How important is it for internal communication to train line managers and build communication capacity of line managers?

Element 4: Common Talking Points

16. What are some of the current challenges in disseminating key messages and common talking points regarding the university strategy to line managers (academic and support)?
17. How do you provide the line managers (academic and support) with your support to help them to fulfil their communication role effectively when they deliver the key messages to their employees?

Element 5: Communication Activities

18. Describe how line managers (academic and support) give feedback to senior and executive management from their employees regarding the strategy of the university?

Element 6: Effective Line Manager-Employee Communication

19. Describe your role in communicating the university strategy to all line managers (academic and support)?
20. How do you feel about your role as director/manager in communicating the university strategy to all line managers (academic and support)?
21. Describe how you perceive the current practical communication skills, knowledge and behaviour of line managers (academic and support)?
22. What practices and measures does the university put in place to ensure that line managers are held accountable for effective communication with employees related to the day-to-day implementation of the university's strategy?

Element 7: Communication Performance Management

23. How do you assess and report on Return on Investment of: (a) internal / employee communication; (b) management communication; and (c) leadership communication?

Building Block 2:

The interpersonal dimension of effective line manager-employee communication

Element 8: Interpersonal Communication Competence

24. How do you perceive the interpersonal communication competencies of line managers?

Element 9: High-Quality Relationship Outcomes

No questions for the Director Corporate Communications

Element 10: Effective Communication Outcomes

No questions for the Director Corporate Communications

Element 11: Enabling Manager

No questions for the Director Corporate Communications

Building Block 3:

The integrated dimension of effective line manager-employee communication

Element 12: Intercultural communication competence

25. How do you perceive the intercultural competence of line managers (academic and support)? How effectively do line managers interact, manage and work with people from differing cultural backgrounds?
26. How do you feel about the prevalence of multiculturalism and multilingualism at the university?

Element 13: Integrated approach to effective line management communication

27. The need for effective line managers who do not only possess effective interpersonal communication proficiency but also intercultural communication competence is on the increase in South Africa's diverse and multicultural universities. Please describe the nature of the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in fulfilling strategic alignment.
28. How can interpersonal and intercultural communication make a meaningful contribution towards building employee trust, motivation and strategic alignment?

Element 14: Effective Communication Outcomes

29. Please describe to what extent effective line management communication, in particular, interpersonal communication competence contributes to creating or enhancing a shared identity, shared culture and shared values amongst the culturally diverse employees?
30. How do multicultural employees relate to the university's identity, culture and values?

Element 15: Mindful Manager

No questions for the Director Corporate Communications

APPENDIX A²:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
PARTICIPANT: MANAGER INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Building Block 1:
**An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee
communication approach at a university**

Element 1: Institutional Strategic Intent

31. How do you inform line managers about their communication responsibilities in as far as implementing the university's strategy is concerned?

Element 2: Institutional Culture

32. What is the main emphasis of the content of internal communication?
33. What are the main challenges to effective internal / employee communication?
34. How do you measure the effectiveness of your internal/employee communication efforts?
35. What is the main emphasis of the content of management communication?
36. How do you support line managers to ensure that they have key messages and common talking points regarding the strategic objectives of the university?
37. How do you identify the communication needs of line managers?
38. What are the current challenges to effective line management communication?
39. important is the communication role of line managers to top management; human resources and corporate communication?
40. How do you approach internal communication, management communication and leadership communication in as far as strategic alignment is concerned? Are they integrated? Do you have differing implementation approaches?

Element 3: Institutional Communications Management System

41. Describe your current role in improving the communication skills of line managers? How do you feel about providing communication skills training to line management at the university? Do you perceive this as the role of corporate communication or human resources?

40. How do you determine the appropriate communication competence (knowledge, skills, behaviour and effectiveness) that line managers need in order to communicate effectively with their employees?
43. Do you evaluate the performance of line managers who have attended and completed communication skills training?
44. How important is it for internal communication to train line managers and build communication capacity of line managers?

Element 4: Common Talking Points

45. Describe how you identify and formulate consistent key messages and common talking points about the strategic objectives of the university for all line managers (academic and support) to use as a “blueprint” to constantly give employees a clear picture of the university strategy?
46. Describe how you package the key messages and content in a way that is engaging and compelling? How effective is your current approach to communicate the key messages?
47. How do you provide the line managers (academic and support) with your support to help them to fulfil their communication role effectively when they deliver the key messages to their employees?

Element 5: Communication Activities

48. Describe the communication activities you currently use to engage employees to raise suggestions, issues and concerns regarding the strategy of the university?

Element 6: Effective Line Manager-Employee Communication

49. Describe your role in communicating the university strategy to all line managers (academic and support)?
50. How do you feel about your role as director/manager in communicating the university strategy to all line managers (academic and support)?
51. Describe how you perceive the current practical communication skills, knowledge and behaviour of line managers (academic and support)?
52. What practices and measures does the university put in place to ensure that line managers are held accountable for effective communication with employees related to the day-to-day implementation of the university’s strategy?

ends

**APPENDIX A³:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**



**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
PARTICIPANT: DIRECTOR HUMAN RESOURCES**

Building Block 1:

An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university

Element 1: Institutional Strategic Intent

53. How do you inform line managers about their communication responsibilities in as far as implementing the university's strategy is concerned?
54. How would you describe the level of understanding of the university's strategy among employees?
55. What is the nature of the working relationship with human resources in as far as communicating the university strategy to line managers and facilitating strategic alignment?
56. What is the nature of the working relationship with corporate communication (internal communication) in as far as communicating the university strategy to line managers?
57. How do you engage the university leadership (both executive and middle management) to play their part in aligning employees to the mission, vision and values of the university?
58. Are the communication behaviours and values of line managers in line with the behaviours that are desired to help achieve the university strategy?
59. What are some of the current barriers at line management level in motivating employees to align with the university's strategy?

Element 2: Institutional Culture

60. How would you describe the culture of communication between management and employees at this university? Would you describe the communication culture

as positive, open, participative and consistent or closed, hierarchical, autocratic and inconsistent? Please explain why?

61. What does the culture of communication at this university need to look like in order for the university's strategy to succeed?
62. What are the key communication challenges you face at line management level? How are you addressing these challenges?

Element 3: Institutional Communications Management System

83. How do you determine the appropriate communication competence (knowledge, skills, behaviour and effectiveness) that line managers need in order to communicate effectively with their employees?
64. How do you train line managers to help them to improve their communication skills? Is training approached in a systematic and objective manner? Is training linked to the main problems identified at the university? Do you evaluate the performance of line managers who have attended and completed communication skills training?
65. Describe your current role in improving the communication skills of line managers? How do you feel about providing communication skills training to line management at the university? Do you perceive this as the role of corporate communication or human resources?
66. How important is it for internal communication to train line managers and build communication capacity of line managers?

Element 4: Common Talking Points

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 5: Communication Activities

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 6: Effective Line Manager-Employee Communication

67. Do you collaborate with Corporate Communication to define the role of line managers in communicating the university strategy and aligning employees to the strategy?

Element 7: Communication Performance Management

68. What measures are put in place to ensure that line managers are held accountable for effective line management communication aimed at facilitating strategic alignment? Are there any Key Performance Indicators set for managers that are related to communication objectives and communication outcomes?
69. How do you determine that line managers are communicating effectively with their employees?
70. What is your perceived level of satisfaction among employees regarding the communication skills of line managers?
71. How do you recognise and reward desired communication behaviours of line managers and improved communication performance?
72. How do you deal with line managers who choose to ignore their line management communication role?
73. Do you assess managers' communication competencies as part of the recruitment process?

Building Block 2:

The interpersonal dimension of effective line manager-employee communication

Element 8: Interpersonal Communication Competence

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 9: High-Quality Relationship Outcomes

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 10: Effective Communication Outcomes

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 11: Enabling Manager

74. How effective is the performance management policy and system in helping line managers to fulfil line managerial responsibility of strategic alignment?
57. What do you do to ensure that the performance management policy informs the practices and behaviours of line managers? How are managers trained and

supported to be effective performance managers and to adhere to required standards for performance?

76. How would you describe the level of compliance to the performance management policy amongst line managers?
77. How are employees' Key Performance Indicators and performance management aligned with strategy and strategic plans every year?

Building Block 3:

The integrated dimension of effective line manager-employee communication

Element 12: Intercultural communication competence

78. How effectively do line managers interact, manage and work with people from differing cultural backgrounds?

Element 13: Integrated Approach to Effective Line Management Communication

79. How do you perceive the nature of the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in fulfilling strategic alignment?
80. How can interpersonal and intercultural communication make a meaningful contribution towards building employee trust, motivation and strategic alignment?

Element 14: Effective Communication Outcomes

No questions for the Director Human Resources

Element 15: Mindful Manager

No questions for the Director Human Resources

ends

APPENDIX A⁴:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
PARTICIPANT: LINE MANAGER (ACADEMIC/SUPPORT)

Building Block 1:

An enabling environment for an integrated, strategic and effective employee communication approach at a university

Element 1: Institutional Strategic Intent

81. What do you do to ensure that your subordinates understand the strategic objectives of the university?
82. How would you describe the level of understanding of the university's strategy among employees?
83. How motivated do you feel your subordinates generally are as far as helping the university achieves its strategic objectives, and what do you think are the main things that motivate them?
84. How motivated do you feel about the strategic direction of the university? Are the university mission, vision and values mentioned or discussed with your subordinates? How often? In what context?
85. What does strategic alignment really mean to you?

Element 2: Institutional Culture

No questions for Line Managers

Element 3: Institutional Communications Management System

86. Have you attended any communication skills training? Was it useful?

Element 4: Common Talking Points

87. How do you share key messages and common talking points related to the essence of the university strategy with each of your subordinates?

88. How do you actively discuss current strategic issues at the university with your subordinates and link the relevant issues to the role/function of each subordinate in order to make sense of the strategic context?
89. How “informed” or “in touch” are you about management decisions related to the current strategy of the university?

Element 5: Communication Activities

90. How do you go about sharing information about the following:
 - Job responsibilities;
 - Performance feedback
 - Individual needs
 - Department objectives and motivating staff to support organisational goals
 - Vision. Mission, values, strategy and supporting key strategic messages.
91. How do you manage your team’s performance? Do you have any specific objectives or Key Performance Indicators relating to strategic alignment in your team?
92. Describe the key communication challenges you experience when you create awareness of and build understanding of the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives of the university among your subordinates? How do you address these challenges?
93. How committed are your employees to the success of your department and the university?

Element 6: Effective Line Manager-Employee Communication

94. What does effective communication really mean to you as a manager?
95. How important is effective communication in your role as a line manager?
96. How do you achieve effective communication with all your subordinates?
97. How do you feel about your specific communication role in aligning all your subordinates to the university’s strategic objectives?
98. Describe how your subordinates communicate with you? Do they take the lead in communicating when they need to know or understand something or have a problem?

Element 7: Communication Performance Management

No questions for Line Managers

Building Block 2:

The interpersonal dimension of effective line manager-employee communication

Element 8: Interpersonal Communication Competence

99. What does effective interpersonal communication really mean to you as a line manager?
100. How important is effective interpersonal communication in your role as a line manager?
101. How do you achieve effective interpersonal communication with all your subordinates?
102. How do you feel about your interpersonal communication competence with regards to:
 - Knowledge
 - Motivation
 - Skills
 - Behaviour
 - Listening
 - Influencing
 - Effectiveness
103. How would you rate your interpersonal communication competence?
104. How do you feel about facilitating more two-way communication between yourself (as line manager) and your subordinates?
105. What challenges do you experience in communicating with your subordinates? What challenges do you experience when your subordinates are from a background differing from your own culture and ethnicity?
106. Describe how you go about ensuring that you pay attention to your own behaviour that can exacerbate obvious and potential barriers to effective interpersonal communication?
107. How do you know when miscommunication, misunderstandings and conflict occur? How do you address or manage misunderstandings and potential conflict during interpersonal interaction?
108. How committed are you to an interactive interpersonal process with your subordinates?
109. How important is face-to-face communication in executing strategic alignment and day-to-day tasks with subordinates?

Element 9: High-Quality Relationship Outcomes

110. How would you describe the quality of relationship with each of your subordinates? Do you have subordinates that you work with more closely than others? What is the difference in the quality of the relationships?
111. In your view, does effective interpersonal communication between a line manager and a subordinate directly and/or indirectly influence the extent to which high-quality relations exist?
112. How willing / motivated / committed are you to communicate with each subordinate as a unique person and not to treat your employees unequally?
113. In your view, is there a correlation between effective interpersonal communication by line managers and outcomes such as shared understanding, transfer of meaning, trust and motivation?

Element 10: Effective Communication Outcomes

114. How do you know when you are communicating effectively with your subordinates?
115. What do you consider to be the key effective communication outcomes that contribute towards achieving strategic alignment?
116. Please describe the current perceived level of trust amongst your subordinates?

Element 11: Enabling Manager

No questions for Line Managers

Building Block 3:

The integrated dimension of effective line management communication

Element 12: Intercultural communication competence

117. Please describe your perceived level of intercultural communication competence (the skills needed to interact successfully with people of diverse cultural backgrounds working in the same place) in terms of:
 - Motivation (interest and confidence in communicating effectively with culturally diverse subordinates)
 - Knowledge about how cultures are similar and different
 - Your ability of how to make sense of culturally diverse experiences

- Your capability to adapt your own behaviour appropriately for different cultures
118. How do you feel when you interact with a subordinate from a similar cultural background compared to interacting with another subordinate from a different cultural background?
119. How committed are you to effective intercultural communication with subordinates from a different cultural background?
120. What key communication challenges do you experience in communicating with a culturally diverse subordinates?
121. Overall, is it an advantage or disadvantage (to you) to have multicultural employees? What are the benefits of a multicultural team in relation to strategic alignment?

Element 13: Integrated Approach to Effective Line Management Communication

122. Please describe how the following intercultural barriers impact on an effective interpersonal dialogue between a line manager and subordinate from a different cultural background:
- Language and semantics
 - Communication style
 - Race and ethnicity
 - Religious background
 - Perceptions and bias
 - Values and prejudice
 - Stereotyping and discrimination
 - Racism
 - Attitude and Behaviour
 - Non-verbal communication
 - Work related values (Individualism vs Collectivism)
123. How prevalent are these intercultural communication barriers when you interact with your subordinates? How do you address them?
124. In your view, what are the main intercultural communication barriers that impact the most on effective communication outcomes during an interpersonal interaction with a subordinate from a culturally different background?
125. How would you describe the nature of the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication competence with specific reference to the communication role of line managers in fulfilling strategic alignment?

Element 14: Effective Communication Outcomes

No questions for Line Managers

Element 15: Mindful Manager

No questions for Line Managers

APPENDIX B:
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT
NWU, UJ AND TUT



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE

Institutional Advancement Office

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel (018) 299-4932

Fax (018) 299-4938

e-Mail

Phumzile.Mmope@nwu.ac.za

Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Prof N Themba Mosia

Institutional Registrar

North-West University (Institutional Office)

24 June 2013

Dear Prof Mosia

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

I am a PhD student at the School of Communication Studies at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom Campus. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Lida Holtzhausen. My research topic is: **“A conceptual framework for integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level in transformed universities in South Africa”**.

This research focuses on effective employee communication in intercultural interactions with the aim to identify and analyse intercultural communication dynamics that impact on employee communication effectiveness within a merged, transformed and multicultural traditional university such as NWU. The diverse higher education sector, coupled with the prevalence of multiculturalism at the merged and transformed universities has created an environment where most line managers need to acquire and use well-developed intercultural communication skills in order to be able to interact, manage and work successfully with people from different cultures.

This study is significant to universities in the following ways:

- i. It affords an opportunity to conduct an innovative exploration that seeks to link the intercultural communication aspect to employee communication between line managers and employees on the specific subject of strategic alignment.
- ii. It provides an opportunity to construct a conceptual framework for effective integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level from a transformed South African higher education perspective.
- iii. The evolution of the concept of integrated intercultural employee communication (IIEC) in the context of the transformed, diverse and multicultural higher education sector, signals a pioneering study and a distinct contribution to the existing body of knowledge that can be relevant and applicable to any multicultural and diverse South African work environment.

1

Against this background, I hereby respectfully request permission for the three campuses of the NWU in Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle to participate in this research. The research will entail the following quantitative and qualitative approaches:

- i. An **online survey** aimed at a randomly selected and representative sample of line managers who fulfil the responsibility of strategic alignment and day-to-day supervision of subordinates from the academic and support departments of the three campuses at the NWU,
- ii. **Semi-structured interviews** with a sample of communication and human resources professionals from each campus. The respondents will include the Director: Corporate Communications, Director: Human Resources, Manager: Internal Communication and two line managers from a support and an academic department. These interviews could also help with the design of the questionnaires for the survey, and

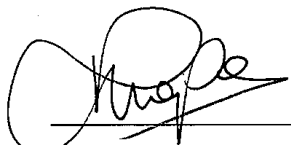
The survey and interviews will be kept strictly confidential, the respondents will remain anonymous and all comments will only be used for research purposes.

Please be assured that once this study is permitted, I will ensure the following ethical measures:

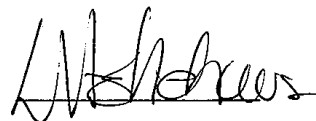
- i. The university's expectations related to the process for ethical clearance and conducting research will be respected and adhered to.
- ii. Consult with all interested parties before undertaking fieldwork and proceed only by consent and agreement.
- iii. Conspicuously convey the purposes of the survey research and the interviews to all respondents to judge whether they may be adversely affected by their participation.
- iv. Report any special circumstance that might affect the interpretation of the results.

I plan to conduct the research at Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses during February to June 2014.

Thank-you for your consideration, and I look forward to your favourable response.



Ms Phumzile Mmope
Researcher



Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Promoter



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
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Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

To whom it may concern

University of Johannesburg

24 June 2013

○ **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG**

I am a PhD student at the School of Communication Studies at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom Campus. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Lida Holtzhausen. My research topic is: **“A conceptual framework for integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level in transformed universities in South Africa”**.

This research focuses on effective employee communication in intercultural interactions with the aim to identify and analyse intercultural communication dynamics that impact on employee communication effectiveness within a merged, transformed and multicultural traditional comprehensive university such as the University of Johannesburg (UJ). The diverse higher education sector, coupled with the prevalence of multiculturalism at the merged and transformed universities has created an environment where most line managers need to acquire and use well-developed intercultural communication skills in order to be able to interact, manage and work successfully with people from different cultures.

This study is significant to universities in the following ways:

- i. It affords an opportunity to conduct an innovative exploration that seeks to link the intercultural communication aspect to employee communication between line managers and employees on the specific subject of strategic alignment.
- ii. It provides an opportunity to construct a conceptual framework for effective integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level from a transformed South African higher education perspective.
- iii. The evolution of the concept of integrated intercultural employee communication (IIEC) in the context of the transformed, diverse and multicultural higher education sector, signals a pioneering study and a distinct contribution to the existing body of knowledge that can be relevant and applicable to any multicultural and diverse South African work environment.

1

Against the aforementioned background, I hereby respectfully request permission for UJ to participate in this research. The research will entail the following quantitative and qualitative approaches:

- i. An **online survey** aimed at a randomly selected and representative sample of line managers who fulfil the responsibility of strategic alignment and day-to-day supervision of subordinates from the academic and support departments of the UJ,
- ii. **Semi-structured interviews** with a sample of communication and human resources professionals. The respondents will include the Director: Corporate Communications, Director: Human Resources, Manager: Internal Communication and two line managers from a support and an academic department, and


The survey and interviews will be kept strictly confidential, the respondents will remain anonymous and all comments will only be used for research purposes.

Please be assured that once this study is permitted, I will ensure the following ethical measures:

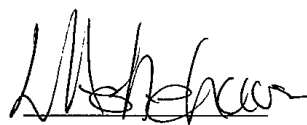
- i. The university's expectations related to the process for ethical clearance will be respected and adhered to.
- ii. Consult with all interested parties before undertaking fieldwork and proceed only by consent and agreement.
- iii. Conspicuously convey the purposes of the survey research and the interviews to all respondents to judge whether they may be adversely affected by their participation.
- iv. Report any special circumstance that might affect the interpretation of the results.

I plan to conduct the research at UJ during February to June 2014.

Thank-you for your consideration, and I look forward to your favourable response.



Ms Phumzile Mmope
Researcher



Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Promoter



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Prof Matoane S Mothata

Registrar

Tshwane University of Technology

24 June 2013

Dear Prof Mothata

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

I am a PhD student at the School of Communication Studies at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom Campus. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Lida Holtzhausen. My research topic is: **“A conceptual framework for integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level in transformed universities in South Africa”**.

This research focuses on effective employee communication in intercultural interactions with the aim to identify and analyse intercultural communication dynamics that impact on employee communication effectiveness within a merged, transformed and multicultural university of technology such as TUT. The diverse higher education sector, coupled with the prevalence of multiculturalism at the merged and transformed universities has created an environment where most line managers need to acquire and use well-developed intercultural communication skills in order to be able to interact, manage and work successfully with people from different cultures.

This study is significant to universities in the following ways:

- i. It affords an opportunity to conduct an innovative exploration that seeks to link the intercultural communication aspect to employee communication between line managers and employees on the specific subject of strategic alignment.
- ii. It provides an opportunity to construct a conceptual framework for effective integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level from a transformed South African higher education perspective.
- iii. The evolution of the concept of integrated intercultural employee communication (IIEC) in the context of the transformed, diverse and multicultural higher education sector, signals a pioneering study and a distinct contribution to the existing body of knowledge that can be relevant and applicable to any multicultural and diverse South African work environment.

1

Against this background, I hereby respectfully request permission for TUT to participate in this research. The research will entail the following quantitative and qualitative approaches:

- i. An **online survey** aimed at a randomly selected and representative sample of line managers who fulfil the responsibility of strategic alignment and day-to-day supervision of subordinates from the academic and support departments of TUT,
- ii. **Semi-structured interviews** with a sample of communication and human resources professionals from each campus. The respondents will include the Director: Corporate Communications, Director: Human Resources, Manager: Internal Communication and two line managers from a support and an academic department. These interviews could also help with the design of the questionnaires for the survey.

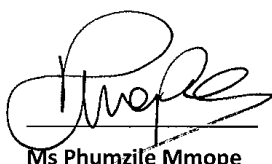
The survey and interviews will be kept strictly confidential, the respondents will remain anonymous and all comments will only be used for research purposes.

Please be assured that once this study is permitted, I will ensure the following ethical measures:

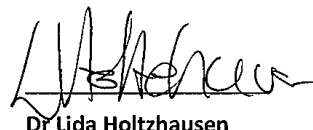
- i. The university's expectations related to the process for ethical clearance will be respected and adhered to.
- ii. Consult with all interested parties before undertaking fieldwork and proceed only by consent and agreement.
- iii. Conspicuously convey the purposes of the survey research and the interviews to all respondents to judge whether they may be adversely affected by their participation.
- iv. Report any special circumstance that might affect the interpretation of the results.

I plan to conduct the research at TUT during February to June 2014.

Thank-you for your consideration, and I look forward to your favourable response.



Ms Phumzile Mmope
Researcher



Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Promoter

**APPENDIX C:
CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH AT NWU,
UJ AND TUT**

NWU RESPONSE

APPROVAL

Comments: *This study appears to be a significant contributor to critical dynamics in employee relationships and cultural orientation. We support this study without any reservations because it will benefit the higher education sector in South Africa and elsewhere.*

NTM Mosia.
Prof N Themba Mosia
Institutional Registrar

N Mosia
Signature

24 June 2013
Date

Comments: *The expected outcomes of this study will contribute significantly to understanding and improving inter-cultural communication and organisational dynamics at NWU and HEI's elsewhere.*

F van Niekerk
Prof Frik Van Niekerk
Deputy Vice-Chancellor:
Research, Innovation and Technology

F van Niekerk
Signature

24 June 2013
Date

>>> "Fourie, Neels" <nfourie@uj.ac.za> 07/22/13 09:54 >>>

Dear Ms Mmope

You are welcome to continue with your research using the University of Johannesburg as one of your data sources. You must forward a copy of the questionnaire, once it is available, to my office.

Keep in mind that my office is not in a position to assist you with any aspects relating to your research.

Regards



Prof C.M. (Neels) Fourie

Division for Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring (DIPEM)

Tel: +27 11 559 2093

Email: nfourie@uj.ac.za

From: Phumzile Mmope [mailto:Phumzile.Mmope@nwu.ac.za]

Sent: 18 July 2013 12:48 PM

To: Fourie, Neels

Subject: RE: Permission to conduct research at the University of Johannesburg

Dear Prof Neels,

Attached please find all the requested supporting documents with the exception of the questionnaire.

I humbly request you to please take the information I have supplied in this email into consideration and advise if my requested is permissible.

I am currently burning the midnight oil and in the process of finalising my literature review chapters. I plan to tackle and finalise the questionnaires and other instruments for my empirical study during the course of October to December 2013. As a result, I am not in a position to provide a copy of the questionnaire at this stage. However, I will gladly provide you with the questionnaire once finalised.

I hope that you will still be in a position to consider my request without a questionnaire.

I will await your feedback and please do not hesitate to contact me should you need additional information.

Kind regards,

Phumzile

Ms Phumzile Mmope

Executive Director:
Institutional Advancement
Institutional Office,
NWU
Tel: (018) 299 4931
Fax: (018) 299 4938
phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za
www.nwu.ac.za



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Me Phumzile Mmope

Uitvoerende Direkteur:
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phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za
www.nwu.ac.za

Vrywaringsklousule / Disclaimer: <http://www.nwu.ac.za/it/gov-man/disclaimer.html>

>>> "Fourie, Neels" <nfourie@uj.ac.za> 07/15/13 10:22 >>>

Dear Ms Mmope

In order to consider your request I need the following documentation from you:

1. A research proposal that will give me an indication of what you intend to do, how you intend doing it, with whom you intend doing it, and what you anticipate to find.
2. If needed, also ethical clearance (from both your institution and the UJ) to conduct such research.
3. If you are going to make use of a questionnaire, also a copy of the questionnaire.
4. A motivation why you specifically want to use the UJ as the place/institution to conduct your research.

As soon as I have the requested documents I will consider your request and give feedback to you.

Regards



Prof C.M. (Neels) Fourie

Division for Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring (DIPeM)

Tel: +27 11 559 2093

Email: nfourie@uj.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee

The TUT Research Ethics Committee is a registered Institutional Review Board (IRB 00005968) with the US Office for Human Research Protections (IORG# 0004997) (Expires 9 Jan 2017). Also, it has Federal Wide Assurance for the Protection of Human Subjects for International Institutions (FWA 00011501) (Expires 22 Jan 2019). In South Africa it is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-160509-21).

February 11, 2015

Ref #: REC/2015/01/004
Name: Mmope PP
Student #: 13276948, NWU

Ms PP Mmope
C/o Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Faculty of Arts
North-West University

Dear Ms Mmope,

Decision: Final Approval

Name: Mmope PP

Project title: *A conceptual framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication at line management level in transformed universities in South Africa.*

Qualification: PhD Communication Studies, NWU

Supervisor: Dr Lida Holtzhausen

Co-supervisor: Prof Lynnette Fourie

Thank you for submitting the revised project documents and clarifications for ethics clearance by the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). In reviewing the documents, the comments and notes below are tabled for your consideration, attention and notification:

- **Demographic Questions**
 - **Institution Type.** The decision to delete Item 1 (Institution Type) is in order and duly noted.



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- **Information Leaflet (Invitation Letter to Participate in a Semi-Structured Interview)**

- **Employment Vulnerability.** The employment vulnerability statement is in order and duly noted.
- **Interview Duration.** The REC took note that fieldwork in other university contexts has established that the interviews can be meaningfully and effectively conducted within 60 minutes.

- **Data Collection Activities in TUT Context**

- The REC took note of the researcher's commitment to adhere to the following **strict project-specific provisos**:
 - **Research Results, Target Institutions.** The research results will be reported in a way that doesn't directly compare the three target institutions;
 - **Research Results, Participant Anonymity.** The research results will be reported in a way that doesn't enable identification of any specific research participant, i.e. strict anonymity will be maintained throughout all phases of the project;
 - **Data Collection, Voluntary Participation.** Each of the research participants will be reminded at the start of the individual interviews that they are completely free to participate and withdraw from the study at any time, i.e. voluntary participation;
 - **Data Analysis, Trustworthiness.** *Member checking* will be used to verify the interview analysis results with each participant in the TUT context; and
 - **Institutional Requirement.** A copy of the final thesis will be provided to the TUT Director Corporate Affairs and Marketing for notification and/or potential implementation in the TUT context.

The Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) reviewed the revised project document on Feb 11, 2015. **Final approval** is granted to the project. The decision will be tabled at the next REC meeting on March 16, 2015 for ratification.

The proposed research project may now continue with the general provisos that:

- 1) The researcher/s will conduct the study according to the procedures and methods indicated in the approved proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings and/or assurances made regarding the confidentiality of the collected data.



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- 2) The proposal will again be submitted to the Committee for prospective ethical clearance if there are any substantial changes from the approved proposal.
- 3) The researcher will act within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.
- 4) The current ethics approval expiry date for this project is **December 31, 2016**. No research activities may continue after the ethics approval expiry date. Submission of a duly completed Research Ethics Progress Report (available at: <http://www.tut.ac.za/Other/rninew/ResearchEthicsCommittees/Pages/default.aspx>) will constitute an application for renewal of REC ethics approval.

Note:

The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants.

Yours sincerely,



WA HOFFMANN (Dr)
Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee
[Ref#2015=01=004=MmopePP]



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APPENDIX D:
EMAIL CONFIRMATION FOR CONDUCTING SEMI-STRUCTURED
INTERVIEW

From: Phumzile Mmope
To: cmaepa@uj.ac.za
BC: Erma Knoetze; Phumzile Mmope
Date: 2015/01/19 02:32 PM
Subject: Confirmation: Interview with Ms Mmope
Attachments: Invitation to participate in interviews_CM.pdf; Phumzile Mmope.vcf

Good day Michael,

Thank-you for your willingness to avail yourself to voluntarily participate in an interview for my PhD study.

Attached please find the formal invitation letter that serves to confirm our appointment at **11:15 to 12:15am on Tuesday, 27 January 2015** at your office.

I will forward the consent form which we will need to sign before I proceed with the interview and the questions I will pose to you not later than Thursday, 22 January 2015 to allow you to prepare and participate in the interview.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this request further, please contact me telephonically on 073 218 9691 or via email: phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za.

Regards,
Phumzile

Ms Phumzile Mmope
Executive Director: Institutional Advancement
Institutional Office,
NWU

Tel: (018) 299 4931
Fax: (018) 299 4938
phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za
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Me Phumzile Mmope
Uitvoerende Direkteur: Institusionele Bevordering
Institusionele Kantoor,
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phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za
www.nwu.ac.za

Vrywaringsklousule / Disclaimer: <http://www.nwu.ac.za/it/gov-man/disclaimer.html>

APPENDIX E:

FORMAL INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

PHUMZILE MMOPE
PhD candidate
Tel: 018 299-4932
Fax: 018 299-4938
Email: phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za
19 January 2015

Dear Collen Maepa

Request to participate in a semi-structured interview

I am a PhD student at the School of Communication Studies at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Lida Holtzhausen. My research title is: "Integrated intercultural employee communication on line management level in transformed universities in South Africa".

The prevalence of multiculturalism at the merged and transformed universities has created an environment where most line managers need to acquire and use well-developed intercultural communication skills in order to be able to interact, manage and work successfully with people from different cultures. The purpose of my research is to identify and determine the inherent and prevalent intercultural communication dynamics that impact on employee communication effectiveness in interpersonal interactions between line managers and their subordinates in a culturally diverse work environment. This study will make a significant contribution by conceptualising a framework for effective and integrated intercultural employee communication that is suited to the transformed and multicultural universities.

I have selected you as one of the 15 respondents to participate in the qualitative phase of the study in the form of a semi-structured interview. Based on my sample of communications and human resources professionals as well as line managers, participants would need to be from one of the following three selected universities that represent a typical merger between a historically advantaged and predominantly white institution and a historically disadvantaged and mainly black institution in South Africa:

- North-West University (NWU), a traditional university
- University of Johannesburg (UJ), a comprehensive university
- Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), a university of technology

Please note the following important information pertaining to the study:

RESEARCH APPROVAL

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, under the following reference numbers:

Student number: 13276849

Ethics reference: NWU-00047-13-S7

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

I selected the 5 participants from each institution using purposive sampling, which means that the participants were regarded to be sufficiently informed and knowledgeable to provide meaningful information related to the research questions. The five selected participants are responsible for the following role(s): i) Director: Corporate Communications; ii) Manager/Specialist: Internal Communications; iii) Director: Human Resources; iv) Line Manager (Support); and v) Line Manager (Academic).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The interview will be conducted face-to-face on Monday, **27 January 2015**. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to conduct. You may request to stop the interview or refuse to answer any questions at any time. These interviews will also help with the design of the questionnaire for the subsequent survey aimed at line managers who fulfil the responsibility of strategic alignment at three selected universities.

PROCEDURE AND RISKS

- Your participation in this study will include one interview. This interview will be conducted in person, if possible, otherwise a Skype video call.
- I will record the interview only with your written consent, and will ask that no personal identifiers be used during the interview, to ensure your anonymity. You can decide not to answer any question or stop the interview any time you want. The tapes and the transcripts will become the property of this research project.
- There are no known risks associated with participation in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. No publications or reports from this interview or research project will include identifying information on any participant. All responses will be reported in summarised form and only be used for research purposes.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this request further, please contact me telephonically on (018) 299 4932 or 073 218 9691 or via email: phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za.

COST / COMPENSATION

Participation in this study will involve no costs or payments to you. Your voluntary participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Phumzile Mmope
Researcher



Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Promoter

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**APPENDIX F:
CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN SEMI-STRUCTURED
INTERVIEW**



Consent Form

Research title

Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa

Name: _____

Designation/Position of Participant: _____

Name of Institution: _____

Name of Campus / Business Unit: _____

Consent (interview): I _____ consent to being interviewed by **Phumzile Mmope** for her doctoral study concerning integrated intercultural employee communication at line management. I also acknowledge that the researcher may use direct quotes from the interview and keep my identity in the research report confidential. I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary;
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to;
- I may withdraw from the study at any time; and
- My responses will remain confidential.

Consent (recording): I _____ consent to having the interview by **Phumzile Mmope** for her doctoral study concerning integrated intercultural employee communication for line management recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher;
- All the recordings will be archived by the researcher after the research is complete and become the property of this research project; and
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts.

Signed

Date

1

APPENDIX G: QUESTIONNAIRE



RESEARCH PROJECT ON INTEGRATED INTERCULTURAL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FOR LINE MANAGEMENT AT THE NWU

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY THROUGH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION
PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

1 BACKGROUND

The transformation of higher education in South Africa has led to a conspicuously multicultural and multilingual university work environment. The prevalence of multiculturalism is reinforcing the crucial role of line managers in facilitating and sustaining effective communication with employees. Line managers should not only possess effective interpersonal communication skills, but also acquire and use well developed intercultural communication skills in order to interact and work effectively with employees from different cultural backgrounds. Effective communication is playing a critical role in motivating employees to align their efforts with the university strategy. The focus of this study is on the specific role of line managers as primary communicators and participants in a strategic dialogue with multicultural subordinates and everyday face-to-face operational communication aimed at facilitating strategic alignment.

This research project aims to gather insights to contribute towards the development of a **Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication** for line management level.

2 PURPOSE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- a) To collect and interpret the perspectives of academic and support line managers from the North-West University who fulfil the specific responsibility of strategic alignment.
- b) To understand how effective the interpersonal and intercultural communication behaviours of line managers are in order to determine the extent of their effect on the communication role of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment.
- c) To rate the main intercultural barriers and the extent to which they impact on the communication role of line managers when they fulfil strategic alignment.
- d) To gather information on the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication in order to develop a **Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication** for line management level.

3 DEFINITIONS

- a) The **line manager** refers to an executive dean, executive director, school director, research director, director, registrar or manager in an academic or support department responsible for managing subordinates' Key Performance Areas that contribute towards achieving the strategic objectives and goals of the university.
- b) **Strategic alignment** refers to an on-going process that builds employee commitment towards the university's strategy through face-to-face communication between line managers and their subordinates.
- c) **Interpersonal communication** refers to the face-to-face communication between a line manager and a subordinate aimed at exchanging messages and influencing one another's behaviour and relationship.
- d) **Intercultural communication** refers to communication between people of different cultures.

- e) **Effective communication** refers to a four-step process of conversation between a line manager and a subordinate which entails: (1) providing **content**; (2) creating **context**; (3) having a **conversation**; and (4) gathering **feedback**.

4 INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey consists of different types of items organised in FIVE sections. All items require an answer, and once you click "submit" at the end of the survey you will not be able to change your answers. If a question does not apply to you, simply click the "Not Applicable" response option and move on to the next survey question.

*PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE ANONYMOUSLY.
CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR RESPONSE IS GUARANTEED.*

A DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please complete questions 1 to 9 by marking the appropriate answer.

1. Please mark applicable business unit:

Institutional Office	①
Mafikeng Campus	②
Potchefstroom Campus	③
Vaal Triangle Campus	④

2. In which section do you work?

Academic	①
Support	②

3. At what level do you work?

ACADEMIC SECTION	SUPPORT SECTION	
Executive Dean	Executive Director	①
School Director	Campus or Institutional Registrar	②
Research Director	Dean of Students	③
	Chief Director or Director	④
	Manager or Head	⑤

4. How many employees report directly to you?

None	①
1 - 3	②
4 - 6	③
7 - 9	④
More than 10	⑤

5. How long have you worked in a line management role?

Less than 1 year	①
1 – 3 years	②
3.1 – 5 years	③
5.1 – 7 years	④
More than 7.1 years	⑤

6. What is your gender?

Male	①
Female	②

7. What is your race?

Black	①
White	②
Coloured	③
Indian	④
Asian	⑤
Other	⑥

8. Out of the 11 official languages in South Africa, please indicate the number of languages that you can read and write satisfactorily.

1	①
2	②
3	③
More than 4	④

Please indicate which languages you can read and write satisfactorily.

Afrikaans	①
English	②
Tswana	③
SeSotho	④
Sepedi	⑤
Zulu	⑥
Xhosa	⑦
Venda	⑧
Tsonga	⑨
Ndebele	⑩
Swazi	⑪

9. Out of the 11 official languages in South Africa, please indicate the number of languages that you can speak and understand satisfactorily.

1	①
2	②
3	③
More than 4	④

Please indicate which languages you can speak and understand satisfactorily.

Afrikaans	①
English	②
Tswana	③
SeSotho	④
Sepedi	⑤
Zulu	⑥
Xhosa	⑦
Venda	⑧
Tsonga	⑨
Ndebele	⑩
Swazi	⑪

B THE COMMUNICATION ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS IN ALIGNING SUBORDINATES WITH THE UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Please reflect on the following tasks or actions you perform when you communicate with your subordinates to align them with the university strategy. Indicate **how effectively** you fulfil each task or action (according to the scale: "1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither; 4=effective; 5=very effective") and **how frequently** each task or action occurs (according to the scale: "1=daily; 2=weekly; 3=bi-weekly; 4=monthly; 5=less than once a month"). If there is no appropriate answer for a task or action, choose option "None Applicable". Reflect on the following tasks or actions and answer truthfully by simply marking the appropriate answer.

HOW EFFECTIVELY DO YOU FULFIL EACH TASK/ACTION HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU PERFORM EACH TASK/ACTION

Providing content

10. I give my subordinates clear messages about the university strategy.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
11. I give my subordinates clear work instructions.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month

Creating context

12. I indicate to my subordinates our division's current position in relation to the strategic direction of the university.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
13. I discuss current issues within our university to link the issues to my subordinate's context.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
14. I ensure that my subordinates clearly see how they can contribute to the success of the university.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
15. I guide my subordinates to think about their role in relation to the university strategy.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
16. I use the university's performance management system to align my subordinates with the university strategy.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month

Having conversation

17. I communicate with each subordinate as a unique and valuable person.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
18. I foster two-way communication with each subordinate.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month
19. I adapt my communication style to suit a subordinate during an interaction.	EFFECTIVENESS <input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable 5 Very Effective 4 Effective 3 Neither 2 Ineffective 1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY <input type="checkbox"/> Never 5 Daily 4 Weekly 3 Bi-weekly 2 Monthly 1 Less than once a month

20. I consider my body language to make it consistent with my message when I communicate with my subordinates.	EFFECTIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable			
	5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Neither	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> Never			
	5 Daily	4 Weekly	3 Bi-weekly	2 Monthly	1 Less than once a month

Providing feedback

21. I listen actively to each subordinate.	EFFECTIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable			
	5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Neither	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> Never			
	5 Daily	4 Weekly	3 Bi-weekly	2 Monthly	1 Less than once a month
22. I gather feedback from each subordinate.	EFFECTIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable			
	5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Neither	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> Never			
	5 Daily	4 Weekly	3 Bi-weekly	2 Monthly	1 Less than once a month
23. I establish trust with my subordinates.	EFFECTIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable			
	5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Neither	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> Never			
	5 Daily	4 Weekly	3 Bi-weekly	2 Monthly	1 Less than once a month
24. I build employee commitment to the university strategy.	EFFECTIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/> None Applicable			
	5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Neither	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
	FREQUENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> Never			
	5 Daily	4 Weekly	3 Bi-weekly	2 Monthly	1 Less than once a month

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

25. Please rate your overall interpersonal communication competence when you convey day-to-day work instructions and provide feedback to your subordinates.	COMPETENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable			
	5 Outstanding	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
26. Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement: Good interpersonal communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with my subordinates.	EXTENT	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable			
	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Uncertain	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
27. Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement: The NWU considers good interpersonal communication competence to be critical to fulfil my communication role as a line manager satisfactorily?	EXTENT	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable			
	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Uncertain	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
28. Please state the reason why you say so:					

C COMMUNICATING WITH SUBORDINATES FROM A CULTURAL BACKGROUND THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OWN

Please reflect on your own behaviour when you communicate with subordinates and employees from a cultural background that is different from your own, and then **indicate to what extent you agree** with all of the statements (according to the scale: "1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=uncertain; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree").

Once again, simply mark the appropriate answer.

STATEMENT

Providing content

29. I experience difficulties with my choice of words when I communicate with subordinates from different cultures about the university strategy.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
30. When I communicate with my subordinates from different cultures to implement my instructions I have difficulties to make myself clear.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

Creating context

31. I am capable to discuss current issues within our university with subordinates from different cultures.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
32. I filter a message when my subordinates from different cultures are sensitive to the information contained in a message.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
33. I am capable of answering questions from my subordinates effectively.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

Having conversation

34. I communicate verbally with ease with subordinates from different cultures.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
35. I feel comfortable when I communicate with each of my subordinates from a different culture.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
36. I use suitable facial expressions and gestures when I communicate with subordinates from different cultures.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
37. I know how to show respect for my culturally different subordinates when we communicate.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
38. I experience difficulties to foster mutual respect with subordinates from different cultures.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

Providing feedback

39. I know how to start a conversation with a subordinate from a different culture.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
40. I am able to listen enthusiastically to the opinions of my culturally different subordinates.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
41. I find it easy to sense an emotional reaction from a subordinate from a different culture.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
42. I find it easy to sense when culturally different subordinates do not understand what I say.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
43. I experience difficulties to foster mutual trust with culturally different subordinates.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
44. I find it difficult to build commitment to the university strategy with culturally different subordinates.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

45. Please rate your overall intercultural communication competence when you interact from day-to-day with subordinates from a cultural background that is different from your own.	<p>COMPETENCE <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Outstanding 4 Very good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor</p>
46. Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement: Good intercultural communication competence enhances the extent to which high-quality relations exist with my subordinates from different cultural backgrounds.	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
47. Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement: The NWU considers good intercultural communication competence to be critical to fulfil my communication role as a line manager satisfactorily with multicultural subordinates?	<p>EXTENT <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p> <p>5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree</p>
48. Please state the reason why you say so:	

D RATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Which of the following intercultural communication barriers do you personally experience when you communicate with subordinates from different cultural backgrounds. Please **rate the barriers** (according to the scale: "1=not experienced as a barrier; 2=a minor barrier; 3=a frequently experienced barrier; 4=a large barrier; 5=a very large barrier"). If there is no appropriate answer for a barrier choose option "None Applicable".

In your opinion, to what extent do the following intercultural barriers **impact on communication effectiveness** when you facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural employees at the NWU (according to the scale: "1=not at all; 2=partly; 3=mostly; 4=fully").

Simply mark the appropriate answer.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

<p>49. Language and semantics – when different cultures assign a different meaning to the words used.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>50. Body language – when different cultures assign a different meaning to nonverbal messages expressed through facial expression and gestures.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>51. Stereotyping – when a culture assigns a belief, an attitude, an assumption or a generalization that ignores true identity and characteristics.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>52. Prejudice and discrimination – when different cultures treat each other unequally or unfairly based on stereotypes, unreasonable beliefs and perceptions.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>53. Selective listening – when you or a subordinate from a different culture distorts a message when the information contained in a message is in conflict with his or her beliefs.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>54. Lack of trust – when subordinates from a different culture do not believe that you know enough or you are competent to give clear, unbiased instructions and feedback.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>
<p>55. Xenophobia – when you experience extreme negative attitudes, feelings and beliefs about non-South African employees within the NWU.</p>	<p>EXTENT 5 A very large barrier 4 A large barrier 3 A frequently experienced barrier 2 A minor barrier 1 Not experienced as a barrier</p> <p>IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS 4 Fully 3 Mostly 2 Partly 1 Not at all</p>

E THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT LINE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

The purpose of this section is to understand how you perceive the relationship between interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies when line managers execute strategic alignment with multicultural employees. This insight, with the rest of the information gathered from the literature study, the theoretical analysis and information obtained through this questionnaire, will serve as a basis to develop a framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication. Consider the following statements and then indicate **to what extent you agree** with all of the statements (according to the scale: "1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=uncertain; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree").

STATEMENT

56. Interpersonal communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree
57. Intercultural communication competence enables line managers to facilitate strategic alignment among multicultural subordinates.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree
58. Integrated interpersonal and intercultural communication competence at line management level will lead to strategic alignment among multicultural employees.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree
59. A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication will assist line managers at a multicultural and multilingual university such as the NWU to manage multicultural subordinates more effectively.	EXTENT 5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Uncertain 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION IN COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.

Would you like to receive the executive summary of the results of this survey? YES NO

If YES, please submit your email address:

APPENDIX H: EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SURVEY

Email subject: Your opinion counts – NWU Survey

Your opinion counts

Dear Colleague,

As a line manager, you are invited to take 20 minutes to participate in the **NWU Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication Survey** and contribute towards the development of a **Framework for Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication at line management level** that is suited to the transformed and multicultural universities. This survey is part of a PhD study conducted among academic and support line managers at North-West University.

The survey is divided into five sections:

- **SECTION A** is about you;
- **SECTION B** is about your communication role in aligning subordinates with the university strategy;
- **SECTION C** is about communicating with subordinates from a cultural background that is different from your own;
- **SECTION D** is about rating intercultural communication barriers; and
- **SECTION E** is about the relationship between interpersonal communication and intercultural communication at line management level.

Please be assured that your expectations related to confidentiality will be respected.

To take part, click on the link below, which will take you directly to the survey:
<https://g3research.co.za/index.php/survey/index/sid/988241/token/zat624/lang/en>

The deadline for response is Monday, 29 June 2015.

As a token of my appreciation, you will be entitled to a complimentary copy of the Executive Summary of results after the survey is completed. If you are interested in receiving the results of the survey, please provide your information at the end of this questionnaire.

Please contact the researcher **Phumzile Mmope** at phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za with questions about the research project. If you have any difficulties completing this survey or need assistance, please send an email to: surveys@g3research.co.za.

Thank-you in advance for your time and participation.

Yours sincerely,

Phumzile Mmope

Researcher

Dr Lida Holtzhausen

Promoter

Onderwerp: U mening is belangrik – Neem deel aan die NWU-opname

U mening is belangrik

Beste Kollega

U as lynbestuurder word genooi om 20 minute af te staan om deel te neem aan die **Geïntegreerde Interkulturele NWU-werknemerkommunikasieopname** en sodoende by te dra tot die ontwikkeling van 'n **Raamwerk vir Geïntegreerde Interkulturele Werknemerkommunikasie op lynbestuursvlak** wat geskik is vir getransformeerde en multikulturele universiteite. Hierdie opname is deel van 'n PhD-studie wat uitgevoer word onder akademiese- en ondersteuningslynbestuurders aan die Noordwes-Universiteit.

Die opname is in vyf afdelings verdeel:

- **AFDELING A** handel oor u;
- **AFDELING B** handel oor u kommunikasie in die belyning van ondergeskiktes met die universiteitstrategie;
- **AFDELING C** handel oor kommunikasie met ondergeskiktes wie se agtergrond van u s'n verskil;
- **AFDELING D** is 'n gradering van interkulturele kommunikasiehindernisse; en
- **AFDELING E** handel oor die verhouding tussen interpersoonlike kommunikasie en interkulturele kommunikasie op lynbestuursvlak.

Wees asseblief verseker dat u verwagtinge ten opsigte van vertroulikheid gerespekteer sal word. Om betroubaarheidsredes en ten einde verwerking te fasiliteer, is die opname slegs in Engels. Ons maak opreg verskoning vir enige ongerief wat hierdeur veroorsaak word maar hoop u kan nogtans u weg oop sien om deel te neem.

Om deel te neem, klik op die skakel hieronder, wat u direk na die meningsopname sal neem:
<https://g3research.co.za/index.php/survey/index/sid/988241/token/zat624/lang/en>

Die sperdatum vir response is Maandag, 29 Junie 2015.

As 'n gebaar van my waardering sal u geregtig wees op 'n komplimentêre eksemplaar van die Bestuursopsomming van die resultate nadat die opname afgehandel is. Indien u belang stel om die resultate van die opname te ontvang, voorsien asseblief u inligting aan die einde van hierdie vraelys.

Skakel asseblief met die navorser, **Phumzile Mmope** by phumzile.mmope@nwu.ac.za, met vrae oor die navorsingsprojek. Indien u enige probleme ondervind om hierdie opname te voltooi of bystand nodig het, stuur 'n e-pos aan: surveys@g3research.co.za.

Dankie by voorbaat vir u tyd en deelname.

Die uwe

Phumzile Mmope
Navorser

Dr Lida Holtzhausen
Promotor

**APPENDIX I:
LETTER FROM LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER**



Director: CME Terblanche - BA (Pol Sc), BA Hons (Eng), MA (Eng), TEFL
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Baillie Park, 2531

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DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Christina Maria Etrechia Terblanche, hereby declare that I edited the
research study titled:

**Integrated Intercultural Employee Communication for Line
Management in Transformed Universities in South Africa**

for **Phumzile P. Mmope** for the purpose of submission as a postgraduate
thesis. Changes were suggested and implementation was left to the
discretion of the author. All fees due have been settled.

Regards,

CME Terblanche

Cum Laude Language Practitioners (CC)

SATI accr nr: 1001066

PEG registered