

**THE PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION APPROACH OF
THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES IN TSHWANE**

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ABSTRACT

Much discourse on the issue of development communication has focused on participation and its role in improving the lives of developing communities. This line of thought emanates from the theories of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber. Freirean dialogue, which emphasises dialogue and conscientisation emanated from Martin Buber's *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships and are relevant in this study because these concepts are pivotal in the endeavour to develop grassroots communities.

For purposes of this study participatory communication is associated with dialogue, self-reliance, empowerment, the communities' socio-cultural context and strategic communication. In an effort to improve service delivery in the public sector, the South African government resolved to provide communities across South Africa with both information and services through the establishment of Thusong Service Centres. The *Thusong* concept refers to 'a place to get help or assistance' in Sesotho, and has been the focus of government in carrying out its mandate in respect of development communication in South Africa.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to gather data, to determine how the communication of Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication. This study used purposive sampling and focused on the six Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. The empirical study comprised document analyses of government policies, semi-structured interviews with senior Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) personnel and personal observations at the six Thusong Service Centres.

An analysis of the communication of Thusong Service Centres with Tshwane communities show that there is inadequate alignment with the theoretical underpinnings of participatory development communication. Against the backdrop of Chin Saik Yoon's four ways of observing participation in development projects, namely, participation in implementation, evaluation, benefit and decision-making, the study indicates that Tshwane communities do not partake in participation in evaluation and participation in decision-making. Furthermore, using Freirean

dialogue as a benchmark, it was concluded that Thusong Service Centres do not fully meet the required principles of dialogue.

Although the abovementioned results indicate that development communication practised by GCIS at Thusong Service Centres is in the main linear in nature, the study makes practical recommendations on how the normative principles of participatory development communication may be implemented at these centres in order to fast track the development process.

Keywords: dialogue, empowerment, Thusong Service Centres, development communication, community participation, participatory communication, information flow, community mobilisation, government communication.

OPSOMMING

'n Groot deel van die diskoers oor die kwessie van ontwikkelingskommunikasie is ingestel op deelname en die rol wat dit speel om die lewe van ontwikkelende gemeenskappe te verbeter. Hierdie gedagterigting vloei voort uit Paulo Freire en Martin Buber se teorieë. Die Freireaanse dialoog, wat dialoog en gewete beklemtoon, is afkomstig van Martin Buber se *I-Thou*- en *I-It*-verhoudings. Hierdie begrippe is in hierdie studie relevant omdat dit die spilpunt vorm van die poging om gemeenskappe op voetsoolvlak te ontwikkel.

Vir doeleindes van hierdie studie word die deelnemende benadering tot ontwikkelingskommunikasie met die begrippe dialoog, selfstandigheid, bemagtiging, die gemeenskappe se sosiokulturele konteks en strategiese kommunikasie geassosieer. Die Suid-Afrikaanse regering het onderneem om dienslewering en inligtingvoorsiening te verbeter deur die daarstelling van Thusong dienssentra. Die begrip *Thusong* verwys in Sesotha na “'n plek om hulp te kry”. Hierdie sentra is die fokuspunt van die regering se mandaat met betrekking tot ontwikkelingskommunikasie.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is gevolg om vas te stel hoe die kommunikasiebenadering van die Thusong-dienssentra's in Tshwane met die normatiewe beginsels van die deelnemende benadering tot ontwikkeling vergelyk. Ses Thusong-dienssentra's in Tshwane is deur middel van doelgerigte steekproeftrekking geïdentifiseer. Die empiriese studie bestaan uit dokumentontledings van regeringsbeleide, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met senior personeel van die Regeringskommunikasie en -Inligtingsdienste (GCIS) en **persoonlike waarnemings** by die ses Thusong-dienssentra's.

Die analise van die Thusong-dienssentra's se kommunikasie het aangedui dat dié kommunikasie nie in ooreenstemming met die normatiewe beginsels van die deelnemende benadering tot ontwikkelingskommunikasie is nie. Teen die agtergrond van Chin Saik Yoon se vier riglyne waarop deelname in ontwikkelingsprojekte geëvalueer kan word, naamlik, deelname in implementasie, evaluasie, voordele en besluitneming, word in die studie getoon dat Tshwane-gemeenskappe nie aan

evaluering en besluitneming deelgeneem het nie. Wanneer hulle kommunikasiebenadering met die beginsels van Freirean dialog vergelyk word, ontbreek dié beginsels van dialog ook in hulle kommunikasiebenadering.

Alhoewel bogenoemde resultate daarop dui dat die aard van die ontwikkelingskommunikasie wat deur die GCIS by die Thusong-dienssentrums beoefen word, wel merendeels lineêr is, word daar praktiese aanbevelings in die studie gemaak oor hoe die normatiewe beginsels van deelwendende ontwikkelingskommunikasie by hierdie sentrums geïmplementeer kan word.

Sleutelwoorde: dialoog, bemagtiging, Thusong-dienssentrums, ontwikkelingskommunikasie, gemeenskapsdeelname, deelnemingskommunikasie, inligtingvloei, gemeenskapsmobilisering, regeringskommunikasie.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH AIMS

1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	2
1.3 CONTEXTUALISATION	6
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	7
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.5.1 Specific research questions	8
1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY	8
1.6.1 General research aim	8
1.6.2 Specific research aims	8
1.7 GENERAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT	9
1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH	10
1.9 RESEARCH METHOD	10
1.9.1 Literature study	10
1.9.2 Empirical study	11
1.9.2.1 <i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	11
1.9.2.2 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	11
1.9.2.3 <i>Personal observations</i>	12
1.9.2.4 <i>Reliability, validity and triangulation</i>	12
1.10 KEY CONCEPTS	14
1.10.1 Community	14
1.10.2 Participatory development communication	14
1.10.3 Self-reliance	14
1.10.4 Dialogue	15
1.10.5 City of Tshwane	15
1.10.6 Thusong Service Centres	15
1.11 STRUCTURE OF STUDY	16
1.12 SUMMARY	17

Table of contents (continued)

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: A THEORETICAL INSIGHT.....	18
2.1 INTRODUCTION	18
2.2 PARADIGM SHIFTS IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	19
2.2.1 The modernisation paradigm	19
2.2.2 The dependency paradigm	26
2.2.3 The participatory paradigm	31
2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	34
2.4 STRUCTURATION THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	43
2.5 SUMMARY	51
CHAPTER 3: A COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT	53
3.1 INTRODUCTION	53
3.2 CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	53
3.3 THE COMMUNICATION PLAN	57
3.3.1 Strategic communication	58
3.3.2 The communication strategy	61
3.3.2.1 <i>Step 1: Establish the communication management function</i>	<i>62</i>
3.3.2.2 <i>Step 2A: Conduct and strategic communication assessment</i>	<i>63</i>
3.3.2.3 <i>Step 2B: Conduct an operational communication analysis.....</i>	<i>67</i>
3.3.2.4 <i>Step 3: Develop a communication strategy and action plan</i>	<i>68</i>
3.3.2.5 <i>Step 4: Implement communication activities</i>	<i>82</i>
3.3.2.6 <i>Step 5: Conduct monitoring and feedback activities</i>	<i>83</i>
3.4 SUMMARY	85

Table of contents (continued)

CHAPTER 4: THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW	86
4.1 INTRODUCTION	86
4.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK	87
4.2.1 Communications 2000: a vision for government communication	88
4.2.2 White paper on transforming public service delivery, 1997.....	90
4.2.2.1 Batho Pele Principles	90
4.2.3 Cabinet Memorandum no. 15 of November 1999	93
4.2.4 President's State of the Nation Address (SoNA), May 2004	93
4.2.5 Thusong Service Centres Government Communications: Business Plan 2006-2014	94
4.3 THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA	94
4.3.1 Management of Thusong Service Centres	95
4.3.2 Objectives of Thusong Service Centres	96
4.3.3 The key elements of Thusong Service Centres	97
4.3.4 Benefits of Thusong Service Centres	97
4.3.5 Services offered by Thusong Service Centres	99
4.3.6 Thusong Service Centre operations	100
4.4 SUMMARY	101
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN	103
5.1 INTRODUCTION	103
5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	103
5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	104
5.3.1 Research questions	104
5.3.2 Theoretical statements	105
5.3.2.1 <i>Theoretical statement 1: Self-reliance</i>	105
5.3.2.2 <i>Theoretical statement 2: Dialogue</i>	105
5.3.2.3 <i>Theoretical statement 3: Empowerment</i>	106

Table of contents (continued)

5.3.2.4	<i>Theoretical statement 4: Community participation</i>	106
5.3.2.5	<i>Theoretical statement 5: Socio-cultural context</i>	106
5.3.2.6	<i>Theoretical statement 6: Strategic communication</i>	107
5.3.3	Data gathering methods	107
5.3.3.1	<i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	107
5.3.3.2	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	109
5.3.3.3	<i>Personal observations</i>	116
5.3.4	Data analysing methods	118
5.3.4.1	<i>Data reduction</i>	118
5.3.4.2	<i>Data display</i>	118
5.3.4.3	<i>Thematic categorisation</i>	119
5.4	RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRIANGULATION	128
5.5	CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED	130
5.5.1	Qualitative content analysis	130
5.5.2	Semi-structured interviews	130
5.5.3	Personal observations	131
5.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	131
5.7	SUMMARY	132
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS – THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES: PRACTISING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION		133
6.1	INTRODUCTION	133
6.2	BACKGROUND	133
6.3	ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	134
6.3.1	Construct 1: Dialogue	134
6.3.1.1	<i>Community participation</i>	134
6.3.1.2	<i>Communication methods</i>	137
6.3.1.3	<i>Key stakeholders</i>	140

Table of contents (continued)

6.3.1.4	<i>Needs identification</i>	142
6.3.1.5	<i>Communication environment</i>	143
6.3.2	Construct 2: self-reliance	145
6.3.2.1	<i>Cooperatives and partnerships</i>	145
6.3.2.2	<i>Commitment</i>	147
6.3.2.3	<i>Sustainability</i>	148
6.3.3	Construct 3: Empowerment	149
6.3.3.1	<i>Ownership of project</i>	150
6.3.3.2	<i>Integrated Development Plan (IDP)</i>	151
6.3.3.3	<i>Planning and decision-making</i>	152
6.3.3.4	<i>Power</i>	154
6.3.3.5	<i>Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)</i>	156
6.3.4	Construct 4: socio-cultural context	158
6.3.4.1	<i>Cultural sensitivity</i>	158
6.3.4.2	<i>Indigenous knowledge</i>	159
6.3.5	Construct 5: strategic planning	160
6.3.5.1	<i>Communication professionals</i>	161
6.3.5.2	<i>Integration of services</i>	162
6.3.5.3	<i>Research</i>	163
6.3.5.4	<i>Communication action plan</i>	165
6.3.5.5	<i>Feedback</i>	168
6.4	SUMMARY	170
 CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		172
7.1	INTRODUCTION	172
7.2	CONCLUSIONS: ANSWERING THE RESEARCH AIMS	172
7.2.1.1	<i>Principles of participatory development communication</i>	173
7.2.1.2	<i>Conclusion</i>	175

Table of contents (continued)

7.2.2.1 <i>The application of principles of participatory development communication</i>	175
7.2.2.2 <i>Conclusion</i>	182
7.2.3 Empirical study	182
7.2.3.1 <i>Thusong Service Centres' communication with communities</i>	182
7.2.3.2 <i>Conclusion</i>	192
7.2.4.1 <i>General research question</i>	192
7.2.4.2 <i>Conclusion</i>	196
7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO GCIS	197
7.3.1 Self-reliance	197
7.3.2 Dialogue	197
7.3.3 Empowerment	198
7.3.4 Community participation	199
7.3.5 Socio-cultural context	200
7.3.6 Strategic planning	200
7.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	201
7.5 SUMMARY	202

LIST OF SOURCES	204
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Five-step guide to strategic communication	62
Table 4.1: Services offered by Thusong Service Centres	99
Table 5.1: Documents analysed	108

LIST OF TEXT BOXES

Text box 2.1: Theoretical statement 1: self-reliance	31
Text box 2.2: Theoretical statement 2: dialogue	43
Text box 2.3: Theoretical statement 3: empowerment	49

Table of contents (continued)

Text box 3.1: Theoretical statement 4: community participation	57
Textbox 3.2: Shifts in the communication paradigm	59
Textbox 3.3: Theoretical statement 5: socio-cultural context	71
Textbox 3.4: Theoretical statement 6: strategic communication	85
Text box 4.1: GCIS objectives	96
Text box 4.2: Benefits of Thusong Service Centres	98
Text box 5.1: Interview guide.....	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: The process of change and empowerment	40
Figure 2.2: Yoon's chaos-wisdom continuum	49

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH AIMS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of South Africa, a developing country with a multicultural population of approximately 48 million, has eleven official languages, together with a variety of dialects and cultures all of which contribute to the complexity of the communication process within the country (South Africa.info, 2009). Post-apartheid South Africa is confronted with the stubborn reality of widespread poverty and growing inequality. However, despite the fact that economic empowerment is benefiting an expanding, mainly urban, black middle class, the majority of people continue to live in poverty and there is mass unemployment (Smith, 2007).

According to CASE (Community Agency for Social Enquiry) (2003), service delivery is one of the many challenges confronting local government as municipalities struggle to find ways to meet their obligation of delivering services. In recognising South Africa as a developing country the attention turns to appropriate methods and new approaches in respect of mobilising change and development. In order to address development problems and the concomitant mass poverty, it becomes necessary to shift the emphasis in dealing with these problems to self-reliant and empowering development. Sustainability of such development would be made possible through communication as well as community participation, in terms of which it should be acknowledged that the participation of the developing community is the greatest contribution which a country may make to its progress and continued existence (Lombard, 1992a:23).

According to Government Communication Information Services (GCIS) (2009) one of the requirements for development is the political will to drive programmes which are aimed at improving the lives of both the poor and disadvantaged. In South Africa the government has demonstrated this political will by means of various policies which have

indicated that development is a priority in the country. An overview of such policies is presented in chapter 4 and discussed in further detail in chapter 6.

Many of the current development initiatives are premised on the principles of centralist social engineering and top-down technocratic approaches whilst too few initiatives actually engage with the communities themselves (Ascroft & Masilela, 1994:260). Furthermore, Ascroft and Masilela (1994:260) argue that the notion of the developing community's participation in development planning, policymaking and decision sharing has remained a concept which is honoured more on paper than in practice.

Smith (2007) argues that, in order for the massive and complex social deficits of the past to be overcome, it is necessary that effective dialogue and partnership building take place between government and the developing communities in order to bridge the deep socioeconomic divides. It is essential that government hear the "voices" of the poor and the developing communities in terms of both policymaking and "delivery" so as to protect and expand the public spaces in which the communities may access power and mobilise as citizens, and also to create a more level playing field to enable communities to play a meaningful role as true partners in the decision-making process.

This implies that communication is at the core of participatory development and empowerment. Participatory development communication, as defined in this study, is informed by Paulo Freire's dialogic process of communication (Freire, 1970:68), which is discussed in further detail in the next section.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on the principles of community participation in the context of participatory development communication. Until the 1960s, economic theories explained the lack of development as being a consequence of industrial and technical backwardness, while sociological theories attributed a lack of development to the cultural backwardness of the illiterate masses. Accordingly, it was believed that the

quickest solution for development would entail the borrowing of the modernisation strategies of the Western societies which were deemed to be developed societies. This resulted in the emergence of development communication during the modernisation paradigm in terms of which specialists and advisors in development advised the poorer countries (Kumar, 1994:76).

In contrast, participatory development communication assumes that individuals should be active in development programmes and processes; they could contribute ideas, take the initiative and articulate their needs and problems while, at the same time, asserting their autonomy (Bafo, 2006). Therefore, emphasis is on the process of planning and the utilisation of communication resources, channels, approaches and strategies in programmes which are designed to bring about some progress, change or development, as well as the involvement of the developing community in the change efforts.

With the abovementioned shift in focus from the linear mode of communication during the modernisation era to full participation of the developing community, there is no longer an attempt to disseminate information to communities, but rather to involve the communities fully in both identifying their needs and taking ownership of activities and information. Cohen (1996:223) states that community participation is a process and it is also a measure of how much is being done by the developing community for themselves with a view to taking control of their own lives and the environment in a self-reliant effort. Participation is thus also a vital criterion for development communication (Tri, 1986a:10; Rahim, 1994:127).

Thomas (1994:49) adds that participation has brought back to discourse the emphasis on a praxis that has emerged from the developing community as a mirror of their aspirations and needs, rather than as one which has been imposed on them by others. This has allowed people to become the subjects of their own development and not simply the objects of either technology or processes.

Paulo Freire, an educational theorist, incorporates participation as a key concept in his philosophy and he indicates that participation is based on the notion that the historical vocation of human beings is to be free from anything in life that does not provide for the involvement of people in the processes of change. Freire's theory focuses on the premise that, in order for communication to be effective, it is essential that it be participatory, dialogic and reciprocal (Freire, 1970:101).

According to Thomas (1994:53), Freire's concept of 'dialogue' emanated from Martin Buber, an Austrian born Jewish philosopher who is well known for his philosophy of dialogue. His philosophy deals with two types of relationships – the "*I-Thou*" and the "*I-It*". The "*I-Thou*" encounter is one of dialogue, mutual respect, openness and give and take, and it is the basis for communion which is the key to community. In contrast, the "*I-It*" relationship is one of monologue, inequality, objectivity and the detachment of human beings from one another, from nature and from God. Buber states that it is in the actual reaching out to the other and in the affirmation of the otherness of the other, that genuine dialogue takes place.

This study is based on Freirean dialogue which incorporates the concept of *conscientisation* which, in turn, focuses on bringing the individual to critical reflection about his/her own living conditions in terms of which he/she actively participates in this reflection process (Servaes, 1996b:97). Accordingly, communication for social change involves people taking the communication processes that will allow them to make their voices heard into their own hands to establish horizontal dialogue with planners and development specialists, and to make decisions on those development issues that affect their lives in order, ultimately, to achieve social changes for the benefit of their community (GCIS, 2009; Bafo, 2006).

It should be noted that it is necessary to reassess power relationships if a development communication initiative is to be successful. A dynamic interpretation of power suggests that, even the powerless are able to acquire a measure of power over their own lives, this will result in a degree of power over other power-holders. A logical deduction would

then be that power for the powerless may emerge from their becoming more self-reliant and developing a voice of their own (Nair & White, 1994a:162).

Chin Saik Yoon also made a significant contribution to the literature on participatory development communication (see section 3.1) by identifying four ways of observing participation in development projects, namely, participation in implementation, participation in evaluation, participation in benefit and participation in decision-making (Yoon, 2004).

According to Yoon (2004), in terms of *participation in implementation* people are actively encouraged and mobilised to take part in the actualisation of projects whereby they are given certain responsibilities and set certain tasks or else they may be required to contribute specified resources. Upon completion of a project people are then invited to review either the success or the failure of the project – *participation in evaluation*. Yoon describes the third type of participation as *participation in benefit* which refers to the process of people enjoying the fruit of a project. Finally, he describes the last approach, *participation in decision-making*, in terms of which people initiate, discuss, conceptualise and plan the activities that they will conduct as a community.

While some development initiatives incorporate all four avenues of participation, there are development initiatives which are restricted to one or two. Nevertheless, Yoon (2004) claims that *participation in decision-making* is the most important form to utilise in the development process because it allows the members of a community power over their own lives and their environment. It is, therefore, of significance to acknowledge the fact that Yoon's theory emphasises participation in decision-making, as this also empowers communities with the necessary skills and, more importantly, with the knowledge to take responsibility for changing their lives and, further, to sustain such change.

The above theories form the basis for this study and, therefore, the results will contribute to the understanding of the concept of development communication in

general, and to the application of the principles of community participation in development communication in particular.

1.3 CONTEXTUALISATION

In an effort to improve service delivery in the public sector, the South African government resolved, in the *Cabinet Memorandum 15 of 1999*, through the establishment of Thusong Service Centres, formerly known as Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) (GCIS, 2009) to provide communities across South Africa with both information and services.

The *Thusong* concept refers to 'a place to get help or assistance' in Sesotho, and has been the focus of government in carrying out its mandate in respect of development communication in South Africa (GCIS, 2009). Consequently, the rationale for the Thusong Service Centres is set within the participatory development communication paradigm, which, in turn, reflects a democratic approach to a public communication and information system as it aims to place the information needs of citizens first in the communication process.

Thusong Service Centres are, thus, one-stop "shops" that offer a range of government products and services to communities. These centres also serve as venues for community events such as education campaigns and exhibitions which, in turn, help people to obtain information which they may use to improve their lives and to develop their communities (South Africa, 2003). As stated in *GCIS's Communications 2000: a vision for government in South Africa* (Comtask Report, 1996:36) these Thusong Service Centres have been identified as the primary vehicle for the implementation of development communication in South Africa.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The participatory development communication paradigm involves a shift in focus from a linear information dissemination paradigm to a transactional, two-way dialogic mode of communication in terms of which communities are fully involved in identifying needs and taking ownership of activities and information. One of the major factors that have slowed human development in South Africa is the lack of the developing community's participation in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that affect their lives. Accordingly, it is important that the Thusong Service Centres be responsive to the needs of communities and that they make provision for feedback from them (GCIS, 2009).

Although it is widely accepted that participation and participatory development communication is the normative approach regarding development, in practice there are many factors constraining the implementation of initiatives based on this approach. One of the points of critique frequently lodged against participation is that it is time consuming and difficult to implement on a practical level (White, S, 1994:30).

The nature and function of the Thusong Service Centre leans towards information dissemination which could result in a modernistic approach to development (Rogers, 1976: 52). Participation may thus only exist on a conceptual and ideological level in government policies, resulting in the practice of diffusion communication, an often easier method to adopt, whereby communication is seen as a unidirectional, one-way persuasion process that does not involve reciprocity.

It is against this background that this study examines the way in which Thusong Service Centres may facilitate the participation and involvement of communities in their communication with government.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The above background information gives rise to the following general research question: *How does the communication of Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication?*

1.5.1 Specific research questions

- 1.5.1.1 According to the relevant literature, what are the principles of participatory development communication?
- 1.5.1.2 How may the Thusong Service Centres incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with communities?
- 1.5.1.3 According to what approach do Thusong Service Centres communicate with the communities they serve?

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 General research aim

The general research aim of this study is to determine how the communication of Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication.

1.6.2 Specific research aims

The specific research aims of the study include the following:

- 1.6.2.1 To establish the principles of participatory development communication as they emerge from the relevant literature.

- 1.6.2.2 To determine the way in which Thusong Service Centres could incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with the communities they serve.
- 1.6.2.3 To determine according to which approach Thusong Service Centres communicate with the communities they serve.

1.7 GENERAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The study relies on the following basic theoretical arguments:

Vertical or one-way communication does not facilitate sufficient active involvement on the part of the participant in the process of communication, which itself is supposed to accelerate development. While groups of individuals may obtain information from impersonal sources such as the mass media, such information has relatively little effect on the behavioural changes envisioned by development (Servaes, 1996b:105).

Community participation is therefore a requirement for development. Development communication theory and principles should thus be applied to communication initiatives when communicating with various communities (Freire, 1970:72).

The central assumption in this study is that Thusong Service Centres have the potential to facilitate participatory development communication between government and communities. Furthermore, if the Thusong Service Centres practised participatory communication, then both their communication and their development efforts would be more effective.

In section 5.3.2 these basic arguments are delineated into six theoretical statements clarifying the nature of participatory development communication as applied in this study. The next sections discuss the research approach and methods that were employed in this study in order to address the abovementioned research aims.

1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study investigated the communication initiatives and approach which government uses in its interaction with its communities and therefore used the qualitative approach. Qualitative research refers to a process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences as a means of determining the process in which such events are embedded, as well as the perspectives of those who participate in these events. Qualitative research uses induction to derive possible explanations based on observed phenomena (Gorman & Clayton, 2005:3).

This study adopted the qualitative research approach in order to gather rich data from the relevant stakeholders in certain development communication initiatives within South Africa. The researcher was of the opinion that this approach was the most suitable for this study and it enabled personal encounters with the interviewees in order to capture both the overall ambience and tone of the environment.

1.9 RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted in two phases: a literature study and an empirical study. The literature study was conducted first in order to gather information pertaining to both the South African government's development communication initiatives and to the principles of development communication on a global scale. This literature study is outlined in the next section.

1.9.1 Literature study

A literature study or review is a means of collecting and organising the results of previous studies in order to produce a composite of what has already been learned about a particular topic (Schwandt, c2001:229). In this study an extensive literature review was undertaken across a broad spectrum of sources including conference

papers, journals, newspaper articles, government policy documents and various internet resources. The following sources were consulted: Nexus; The National Research Foundation (NRF) website; the Ferdinand Postma Library Catalogue, OASIS; Unisa Library e-Journal Finder; JSTOR; EBSCOhost; ProQuest; and Project MUSE.

The literature search indicated that, although extensive research has been conducted in the field of development communication, the focus in previous research has not been on the actual approach that government uses in its communication with communities.

1.9.2 Empirical study

The second phase of this study involved an empirical study which is discussed in the following section.

1.9.2.1 Qualitative content analysis

Henning (2004:98) suggest that, when used alongside other research methods, a qualitative content analysis reveals meaning in research. In other words, relevant documents in a study are analysed as entities of data that reveal meaning in respect of that particular study. Accordingly, an analysis of government policy documents was conducted in order to ascertain the South African government's undertaking in respect of its development communication initiatives and approach (refer to chapter 6 for an analysis of the findings) and was used as the backdrop against the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews.

1.9.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Swift (2006:157) asserts that the semi-structured interview is a method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves the asking of a series of questions and which enables the interviewer to follow up and probe responses, motives and feelings. In this study, semi-structured interviews were especially

appropriate because this method enabled the researcher to work from an interview guide, ensuring that the same questions were asked to all the interviewees. On the other hand, it also allowed the researcher the freedom to ask follow-up questions and adapt the interview guide to be appropriate for the specific interviewee.

The study focused on all six Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. The population involved in the investigation consisted of the key role players who are responsible for the functioning of the Thusong Service Centres, and included Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) personnel based at the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane as well as key personnel from GCIS.

The above interviews were aimed at ascertaining the approach adopted by government in its interaction with communities regarding development communication efforts. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, after which the texts were analysed by means of coding the dominant themes which had been identified.

1.9.2.3 Personal observations

Henning (2004:81) and Gorman and Clayton (2005:106) state that observation brings to the fore a sense of the real-life actions as they are performed in real time. Observation, thus, enables the researcher to become the instrument of observation and to witness for him/herself firsthand the way in which people act in a specific setting and also what that setting actually comprises. This method was adopted to observe the real-life setting and actions of the members of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane and it further assisted in determining the communication approach adopted by these Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane.

1.9.2.4 Reliability, validity and triangulation

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:278) and Gorman and Clayton (2005:55), the underlying issue regarding reliability is whether the process of a study is both consistent

and reasonably stable over time and across methods – “quality control”. Furthermore, Mouton and Marais (1990:91) and Gorman and Clayton (2005:56) recommend that multiple sources of data collection be included in a study in order to increase the reliability of the study. In this study audio taped interviews, field notes and an interview guide were used to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the interpretations.

In addition, it is important to ensure the internal validity of a study. Internal validity refers to the extent to which conclusions drawn from a research study provide an accurate description of what happened and why (Schwandt, c2001:311; Gorman & Clayton, 2005:58-59). This study investigated participatory development communication at the Thusong Service Centres by analysing government policy documents; interviewing senior GCIS personnel; and conducting personal observations at the six Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane.

The use of these three research methods to gather data allowed cross referencing across methods and therefore contributed to internal validity of the study. Cross referencing refers to triangulation, which may be defined as a procedure which is used to examine a conclusion, assertion or claim from more than one vantage point in order to check the integrity of the inference drawn. In this study, source triangulation was used by both analysing the normative principles in the field of development communication, as well as examining the South African government policy documents on development communication. Method triangulation was achieved by conducting interviews with the key role-players in this study, namely, Thusong Service Centre and GCIS personnel, as well as from qualitative content analysis and personal observations, using the same categories of analysis to investigate the development communication approach of GCIS.

The study used Tshwane as the geographic area under investigation, and it is, thus, not possible to generalise the findings of this study to Thusong Service Centres outside of the Tshwane region.

The following section explains the key concepts used in this study that are specific to participatory development communication.

1.10 KEY CONCEPTS

1.10.1 Community

Homan (2004:149) defines a community as a number of people who share a distinct location, belief, interest, activity, or other characteristic that clearly identifies their commonality and which differentiates them from those who do not share it. Lombard (1992b:64) maintains that the concept of community may be characterised by geographic boundaries. This study characterised its communities geographically by investigating the communities of Tshwane which include Mamelodi, GaRankuwa, Atteridgeville, Soshanguve, Hammanskraal and Olivenhout in Tshwane.

1.10.2 Participatory development communication

Participatory development communication refers to a two-way dynamic interaction between 'grass-roots' receivers and the information source. This interaction is mediated by development communication which, in turn, facilitates the participation of the 'target group' in the process of development (Nair & White, 1994b:346).

It should be noted at the outset that participation in this study does not refer to "being involved in" in the sense of passively undergoing a process with which one is concerned, but rather as "taking part in" in a positive sense of exercising a share of responsibility in the carrying out of some process (Colin, 1986:68).

1.10.3 Self-reliance

The concept of self-reliance constitutes an integral aspect of participation, both as an outcome and as a part of the development process. This study argues that self-reliance

is a necessary element to enable people to move out of dependency relationships because, when communities become self-reliant, their behaviour changes from apathy to action, from dependence to independence, from alienation to involvement, from powerlessness to assertiveness, from defensiveness to supportiveness, and from ignorance to knowledge with an overall perspective of being self-determined (White, S, 1994:25–26).

1.10.4 Dialogue

The dialogue process in the context of development communication involves a two-way horizontal flow of communication, which is contrary to a vertical, linear communication process (Nair & White, 1994b:347). In this study dialogue is used as a foundational principle which is a necessary element if development is to occur.

1.10.5 City of Tshwane

The City of Tshwane, the second largest municipality in Gauteng and one of the six largest metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, covers an area of 2 198 square kilometres with a population of approximately 2.2 million. The City of Tshwane is steeped in a rich cultural heritage (City of Tshwane, 2010).

In this study, Tshwane communities, which were identified from the geographic location of the six Thusong Service Centres, fall into the category of developing communities as a result of the previously disadvantaged circumstances to which these communities were exposed.

1.10.6 Thusong Service Centres

Thusong, a Sesotho word meaning ‘a place to get help or assistance’, has been the focus of government in its carrying out of its mandate in respect of development communication in South Africa (GCIS, 2009). Thusong Service Centres refer to

community centres which were formerly known as Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) and which were initiated by the South African government in 1999 as one of the primary vehicles for the implementation of development communication and information, and to integrate government services in rural and disadvantaged urban areas. Thusong Service Centres have been defined as one-stop, integrated community development centres which are characterised by community participation and services that are relevant to the needs of the developing community (GCIS, 2009).

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study comprises seven chapters. This chapter introduces the problem statement, research questions and the research aims, and introduces the key concepts and theoretical arguments relating to participatory development communication and which were used as the basis for the literature review in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 presents a theoretical insight into development communication at large by examining the participatory, modernisation and dependency paradigms of development communication in order to gain an understanding of the various perspectives as well as eras through which development communication has passed.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed communication plan for participatory development. This plan embraces strategic communication planning which comprises an essential component for successful development communication initiatives. It should be noted that the six theoretical statements formulated in chapters 2 and 3 were used as foundational participatory development communication principles throughout this study.

Chapter 4 discusses Thusong Service Centres in detail whilst, at the same time, contextualising these centres within the participatory development communication paradigm. Chapter 5 discusses and motivates the research methodology and research design which were adopted in this study, while chapter 6 describes and interprets the

results that emerged from the empirical study. Chapter 7, the final chapter of the study, presents the conclusions and recommendations.

1.12 SUMMARY

This study views participation on the part of the developing community as a mandatory element in development, and, thus, the study considers participatory development communication to be an invaluable component of the overall betterment of a community. The notion of development incorporates the importance of participation at all levels – from the crucial first stage of the identification of needs to the final stage of evaluation and adjustment of the plan, as well as the making of decisions throughout the process. It is, therefore, necessary to adopt appropriate communication techniques in order to ensure both horizontal and bottom-up communication processes.

This introductory chapter provided an overview of the context in which the research into participatory development communication at Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane was conducted for this study. In view of the aim of the study, which was to determine how the communication of Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication, the next chapter will present a general discussion of development communication with a focus on the participatory paradigm. The chapter will also establish the benchmarking for the subsequent empirical analysis.

CHAPTER 2

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: A THEORETICAL INSIGHT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of development is both to improve and to change the lives of people in a sustainable way. In order to bring about such change and to elicit participation on the part of the relevant people, it is important that the development process be driven by communication. The significance of communication lies in involving members of the developing community at all levels of the development effort, and, thus, participatory communication became an essential focal area of development, without which sustainable development is not possible (Anyaegbunam, Mefalopulos & Moetsabi, 2004:6).

In light of the above, the point of departure for development communication is, according to Bessette (2003), not the dissemination of an innovation, or of a new idea that is full of promise, but the grassroots expression of the communities' needs. This relates to the concept of participation which plays a vital role in normative contemporary views on development.

Participatory development communication – the process by which people become leading actors in their own development – enables people to become generators of their own development as opposed to being mere recipients of external development interventions. At the heart of the concept of development communication is the need for an exchange of information in order both to contribute to the resolution of a development problem and to improve the quality of life of a specific community (Bessette, 2003). Despite the fact that participation is sometimes viewed as being synonymous with development, it has not always been practised in this manner.

Communication plays a significant role in development and, hence, the study field of development communication. However, there is no clear definition of development communication and the nature of development communication has been informed by the different development paradigms of the time.

Accordingly, development communication moved through various paradigms before it reached what is now known as participatory development communication. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the various paradigms in development communication and to situate this study within a relevant theoretical framework. The theory discussed in this chapter is essential to this study, as it informs the analysis of the empirical data in chapter 6. Ultimately, this chapter aims to answer the question “*What are the principles of participatory development communication according to the literature?*” The following section discusses the various paradigms through which development has moved.

2.2 PARADIGM SHIFTS IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

2.2.1 The modernisation paradigm

Within an historical context the term “modernisation” refers to the Industrial Revolution which took place in the eighteenth century in Europe, and which resulted in the economic and political advancement of European societies. Accordingly, modernisation has come to mean the process by which developing countries may attain the economic and political accomplishments of the West (Agunga, 1997:139).

Agunga (1997:139) further mentions that, following World War II, the United States became the dominant power in the West and that the United States wanted to transform the defeated countries. Thus, post-World War II, the United States helped to rebuild Western Europe and this established America as the centre of the world with the rest on the periphery. Consequently, modernisation theory bestowed on America a special feeling as ‘donor’, with the rest of the world as ‘recipients’. Thus, at this time,

development connoted the existence of a power hierarchy in terms of which the wealthy countries were perceived as possessing the power and poor countries as being weak. Giddens and Pierson (1998:15) indicate that traditional societies need to overcome their traditional past, and Lerner (1976:287) suggests that mass communication could assist in this process because of its key role in accomplishing modernity. He refers to two major development patterns, namely, the acceleration of history and the mobilisation of the periphery. In addition, he maintains that a substantial amount of the historical acceleration was either initiated or reinforced by new technology and urbanisation was seen as the first step toward social mobility because it was coupled with industrialisation. Lerner argues that there will continue to be disparities and frustrations resulting from the accelerated tempo of technological innovations, but that these are necessary in order to move our societies into modernisation.

Modernisation theory, which dominated most of the development work in the 1950s and 60s, emphasised that it was essential that the newly independent, developing nations adopt Western ideas and innovations, which had been diffused using the mass media, in order to “catch up” with the developed nations (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The original mission of modernisation comprised technical assistance only with expert knowledge and skill being offered through information dissemination and technical training, and through the transfer of technology (Nair & White, 1994a:156).

Thomas (1994:58) argues that diffusion of innovations theory, which had been initiated by the American scholar, Everett Rogers in the 1950s, grew out of the need for technological information to be disseminated from expert sources, within the socio-cultural context of assimilation, so as to enable modernisation. This diffusion of the innovations model was based on an assumption that information fed into the system would naturally diffuse among members of the developing community and, hence, that the ideas of the experts would ‘trickle down’ to the less informed communities.

This rationale presumed that the progressive sectors of society would embrace new ideas and pass these new ideas on to their friends and neighbours, and that, eventually,

these ideas would be 'adopted'. Rogers concluded that the media played an extremely important role in increasing awareness, but that interpersonal communication and personal sources were, nevertheless, crucial in the making of decisions to adopt the innovations. This revision incorporated insights from the two-step flow theory of Katz and Lazarsfeld (University of Twente, 2004), who had claimed that the two steps to information flow referred to comprised the flow of information from the media to opinion leaders and from the leaders to the masses. Media audiences relied on the opinions of members of their social networks rather than on the mass media only (Thomas, 1994:58).

Although technological growth and expansion were both inevitable and necessary, the modernisation theory resulted in the widening of the knowledge gap. Rather than achieving widespread adoption, technological information became power in the hands of a privileged few (Thomas, 1994:58).

Nyamnjoh (2005) argues that modernisation may be seen as a giant compressor which is determined to destroy every other civilisation in order to reduce these other civilisations to the model of the industrialised West. It is for this reason, according to Nyamnhoh (2005) that modernisation theory may also be termed *the theory of the convergence of civilisation* since every other civilisation is considered to be moving towards this unique model. Modernisation may also be viewed as a process of change and innovation in terms of which that which is new is perceived as progress, regardless of its real impact on the recipient individuals and communities. The reason for this is that the emphasis is on measuring effectiveness and not on effects, which may not always be measurable even though they may be more relevant.

Lerner's theory, as discussed above, is extended by Wilbur Schramm's view that the mass media may be used to widen horizons, raise aspirations, focus attention, create a climate for development and feed the interpersonal channels (Lerner & Schramm, 1976:343). In terms of this view, which resonates well with the modernisation paradigm,

Schramm has been actively engaged in the use of mass media as the teacher to break down the barriers of ignorance (Chu, 1973).

According to Schramm (1964:iv), it is understood that, before there may be free and adequate information in any country, there must be sufficient development of the mass communication. He further states that mass communication is influential in modernising a developing culture which is, in turn, necessary for national development. Lerner (in Schramm, 1964:247) claims that mass communication is the great multiplier of development – the device that may spread the new ideas, attitudes and knowledge more rapidly.

According to Chowdhury (1999:1089) the centrality of the state re-emerged from the late 1970s onwards, mainly as a reaction to the neglect of the state within structural functionalism and Marxist paradigms. The state has a critical part to play in controlling disorder and creating order and one of the key ways of implementing this is to mobilise development. The aforementioned author adds that to cope successfully with modernisation, a political system must be able to innovate policy and the change or destruction of traditional forces requires the concentration of power in the agents of modernisation (Chowdhury, 1999:1093). The relevance of the statist view on modernisation is important to note in this study due to the nature of enquiry, which focuses on government policies and government support in development.

Modernisation theory suggests that cultural and information deficits are at the bottom of development problems and, thus, it is impossible to resolve these development problems through economic assistance alone. Third World countries lack the necessary culture to move onto the modern stage (Communication Initiative Network, 2003). However, Durkheim (in Giddens & Pierson, 1998:15), argues that it is not possible for any one tradition in this world to hold sway, neither is it possible for any single customary mode of action to serve as the foundation for living one's life within the complex and ever-changing circumstances of the present.

According to Giddens and Pierson (1998:15) traditions and customs, beliefs and expectations are adaptable resources within the globalised, cosmopolitan and diverse world of intersecting cultures and lifestyles. Accordingly, the modern world is not responsible for the abolition of tradition, but instead it locates and contextualises traditions as alternative ways of decision-making and as sources of knowledge, value and morality.

The above argument guides this discussion to a criticism of the modernisation paradigm. The basic assumption of development was that 'modern' people act in a rational and informed manner and that success inevitably results from careful planning. This "rationalist and positivist" approach in terms of which everything may be measured and uncertainty eliminated is hardly a reflection of real life (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Moemeka (1999) explains that since development communication began in Africa in the 1950s it has been based on the erroneous belief, firstly, that development meant westernisation and, secondly, that development meant modernisation. This resulted in the two following working assumptions – that money and educated (qualified) personnel were all that was needed to bring about development; and that all efforts should be concentrated on the developing areas. As a result of the fact that development has been misinterpreted to mean modernisation, all efforts have been geared to living as people in the Western world do (Moemeka, 1999).

Nyamnjoh (2005) argues that development in Africa may have been impeded because, firstly, the continent has relied on a notion of development and on development agendas that are both foreign to the majority of its peoples in origin and objectives, and which have not always addressed the correct issues or, indeed, addressed these issues in the right way. Secondly, development communication researchers have adopted research techniques which were designed to meet the needs of Western societies, and these research techniques do not always suit African cultures or African societies.

Good communication has been presented as a way of being able to break through blockages (the *so-called* backward attitudes and practices – customs, traditions and philosophies) with knowledge. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to either the communities' backgrounds or indigenous knowledge as constituting valuable inputs in the development process (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Eisenstadt (1976:35) asserts that it is clear that the mere destruction of traditional forms did not necessarily assure the development of a new, viable, modern society. In fact, this disruption of traditional settings – the family, the community, and even the political order – often led to disorganisation, delinquency and chaos rather than to a viable modern order.

The implication for African countries which are taking their political, cultural, economic and intellectual cues from the West – as modernisation theorists suggest – is that these African countries run the risk of losing any political autonomy, cultural identity, economic independence and intellectual creativity that they may have had (Nyamnjoh, 2005). According to Srampickal (2006), it is essential that development be conceived as an integral, multidimensional process which may differ from country to country. Jacobson (1994:60) agrees with this assertion and goes on to state that participation in local projects differs from participation at national-level because it is vital that each community define development for itself.

Nonetheless, it is the view of Schramm (1964:250) that the mass media are quite capable of handling the basic informational tasks of development on their own. Furthermore, he refers to the use of the media as part of a total educational experience, either with or without the guidance of a teacher.

This view relates to Freire's reference to the process of education as the ultimate factor in conscientising people. According to Freire (1970:62) prescription is one of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. In fact, he states that every prescription represents the imposition of one man's choice upon another, thus transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms to the consciousness of the oppressor. Freire criticises prescription because of this state of

imposition on people and the contradicting principles which prescription offers when compared to his theory of consciousness. Freire's argument against prescription is relevant in terms of the theory of modernisation which adopts a prescriptive approach in the development process.

It should be noted that, although modernisation emphasised one-way communication, participation was, in many cases, the proposed outcome. This is evident from Schramm's (1964:63) definition of development communication as an introduction of a process of nationwide dialogue regarding national goals, policies and accomplishments (White, R, 1994:101). Lerner in Schramm (1964:247) also envisions development which would lead to a participant society in the sense that members of the developing community would increasingly form opinions about national public issues and vote in national elections. However, this type of participation does not comprise the authentic dialogue that is referred to in this study, and which is a requirement for successful development.

Third World countries relied heavily on the strong capitalist nations for economic support and technological assistance. However, even after more than forty years of planned growth and the application of new technologies, the most basic human needs of millions of people in the world are still not being met. Economic goals have remained largely apart from human development goals and, as a result, modernisation has marginalised many segments of society (Nair & White, 1994a:155).

Lerner (1976:299–300) argues that communication technologies should be the servant and not the master of communication policy. Furthermore, he states that it is essential that economic growth and human betterment within a framework of societal stability reach a state of "dynamic equilibrium". It is in this light that Lerner considers the role of the communication specialist to be vital in improving the capacity of society to absorb new technologies. According to Servaes (1983:66), technological innovation is either encouraged or discouraged by the prevailing social system and it is integrated into that system, usually to achieve the objectives of the dominant elements already

commanding the social system. This relates directly to the structuration theory which will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is evident from the preceding discussion that the power has remained in the hands of the leaders and this, consequently has led to dependent development in terms of which powerful global forces have exercised control over the development countries by setting the terms of exchange, global trade and the structure of global markets. This inadequacy of the modernisation theory extended into the next paradigm – the dependency paradigm – which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 The dependency paradigm

The dependency paradigm emerged in the mid 1960s as a reaction to modernisation from a Latin American base, specifically Brazil and Chile. Dependency theory was perceived as a possible way of explaining the persistent poverty of the poorer countries and it was informed by Marxist thinking. This dependency paradigm, which is a reaction to modernisation, focused on underdevelopment. Andre Gunder Frank (Frank, 2005) adapted the dependency theory to Marxism whilst Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein, 1976) refined the Marxist aspect of the theory and termed it the “world system” (Ferraro, 1996).

This ‘world system’ identified above is aligned with the Marxist theorists who viewed persistent poverty as a consequence of capitalist exploitation. This new body of thought, termed the “world systems approach”, argued that poverty was a direct consequence of the evolution of the international political economy into a fairly rigid division of labour which favoured the rich and penalised the poor (Ferraro, 1996).

Wallerstein’s world system theory contributed to the dependency theory in terms of which he refers to three categories that nations hold in a world system, namely, core, periphery and semi-periphery. The relationship between core and periphery was a straightforward description of dependence and exploitation in respect of the rich and the

poor. However, the category of semi-periphery was more problematic with a vague allusion to a middle ground between the core and the periphery (Sommers, 2005).

The three categories in Wallerstein's world system theory mentioned above may be interpreted as three basic elements, namely, a single market system, a series of state structures and an appropriation of surplus labour (Schiller, 1976:5). Sommers (2005) claims that Wallerstein's intention was to create a unified theory of economic, political and social phenomena which also provided a model for understanding change within the global system, and the relationship between the parts of the global system. Wallerstein's theory resonated with the relationship of "unequal exchange" in terms of which the rich nations of the world enforced trade relationships with the poor and the former extracted surplus from the latter.

Paul Baran, a proponent of dependency theory, was one of the first to articulate the proposition that development and underdevelopment are interrelated processes. In Baran's view, continued imperialist dependence after the end of the colonial period was ensued by the reproduction of socioeconomic and political structures at the periphery in accordance with the interests of the power centres. This, he argues, was the main cause of the chronic backwardness of the developing countries, as the main focus of the Western monopoly of capitalism was either to prevent, or to slow down and control, the economic development of underdeveloped countries (Servaes, 1983:14). These poorer countries, which became puppets in the world market, were encouraged to specialise in specific food and fibre commodities, capitalise on cheap labour, and export raw material from their natural resources. As a result, these poorer countries lost their ability to be self-sufficient (Nair & White, 1994a:156).

The dependency relationship was further explained by Andre Gunder Frank (Frank, 2005; Ferraro, 1996), who asserts that the motive force behind dependency is international capitalism. According to Frank, the capitalist system has enforced a rigid international division of labour which has been responsible for the underdevelopment of many areas of the world; therefore it is essential that developing countries attempt to

pursue policies of self-reliance in order to overcome their dependence. This self-reliance should be interpreted as endorsing a policy of controlled interactions with the world economy, in terms of which poor countries should endorse only interactions on terms that promise to improve the social and economic welfare of their larger citizenry (Ferraro, 1996).

Frank's key concept of self-reliance in overcoming dependence relates to Wallerstein's world system theory. Furthermore, the three key elements of Wallerstein's theory within the dependency paradigm may be used to understand cultural imperialism, which is, in turn, a relevant concept within the dependency paradigm.

According to Schiller (1976:6) cultural imperialism develops in a world system within which there is a single market, and within which the terms and character of production are determined in the core of that market and then radiate outward. National states exist and impinge on the pure workings of the world system, whilst ordinarily their interventions benefit the interests of the dominant classes in their own domains. The maintenance of an intermediary layer is essential for the preservation of the system internationally and within each constituent state within the system. Schiller (1976:6) indicates that it, thus, follows that third forces, middle classes and informational pluralism constitute the catchwords and necessities of system maintenance.

The cultural-communications sector of the world system necessarily develops in accordance with, and facilitates, the aims and objectives of the general system. A largely one-directional flow of information from core to periphery represents the reality of power (Schiller, 1976:6).

A phenomenon of 'cultural imperialism' paralleled the increase in dependency and it is captured by Cohen in Nair and White (1994a:156) in the following quotation:

Economic relations with the rich transmit to the poor the profile of preferences and desires altogether unsuited to their economic and social needs ... the tendency on the

part of many people in poor countries to attempt to emulate the consumption patterns of rich nations about what they constantly read in their press, or hear on their radio, or see for themselves on their televisions and in the movies.

Matson (1976:259) refers to Marshall McLuhan's global village theory. This theory is relevant in this study because of its reference to a world community which is united through electronic enlightenment. This globalisation, which is made possible by mass communications technology (McLuhan & Powers, 1989: 85-87), promises cultural pluralism, but it also signifies cultural imperialism, which, in turn, creates a community dependent on the authorities.

The cultural imperialism theory positions Western nations as dominating the media around the world and this, in turn, has a powerful effect on Third World cultures by imposing Western views on them thereby destroying their native cultures (Communication Capstone, 2000). Western civilisation produces most of the media because it has the money to do so, and the rest of the world purchases these media productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than to produce their own. Consequently, Third World countries watch media that comprise the Western world's way of living, believing and thinking (Communication Capstone, 2000).

As victims of cultural imperialism and their dependency on the wealthier nations, the poor nations find it difficult to formulate autonomous development policies in accordance with their own cultural histories and societal interests (Servaes, 1983:13). Servaes (1983) was one of the pioneering scholars who emphasised the need for development programmes that are culturally sensitive. He criticised both the dependency and the modernisation theories as he aptly contended that both theories were based on the assumption that, as societies develop, they lose their individual identities and gravitate toward a common culture. The essential input that indigenous communities have to offer to the development process is, thus, ignored and this results in overlooking the cultural nuances of communities and, eventually, in the failure of the development effort (Chitnis, 2005).

Freire (1985:73) also criticises the dependency paradigm when he argues that the dependent society is, by definition, a silent society and its voice is not an authentic voice but merely an echo of the voice of the authorities in every way, whereby the authorities speak and the dependent society listens. According to Freire (1985:75), the mode of consciousness that corresponds to the concrete reality of dependent societies is historically conditioned by the social structures of these societies. The dominated consciousness does not have sufficient distance from reality to objectify reality in order to know it in a critical way. This mode of consciousness is referred to as semi-intransitive¹.

White, S (1994:25) refers to the concept of self-reliance as an integral aspect of participation – both as an outcome and as a part of the process. Furthermore, White criticises the dependency paradigm by arguing that, in order to become self-reliant, the focus must be on both strengthening local economic resources and on making the community more self-sufficient. This would mean that a community of self-reliant people would move from dependence to independence, and this, in turn, informs the following theoretical assumption.

¹ Freire's concept of conscientisation is explained in section 2.3

Text box 2.1: Theoretical statement 1 - self-reliance

It should be the goal of GCIS to provide self-reliant opportunities for communities to become independent participants in the development process, and not fall into a paradigm of dependence in terms of which cultural imperialism and cultural domination destroy native cultures and compromise the independent thinking communities.

Dependency theory thus refers to development domination – a widening economic and social gap between the rich and the poor. This dilemma expedited the search for alternative models which would help to improve the welfare of the human masses. This, in turn, led to the participatory paradigm within development communication theory. This paradigm is discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 The participatory paradigm

Participatory communication, which emerged in the 1980s, grew out of the realisation that it is essential that beneficiaries be involved in the development programmes that are meant for them. This, in turn, requires the devolution of power and social change interventions in order to reflect the real needs of people (Chitnis, 2005).

A reliable indicator of participation is the full and authentic involvement of members of the developing community in the planning, decision-making and ownership in the change effort. Without these prerequisites any change effort will be perceived as ‘someone else’s’ initiative (IDRC (International Development Research Centre), 2004; Mushi, 1986:263). It is important to acknowledge that participation translates into the active involvement at grassroots level of the developing community (Bafo, 2006) and, thus, that the limited notion of ‘consultation’ is insufficient if authentic development is to take place.

Otsyina and Rosenberg (in Srampickal, 2006) and Nair and White (1994b:347) agree that participatory development communication emphasises two-way communication processes which favour horizontal approaches. These horizontal approaches encourage both dialogue which is centred on problem analysis and a search for solutions, as well as bottom-up approaches that aim to raise the awareness of the decision-makers. Accordingly, the participatory process distinguishes itself from one-way communication approaches that involve disseminating messages, transmitting information, or persuading people to change their behaviour. It may, thus, be stated categorically that participatory communication is inherently 'transactional'. According to Nair and White (1994b:347) transactional communication is a dialogue, wherein sender and receiver of messages interact in order to arrive at shared meanings, which results in consensual agreement and is required in participatory development communication.

It is important to identify the use of appropriate media in the participatory paradigm. Aligned with this is Bordenave's (1994:43) assertion that, in order to build a participative society, it is essential that communication undergo a radical change regarding their media landscape. Bordenave goes on to suggest that, for various reasons, commercially operated media is not ideal during the participatory development process. He points out that the commercial media are more interested in diffusing information than in provoking discussion, as well as participation which would be relevant to the discussion. The theoretical framework of this study encourages dialogue during participation and, thus, Bordenave's (1994:43) proposition resonates with this fact by referring to community media instead of commercial media. He refers to community and traditional media as channels for allowing community members equal access to expressing their viewpoints, feelings and experiences – an important factor during participatory development.

In addition, Bordenave discourages the use of commercial or capitalist media for development communication because both generally have a disintegrating effect on cultural identity. Media, as extensions of man, should not be restricted to communication professionals, but should rather be the authentic voice of the developing

community (Bordenave, 1994:44). McLuhan's (Gordon, Hamaji & Albert ,2007:90) global village theory is pertinent in this regard, whereby he explains that media are powerful agents of change in how we experience the world, how we interact with each other and how we use our physical senses. In other words, the media assists us in extending our senses beyond our physical conditions. In this study, it is not only GCIS that should have access to the media regarding the development of communities, but also the communities themselves. Accordingly, it is important that community media be adopted during development communication initiatives. This includes both community newspapers and community radio and this would, as a result of access and the literacy levels of the community, ensure the maximum reach of the message.

In the same vein, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights promotes a culture of dialogue, community and human rights. According to Srampickal (2006) there are three key rights that address communication directly. Firstly, *the right to communication* is a basic human right which points to the basic need of every human being to express what he or she thinks about any matter. Since all democratic relationships presuppose interactions that are mutual, no relationship without dialogue is possible because, in order for people to enter into relationships, to establish communities and to survive, people have to communicate.

The second key right is *the right to information* in terms of which citizens of a country have a right to be informed of everything that affects them in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres, including their country's plans for development. Development communication emphasises not only education itself but also the right of the developing community to know more about the need for development, the causes of underdevelopment, and their government's plan for development.

Lastly, in terms of the right to communication, the *democratisation of communication* demands that every citizen have access to the media, although within the context of a global market economy, this third right poses a challenge. Despite the fact that national public broadcasting systems have been established in most democracies, the

communications in most countries are controlled by either a small professional elite or by commercial advertising interests, and therefore the existence of this challenge.

Several of the development efforts undertaken in the past have focused on effective communication and the enabling of action. However, this narrow focus has left these efforts vulnerable to eventual failure as people lack both ownership and the relevant in-depth knowledge to assume control of activities in the long term and, more importantly, because the developing community lack a sense of community (Yoon, 2006).

If development is to be successful, it is essential that the community be actively involved in the planning, decision-making and ownership of all activities – this active involvement translates into participation. Without the participation of the relevant communities, development policies are in danger of lacking firm foundations or of being usurped by dominant or dynamic groups. This, in turn, will result in the development's stagnating and, as a result, there is the danger that dependency may once again emerge. The direct relevance of this to this study is that the GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the entire development process, including the stage of policy formulation. In other words, the Thusong Service Centres should use a horizontal as well as a bottom-up communication approach in their development initiatives.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (2004) argues that, by allowing for participation in development, participatory development communication becomes a means of emancipating people and communities. This, in turn, opens the way for a discussion of Paulo Freire's theory of conscientisation and dialogue.

2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

This study uses the theory of dialogue as its foundation, in terms of which various viewpoints are discussed in order to showcase different perspectives in the participatory

development communication field. The study argues that dialogue is a prerequisite for participation and, by implication, a prerequisite for authentic development. In the context of development communication the dialogical process involves a two-way horizontal flow of communication, which is contrary to the vertical, linear communication process which was discussed in section 2.2.1 above during the modernisation era. In this regard, this study is informed by the theories of both Paulo Freire and Martin Buber on dialogue.

Paulo Freire, an educational theorist, modified the concept of education when he emphasised that education leads to awareness. His pedagogy evolved from his encounter with poverty and exploitation in northeast Brazil (White, S, 1994:24). Freire refers to two important concepts which are relevant in this study, namely, *conscientisation* and *dialogue*. Both these concepts are pivotal in the endeavour to develop grassroots communities.

Freire argues that the truly revolutionary project, which is enabled by the process of dialogue and mediated by the outcomes of conscientisation, creates a process during which members of the developing community assume the role of subjects. The term “subjects” has a flavour of independence, status and integrity, and that it reflects the preferred value system by conscientisation, engendered by dialogue, is the means of “transforming” objects into subjects and the oppressed into the liberated (Thomas, 1994:50).

Freire further claims that, in order for people to be liberated, they need education. In order to contextualise this statement for the purpose of this study, Freire’s theory will now be examined. Freire refers to active reflection and reflective action, which, according to Freirean dialogue, is referred to as praxis. This implies that dialogue cannot exist unless it involves critical thinking, that is, thinking which perceives reality as a process and a transformation, rather than as a static entity (Taylor, 1993:56–57).

According to Freire (1970:29), all individuals have the capacity for reflection, for abstract thinking, for conceptualising, for making decisions, for choosing alternatives and for planning social change. Thomas (1994:50) states that it is not merely awareness, or the act of knowing or nominal involvement that is important, but rather the act's relationship to a project of social transformation in terms of which consciousness and action on consciousness are dialectically related. In Freire's pedagogy, action and reflection are not separate activities but rather an organic whole and it is this dialectical interplay of action and reflection that constitutes the process of conscientisation (Freire, 1970:68). In other words, authentic participation leads to a 'freeing' – it is an emancipatory experience resulting in actual liberation (Thomas, 1994:50–51; IDRC, 2004). Giddens and Pierson (1998:76) are in agreement with Freire when they state, in their structuration theory that structure comprises a flow of people's actions and connection with the self-consciousness.

Freire's concept of "dialogue" emanated from Martin Buber, an Austrian born Jewish philosopher, who is best known for his philosophy of dialogue (Thomas, 1994:52). The aforementioned author further explains that Buber's theory deals with two types of relationship – the *I–Thou* and the *I–It relationships*. The *I–Thou* encounter is one of dialogue, mutual respect, openness, and give and take, and it forms the basis for communion, which is, in turn, the key to community. The *I–Thou* encounter accepts and affirms the other and, through such acceptance, liberates and enhances both the *I*, who meets, and the *Thou*, who is met. Thomas (1994:52) emphasises Buber's argument that all life is relational, and it is only in terms of mutuality and meeting that human life may achieve meaning and fulfilment. The dialogic encounter which is born of relation applies to one's life with nature, with other people, and with "the eternal Thou" who is addressed in every Thou (Thomas, 1994:52).

Thomas (1994:52) points out that the *I–It* relationship is one of monologue, inequality, objectivity and detachment, and it is at the root of the alienation of human beings from one another, from nature and from God. Buber explains that, in the *I–It* relationship, an individual treats other people as objects to be used and experienced which, in turn,

relates essentially to the way in which an individual's interest may best be served. Nevertheless, there is still the possibility for an *I-Thou* relationship to emerge, and it is essential that this new relationship, which is based on dialogue, be seen not merely in terms of thought or language, but that it should express itself primarily in action. It is in the actual reaching out to the other, in the affirmation of the otherness of the other, that genuine dialogue takes place. In essence, Buber emphasises that the act of dialogue is, in fact, the act of making oneself whole and freeing oneself from the shackles of individualism, and, thereby, emerging into full personhood in the community.

Buber's reference to the *I-Thou* and the *I-It* relationships resonates with Rahim (1994:120) who asserts that there is no communication without community, and no community without communication. The communicating subject is constituted by self and others in terms of which the individual voice is linked to other voices, and the individual communicator is always engaged in dialogues with both him/herself and with others. Both Buber and Freire's ideas on dialogue have contributed significantly to the body of knowledge and understanding of participatory communication.

Freire asserts that the process of learning is essential to ensure liberation of the individual and the community. Rather than a "banking" model in terms of which the teacher makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise, and reproduce and which serves only to increase the recipients' dependence upon the teacher and to perpetuate their oppressed conditions, Freire suggested a model in terms of which education becomes a dialogue during which both the teacher and student learn from each other. In this model the student is enabled to understand better the causes of his/her oppression and this then translates into action to solve the ensuing problems – termed "conscientisation" or "consciousness raising" by Freire (Srampickal, 2006).

The concept of conscientisation is at the core of Freire's pedagogy. According to Srampickal (2006) conscientisation comprises several stages, starting with "intransitive thought" during which people believe that control over their lives is out of their hands and that fate defines their experience. In other words, they do not perceive that their

own actions are capable of changing their conditions. "Semi-transitive thought" is the next stage towards conscientisation, where people believe partially in themselves as motors of change and, to some degree, they try to act in order to bring about social change (Srampickal, 2006). However, at this stage, people's understanding of their situation is still fragmentary insofar as they fail to connect their particular problems to the larger societal determinants which underlie single situations.

The final stage, which Freire (1970:71) terms "critical transitivity", corresponds to the achievement of conscientisation. This stage involves a dynamic relationship between critical thought and critical actions which is triggered by the ability to think holistically and critically about one's condition. This level of consciousness does not exist automatically, but is always achieved through a social process of learning which is characterised by both dialogical and participatory relationships. The empirical study will facilitate the categorisation of communities in Tshwane in respect of their level of conscientisation.

Freire (1970:71) emphasised that the mere transfer of knowledge by an authority source to a passive receiver does nothing to help promote growth in the latter as a human being with an independent and critical conscience, capable of influencing and changing society. According to Freire, if development communication is to be effective, it is essential that it be linked not only to the process of acquiring technical knowledge and skills, but also to the awareness-raising, politicisation and organisational processes (Thomas, 1994:50). In his model, development communication may be considered as a means by which grassroots communities are able to take control (IDRC, 2004).

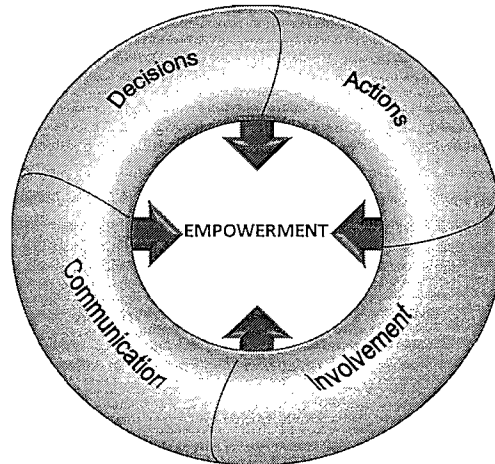
Freire noted that people accepted content in a passive way and that they rarely reflected on the validity of the knowledge. Accordingly, he proposed the act of critical reflection as an essential element in the creation of alternative participatory development. Authentic participation would enable the subjects involved in the dialogic encounter to unveil reality for themselves and this would, in turn, lead to the disappearance of distinctions. It is against this background that Freire argues that, in

order for communication to be effective, it is necessary for it to be participatory, dialogic and reciprocal (Thomas, 1994:51).

Rahim (1994:118) contributes to the participatory paradigm when he states that it is essential that the meanings and values of development be produced by members of the developing community within the country or community in which development is taking place. Knowledge and information from outside may assist in the process, but it is not possible for this knowledge and information to dominate the process, which renders it imperative that development communication change its focus from information supply to meaning production, which recognises revolutionary developments in communication technology.

This use of communication technology is referred to by Rahim (in Servaes, 2000:84) when he advocates the use of cyberspace as a potential source of empowerment both locally and globally. Modern electronic communication technology has significantly increased the power and speed of interactive communication and ease of access to information sources, information processing and storage, which is the technical source of empowerment in cyberspace. Moreover, it is possible for people in cyberspace to interconnect themselves quickly and efficiently, enter into regular discussions and dialogues, and form virtual communities. The important fact to emerge from the above discussion is the fact that human interaction on networking is a fundamental source of democratic empowerment.

According to Homan (2004:399), development involves the community taking action as the first, as well as the final step, and, thus, every change effort requires that someone who starts by doing something different. In this study, the change effort refers to the development communication initiatives which require community participation for the empowerment of the community. The following illustration in figure 2.1 shows the process of change and empowerment within a community.



The Process of Change and Empowerment

FIGURE 2.1: The process of change and empowerment

Source: Homan (2004:399)

From figure 2.1 above it is clear that, with appropriate communication and decision-making, change and empowerment are possible, but that this change and empowerment are both facilitated by the involvement of members of the developing community. Without the participation of the developing community as a precursor to empowerment, no authentic development is possible. Related to the foregoing discussion is that a new currency, which has been identified as information, has emerged in today's society, and this new currency is shaping our lives (Homan, 2004:109).

In order to communicate one's needs, assets and ideas, understand threats and opportunities, and remain connected to the daily commerce of modern life, it is essential that one has information and that one use this information in a timely way. If an

individual is able to acquire, use and exchange information, then, according to the theory of information currency, that individual's efficacy increases which, in turn, means that the individual is more readily able to manage his/her life. Information exchange affects both our world and relationships because people have always been connected by the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions. However, the medium of this exchange is changing. In addition, people are becoming increasingly dependent on information capital in order to succeed in their daily lives. Those who have access to this capital and know how to use this capital are becoming the haves, while those who are disconnected from it are becoming the have-nots (Homan, 2004:110).

For Freire the resources for the task at the present time are provided by the advanced technology of the Western world, although the social vision which impels us to negate the present order and which demonstrates that history has not ended comes from the suffering and struggle of the developing community of the Third World (Rahim, 1994:118).

Rahim's (1994:117) view of participatory development communication resonates with Freire's view of dialogic communication. As stated above, however, Freire refers to the circumstances of the people of the Third World in terms of which there is a danger that advanced technology is creating a society which conforms within the system. In this study, this danger would arise should governments use technology to advance their own agendas, thus silencing communities under the guise of creating opportunities, which may be viewed as communities' dependency on government for survival.

A close evaluation of Freire's theory reveals that he places great emphasis on the educator as the initiator of the conscientisation and dialogue process. In this study, the initiator of the development process is the South African government. Should the initiator not commence with the process, then the dependent communities would be disadvantaged. However, in view of the dangers discussed in the preceding section on the dependency paradigm, it is essential that the conscientisation process not be totally dependent on the communicator. Blackburn (2000) goes on to state that the Freirean

approach presupposes that the oppressed are incapable of determining their own vision of liberation which, once again, places communities at a disadvantage and categorises the process into the paradigm of dependency.

In short, rather than providing a prescribed path, Freire seeks to improve our perception of each stage of the journey of life. Accordingly, his message is as relevant to communities as it is to those who work within the communities (Blackburn, 2000). Even today, we are able to draw on and apply these principles to development communication within the South African context. The importance of and the necessity for this study are to be found in the historical and current practices of development communication in South Africa when we realise that, although participatory communication seeks to empower people, it is essential that it function within the existing power structures which are, in turn, controlled by the elite. It is not enough simply to empower people by recognising their knowledge and their capacity to bring about change since it is vital that there be dialogue between the people in power and the community members if social change is to occur. It is within this context that we examine the way in which power is accounted for in participatory development (Chitnis, 2005).

It is essential that developing communities take ownership of processes if these communities are to reach a level of conscientisation so as to effect real and authentic change within their communities. This theoretical debate is expanded on in the following section which illustrates the importance of understanding the rules and resources of the social system in which the development exists. This idea is to be found in structuration theory – the theoretical foundations of which explain and ground the current situation in South Africa in respect of the structure within which development should take place. The preceding discussions relate to Freirean dialogue as well as to Buber's reference to dialogue as central thoughts – a process which is deemed necessary if development is to take place.

In view of the above the following may be stated:

Text box 2.2: Theoretical statement 2 - dialogue

This study uses the concept of dialogue as the common and grounding factor and the basis for participatory development communication, therefore Freirean dialogue is used as the benchmark for development communication. Transactional communication is not a 'one-way' persuasion process but is rather a dialogue in terms of which both the sender and the receiver of messages interact over a period of time in order to arrive at shared meanings. It is expected that the environment for participatory development communication be supportive, creative, consensual and facilitative, thus leading to the sharing of ideas through dialogue.

2.4 STRUCTURATION THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Structuration theory, as advocated by Anthony Giddens (Giddens & Pierson, 1998:10), is discussed in this study in relation to the structures that exist within the development communication arena. Giddens and Pierson (1998:10) state that the institution may either enable or constrain the development process. This is termed the "duality" of structure, which explains the way in which social practices and systems operate. The structuration perspective helps explain that social systems will not exist across time and space unless the actors in them are considered to be knowledgeable agents (Chitnis, 2005). In this study the actors referred to are the developing communities. Accordingly, this supports the assumption of dialogue between the change agent and the communities which is, in turn, an assumption that the participatory approach to development recognises as crucial if people and nations are to progress.

Giddens's structuration theory was influenced by Durkheim's concept of "social structure" (Giddens & Pierson, 1998:10). However, according to Giddens and Pierson (1998:79), Durkheimian theory points out that society is a structured phenomenon and that the structural properties of a group or a society affect the way in which people act,

feel and think and Giddens, on the other hand, believes that the effect that the form and structure of society may have on people is always in accordance with the will of the developing community.

Both Giddens and Durkheim (in Giddens & Pierson, 1998:10), state that social structures are held together by the glue of “social bonds” in the form of social integration and this integration is made possible through media exposure to enable people to achieve their purposes and goals. Habermas (in Jacobson, 1996:272) also refers to social integration, but in the context of “system rationality”, when he states that cultural institutions tend to introduce cultural fragmentation because of commercial and bureaucratic rationality. This is in contrast with the above argument of Giddens. Habermas claims that communicative competence is suppressed by the way in which the major domains of social life operate, including the relationships between social systems and the environment (Jacobson, 1996:272). This study encompasses the investigation of the relationship between the South African government and the developing communities in the Tshwane region.

Structuration theory, aligned with empowerment and situated within the context of power, may be linked to two concepts, namely, the dialectic of control and the emancipatory politics of life (Giddens, in Chitnis, 2005). Accordingly, structuration theory maintains that people are empowered because they have the agency to draw upon existing rules and resources in the social system in order to counteract or resist the dominant actors, who are referred to as the South African government in this study. It is important to note that the concept of power in development is perceived to be in binary opposition to the concept of empowerment, in terms of which power is seen to possess the transformative capacity which is held by the elite to bring about some change that would be in the interests of the elite. On the other hand, empowerment may be regarded as the process of distributing power equitably among people and groups within the community (Chitnis, 2005).

Waters (in Chitnis, 2005) identifies two dimensions of power that intervene in the praxis of development. Firstly, participatory communication for development is based on the assumption that there is a dialogue between, and the mutual engagement of, the social actors as equal subjects and, thus, power may impede the operationalisation of dialogue. Secondly, power intervenes in the larger development context as a result of the discursive practices in which the development agencies and other institutions engage and, when this discourse is translated into praxis, it tends to maintain the existing power structure.

The participatory approach to development challenges the epistemological assumption of knowledge as being privileged and belonging only to the powerful and, instead, it acknowledges that people create their own knowledge based on their lived experiences. However, institutions and people in power may act as impediments to the development process (Chitnis, 2005).

Chitnis (2005) further argues that, within the development context, the concept of power may also be useful in explaining the subject–object dialectic. Traditionally, beneficiaries of development projects were treated as objects that could be acted upon and not as subjects who could participate meaningfully in the development programmes which were aimed at benefiting them. The participatory model emphasises that it is essential that the beneficiaries of development programmes be treated as subjects who have a voice and a right to be heard, and that their knowledge be respected in the same way as that of the experts is respected. This concept relates to Buber's "*I–It, I–Thou*" theory of dialogue for the community (Thomas, 1994:52–53), as discussed in section 2.3.

Giddens and Pierson (1998:28) also refer to individuals within a community when they argue that modern society is characterised by a high degree of social reflexivity. In a situation in which tradition has lost its hold and, thus, no longer guarantees the reliability or trustworthiness of either individuals or institutions, each person is faced with a series of open choices about the way in which to live his/her life. It is in this context that the

process of dialogue, which is fundamental to Freire's theory, becomes increasingly central with regard to people's behaviour.

According to Giddens and Pierson (1998:25) we are no longer content to leave decisions about social life to others in our modern society. Instead, they suggest that the institutions of government should catch up with the processes of democratisation by transformation that, in turn, involves affording communities the opportunity to feel confident about placing their trust in a government which was previously perceived to be self-interested and disconnected from the everyday concerns of its people. In short, Giddens proposes that it is necessary that governments work with, and not against, the social reflexivity of modern society. In this study, this is important in order to secure 'a better life for all' – a concept that is aligned with the South African government's vision for the nation.

Servaes (1996b:83) suggests that there is no universal path to development and that development should be conceived as an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process which may differ from one community to another. The above discussion is reverberated by Tri's (1986b:37) argument that participation derives legitimacy from the state as well as from social institutions which, in turn, translates to the necessity for development to operate within a structure.

In other words, Servaes (1996b:83) is maintaining that it is essential that each society attempt to delineate its own strategy for development based on its own culture and circumstances. Accordingly, a society should not attempt blindly to imitate the programmes and strategies of other countries with a totally different historicity and cultural background. It would appear that the proposition that oppressed and marginalised individuals are able to free themselves if they are given both a voice and the ability to take control of their surroundings excludes the role of structure as played out by the institutions involved.

Giddens reminds us that social change is dependent on the relationship between the people and the institutions that govern their community (Giddens & Pierson, 1998:78). Thus, it is not individual change alone, but rather a collective movement that is striving to change the structures of oppression, which would consequently make possible sustainable social change (Chitnis, 2005). Giddens and Pierson (1998:78) refer to communities as conscious, intentional beings that reflect on their findings. They further assert that what we do in everyday life is governed by practical consciousness – an assertion which relates to Freire’s concept of conscientisation in Servaes (1996b:97) (see section 2.3).

Chitnis (2005) maintains that merely making available allocated resources and providing diagnostic advice does not mean that people will be able to liberate themselves. The participatory communication model puts forth the notion that there is a growing interdependence between communities, classes, nations and nation-states, and, thus, that change needs to occur at all levels if people are to be truly liberated from their oppressive situations.

Participatory communication for development, which emphasises the empowerment of people through dialogic communication, would be more effective if the change agents and community members were able to bring about changes within the structures of domination. It is through communication that peoples’ embedded knowledge is unleashed and people placed in a position to overcome the dominant forces that impede social change (Chitnis, 2005). This statement reiterates Yoon’s chaos–wisdom continuum in terms of which knowledge is considered an essential component in the conscientisation process (Yoon, 2006).

Arnst (1996:110–112) asserts that participation does not merely constitute bodily presence at community meetings, nor must it be construed as a chance to tick a voting ballot every few years. Arnst argues that participation is also not simply access to the mass media which are controlled by the urban elite and bureaucratic vested interests, nor is it an extension of existing structures and programmes. The primary objective of

an existing structure or social institution is that structure or social institution's own survival and expansion. This self-preservation necessitates the continued existence of the larger system of which the structure or institution is a part – a system which it serves and from which it benefits.

The above discussion applies to structures from the macro to the micro level. At the micro level, the tendency is for the more powerful members, as well as for local development bodies, to take advantage of any opportunity, including participatory programmes, which offer influence and profit. Moreover, superficial restructuring programmes will not result in increased participation. While existing structures and interests constitute a substantial impediment to participatory processes, valid, applicable and sustainable change is possible only through genuine participation that the powerful are generally not willing to grant in a substantive manner (Arnst, 1996:110–112).

Servaes (1983:10–11) points to the following two basic perspectives for analysing societies, namely, focusing on actors and focusing on structures. According to the actor-oriented perspective, societies are the sum total of the actors participating in these societies, where the societies may be perceived as the human beings who act with the world as the set of countries that act. In contrast, the structure-oriented perspective claims that societies constitute the structures of interaction between the actors. Despite the fact that the structure-oriented perspective is in search of structural change, it should be noted that it is essential that all components in the communication process be integrated.

Structuration theory suggests that we rid our society of the present structures of domination and that we challenge the use of power. An understanding of the limitations and the strengths of participatory communication by using concepts from structuration theory provides us with the hope that participatory communication for development may achieve meaningful and social change by both addressing institutional barriers as well as empowering communities. It is essential that dominating forces emanating from

government do not abuse their power positions as this may adversely affect the development process. Supek's (1986:126) view contradicts this argument in that he claims that both structuration and social integration are responsible for subordinating the individual to alienated power centres.

Based on Giddens' concepts of the duality of structure, dialectic of control and structures of domination, we realise that development, as a social change process, is possible only when it is understood as a totality and not as an individual-level phenomenon. It is important for communities to empower themselves through the processing of information which will, in turn, create a sense of conscientisation, which is an important concept used in Freirean dialogue.

The abovementioned arguments lead to the formulation of theoretical statement 3.

Text box 2.3: Theoretical statement 3 (empowerment)

GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the development project, therefore GCIS should plan together with communities by creating structures which offer communities and developers equal power. GCIS should also introduce activities that will empower communities which, in turn, suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue.

This sense of conscientisation highlights the importance of those processes that create knowledge. This is explained in the *chaos-wisdom* continuum as advocated by Yoon (2006) (see figure 2.2):

Chaos → Data → Information → Knowledge → Wisdom

Figure 2.2: Chaos-wisdom continuum

Source: Yoon (2006)

The chaos-wisdom continuum begins with *chaos*, which is fragmented and disorganised data that are of no use to people. *Data* (the second component) may comprise clusters of numbers and visual observations that have been processed and made ready for use. The third component of this continuum is *information* which refers to data that have been organised into chunks that provide meaning to people. This information becomes *knowledge* once it has been successfully communicated to and understood by the developing community – “knowledge is the product of information, as well as thoughts and ideas, and it implies a value judgement because knowledge marks the processing by a human of useful and relevant information” (Yoon, 2006). Finally, *wisdom* occurs when knowledge is used to make sound judgements.

Yoon’s (2006) main argument in the chaos–wisdom continuum is that those strategies which are often adopted by conventional communication approaches focus only on the dissemination of data and information to people, and they frequently omit participatory group processes that permit people to convert these raw inputs into useful knowledge that they may use as a community. This theory is especially relevant in this study because of the danger that communication with communities may be reduced to information dissemination as is indicated in the problem statement in 1.4.

Chitnis (2005) suggests that participation provides people with an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the change agents thereby using their own knowledge to bring about social change. Accordingly, participatory communication for development emphasises that knowledge is not a property of the experts which must be transmitted from these experts to the end beneficiaries. The literature thus far demonstrates that it is through active participation and dialogue that communities may help identify their own needs and to address them using the available resources and, thus, use and create their own knowledge. Knowledge is tapped by facilitating the empowerment of communities which, in turn, leads to directed social change.

According to Servaes (1983:11) it is social structure that determines the way in which people communicate, as opposed to the way in which they communicate that

determines the social structures. This relates to the role of the South African government in providing appropriate means for poorer communities to become authentically socially integrated. The above assertion of Servaes may be directly related to this study, because active social participation would be made possible if government were to create the appropriate structures.

2.5 SUMMARY

The field of development communication is vast and its divisions are numerous. The different paradigms that have marked its evolution are still active to various degrees, while the models that are attached to these paradigms are as different as their ideologies and the orientations that inspired them (IDRC, 2004). This chapter argues that the modernisation paradigm has meant that power has been vested in the hands of the leaders and not in the hands of the developing communities. Accordingly, because of these inadequacies, this paradigm has expanded to include the dependency paradigm, which may also be referred to as cultural imperialism or dominant development. Eventually, the participatory development communication approach was born. This approach incorporates dialogic and it is used in this study as the theoretical foundation and normative principle of the development communication process.

It may be concluded from the above discussion that structuration theory is useful in development communication in view of the fact that both the development change agents and the developing community need to be aware of the structure within which they operate. This is important to enable the initiation of realistic development projects within the structural parameters and, eventually, to effect meaningful change. An understanding of structuration theory also assists in situating development within a framework of context and, in the absence of such a framework, it may be difficult for development agents and researchers to provide practical suggestions or a way forward in respect of future development within a particular community.

In spite of the diversity of approaches and orientations there is, nevertheless, consensus today on both the need for grassroots participation in development and on the essential role that communication plays in promoting development (IDRC, 2004). Communication for development, thus, goes beyond the macro-level of analysis to the heart of social relations.

The former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, aptly describes participation in development as follows:

People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's home, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does; he develops himself by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation – as an equal – in the life of the community he lives in (Nyerere in Servaes 1996b:82).

It is, thus, clear that dialogue, empowerment and cultural diversification are at the heart of participatory development communication. Although the literature is fairly unanimous in respect of these philosophical concepts grounding participation, there is less consensus on the way in which these concepts may be realised in practice, which is the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

A COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter argued that participation is the norm in development and, although this is the ideal in theory, it may not always be realised in the planning and implementation of a development communication initiative. This, in turn, leads the discussion to the challenges which arise in participatory development communication. The purpose of this chapter is to answer research question 2: “How could Thusong Service Centres incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with the communities they serve?”

3.2 CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:7) point out that *poor planning and programme formulation* and a lack of research activities are some of the many challenges faced by development practitioners. Many development projects fail because the beneficiaries are not given the opportunity to really participate in the assessment of needs and the identification of the problems to be addressed by the projects concerned. The perceptions of the communities themselves of the problems and solutions are often overlooked, while their storehouse of information, experience and analysis is often neglected.

Such communities are, thus, regarded as mere recipients rather than as the actual creators of change. This, in turn, results in an incomplete and inaccurate analysis of problems, as well as an incomplete and inaccurate identification of solutions, which frequently leads to poor performance planning and formulation. Belbase (1994:458) states that it is essential that personal aspirations in the development communication process be replaced by common goals because, when individual interests clash with

community interests, conflict arises. People have to learn to place the community before themselves.

According to Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:7) other challenges in participatory communication include the *misallocation of, or inadequate, project resources*. When incomplete and inaccurate information about the community is used in the planning of the development efforts, there is a definite tendency to allocate project resources either to people who are not in the greatest need of these resources or to the very poor. This may, in turn, result in inadequacies in respect of sustaining the magnitude of the effort required for facilitating and achieving participatory development communication.

Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:8) refer to the disregard of *indigenous knowledge* as an obstacle to an effective development process. There is a need to recognise and to validate both indigenous and expert knowledge, and to find an effective way of blending the two, but with due care being accorded to existing social and cultural norms. According to Tri (1986b:37) participation is a multicultural process which seeks to encompass all the cultural and ethnic components of society. However, it should be noted that this does not mean 'integration' or 'incorporation', but rather involvement on an equal footing. This relates to the discussion in section 2.2.1 on cultural diversification, where it is argued by Giddens and Pierson (1998:15) that cultural variety should be taken into account in order to contextualise tradition and customs in a meaningful way.

Communities' low sense of power is also problematic in the development process (Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004:8). Some communities, especially the oppressed and the very poor, often feel powerless to steer development policies, priorities, technologies, agendas and programmes. They believe that development is controlled and decided almost entirely by outsiders and that it is not possible for them to influence this process. This sense of powerlessness may be due to the non-inclusion of the developing community in creating the development programmes and, thus, Belbase (1994:457) maintains that small successes and achievements are important in building confidence

and in encouraging local participation during the development process. This also resonates with Freire's (1970:62) conscientisation process (see section 2.2.3), and Yoon's (2004) participation model (see section 3.1) where both Freire and Yoon argue that it is essential that people be empowered by their involvement in the decision-making process of development.

The *provision of inappropriate technology* may also impede the participatory communication process. Development change agents frequently promote inappropriate solutions which the developing communities then refuse to adopt because these solutions are not perceived as being relevant to the needs of the communities. This refusal stems from the use of ineffective methods when involving members of the developing community in the identification and development of appropriate technology which would address local conditions, needs and problems, and take advantage of local resources and opportunities. In such situations, development agencies commonly blame the communities for being resistant to change and not possessing the appropriate attitudes and values to recognise the usefulness of the proffered solutions (Anyaeibunam *et al.*, 2004:8).

Inadequate promotion is also problematic during development and stems from the poor identification and packaging of information, ideas and knowledge which are appropriate for the socio-cultural context of communities. This, thus, frequently leads to non-use and non-appreciation on the part of members of the developing community, or even to confusion and misdirection (Anyaeibunam *et al.*, 2004:8). In addition, Anyaeibunam *et al.* (2004:9) argue that *ineffective training methods* may also hamper participatory communication because the training methods used in development may not appropriately transfer knowledge and skills to disadvantaged communities that are characterised by low levels of literacy and little proficiency in formal education processes. In other words, development initiatives seldom empower disadvantaged communities. Anyaeibunam *et al.* (2004:9) state that training is as necessary for the policymakers, senior administrators and development bureaucrats as for the development communication planners, field staff and community workers. Accordingly,

training one group while neglecting another or others may not create a favourable climate for participatory development communication.

Finally, Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:9) state that there is generally a *low level of recognition* of the role of communication and participatory methods in the planning and implementation of development programmes, especially among policymakers and decision-makers in both government and in development agencies. They indicate that there are several government officials and development experts who still perceive communication as a media-oriented one-way process of dispatching information, knowledge and skills from the all-knowing project or government ministry to the ignorant communities in order to educate the ignorant community. This lack of appreciation of the two-way nature of communication as both sharing and participation usually leads to inadequate support for the communication and participatory activities in development projects. This top-heavy approach was prevalent during development in the modernisation era.

From the above it would seem that both theory and practice emphasise the importance of participation for effective development. However, the concept of participation is complex as is highlighted by Chin Saik Yoon's distinction between four levels of participation in development projects discussed in section 1.2. Yoon places emphasis on participation in decision-making which relates to the participatory development communication paradigm discussed in section 2.2.3, which advocates a culture of dialogue; self-reliance and community empowerment, whereby the community is involved at each stage of the development process and are therefore empowered to sustain such initiatives. As is reflected in theoretical statement 4, the assumption in the current study is that participation should be part of the entire development process.

Text box 3.1: Theoretical statement 4 (community participation)

In accordance with the principles of dialogue, a primary emphasis of the participatory approach is to engage the communities in active participation during the entire development communication initiative. Building trusting relationships and appropriate planning with members of the developing community throughout the programme is necessary for development to occur.

One of the major challenges for policy makers and communication specialists, according to Schoen (1996:250), is how to integrate communication into all phases of the policy design process in development initiatives. A systematic approach in the strategy, design and implementation of communication processes is required for active participation to occur, which means a shift from an exclusive focus on communication media and materials, to a close collaboration with the grassroots community.

3.3 THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

According to the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) (2008) participatory communication planning offers a systematic and logical framework for communication planning for development. This is discussed in the following section which focuses on the communication plan which is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development initiatives.

Participatory communication planning may be used as the foundation of a strategic design that is based on focal problems which have identified for the setting of long-term objectives, as well as a means of providing practical guidelines for field applications. The next section outlines the importance of strategic communication from the perspective of development communication initiatives. This section is followed by a discussion of the actual proposed strategic steps in development communication planning.

3.3.1 Strategic communication

Strategic communication plans and activities empower development stakeholders with knowledge and information that may be applied to effective decision-making, accountable management, social and political mobilisation, helpful behaviour change and individual and collective growth (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:2). It is essential thus that communication activities be planned in a systematic and proactive manner while, at the same time, focusing on establishing effective feedback mechanisms instead of merely disseminating information. According to UNICEF (2005:1) strategic communication is an evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken with the participant group(s). It is intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change.

This section emphasises the importance of strategic communication, a research-based communication process, in achieving development goals (UNICEF, 2005:1). It underscores that communication is as much a science as an art, as much a process as it is about outcomes. Setting goals, both mid- and long-term, is an important step to measure the success or failure of any programme including that of development initiatives.

According to UNICEF (2005:8) strategic communication is sometimes understood as persuasion, which may be further construed as manipulative leaving little room for dialogue and discussion with the members of the developing community. However, it should be noted that strategic communication provides for dialogue, authentic participation through proper planning and does not preclude rejection of interventions (UNICEF, 2005:8).

UNICEF (2005:3) outlines the shift in the communication paradigm regarding strategic communication from the concept of persuasion to participation in development in the following Text Box 3.2:

Text Box 3.2 Shifts in the communication paradigm (UNICEF, 2005:3)

Widen focus	from individuals to households to networks, communities and civil society
Widen behaviour emphasis	from individual behaviour change to collective action and social change
Widen view	of parents, families and communities from beneficiaries or recipients to stakeholders and active partners in social development
Widen orientation	from mobilisation to create demand and sensitise community to external concerns to participation and empowerment
Widen knowledge acquisition process	from top-down information dissemination “selling mode” campaigns to community-based, participatory problem-posing approach “learning mode”
Shift in emphasis	from needs to rights
Shift in outputs	from messages and products to dialogue and interaction
Shift in situation analysis	from needs assessment to rights analysis, assets mapping, and participatory assessment
Balance among interventions	from mass media and electronic communication to interpersonal and traditional communication
Balance the focus	from art and creativity to science and evidence-based

Mozammel and Schechter (2005:7) suggest five phases in terms of which strategic communication may contribute to development interventions. These interventions are important in the context of this study in order to understand the importance of employing such interventions so as to ensure a successful development initiative. The first focus in the discussion on strategic communication is on ensuring that the project design is realistic, appropriate and effective in creating awareness and understanding on the part of the various stakeholders. In view of the fact that strategic communication may assist in creating a common understanding of and commitment to project objectives and activities among all stakeholders, it has been identified as an important management tool for implementation. Communication facilitates the multidirectional exchange of important information to enable knowledge-based and realistic decision-making at all levels.

Mozammel and Schechter (2005:3) further state that strategic communication may add value as an operational aid by helping to identify development-related perceptions and the level of knowledge and learning needs on the part of the relevant community. Through culturally sensitive education, learning and mobilisation efforts, a strategic communication intervention may promote the adoption of new practices, empower people, and build networks and capacity among stakeholders, all of which are necessary for the sustainability of an initiative.

In this context, strategic communication interventions should always include training and capacity building taking into account the conditions and needs at the institutional, community and grassroots levels.

Finally, strategic communication works best when interventions are planned, funded, implemented, evaluated and scaled up as independent components or sub-components of a project or programme.

Furthermore, the integration of a strategic communication framework into a development intervention is also an essential enabler for sustainability (Mozammel &

Schechter, 2005:4). A strategic communication framework serves several purposes in the development process. Firstly, it takes into account the psychological, socio-political, cultural and economic dynamics within and across the stakeholder groups which are either directly or indirectly involved in the development process. It also combines information, education, mobilisation, behaviour change and capacity building activities that facilitate the knowledge and learning which are important in any development initiative. Furthermore, strategic communication plays a major role in empowering communities in several ways – this is fundamental to Frank's concept of self-reliance and sustainability (Ferraro, 1996) which is discussed below.

Strategic communication confers on communities the ability to identify their needs, challenges and resources, engage in productive conflict resolution, tap into their own capacities and make truly collective decisions. It also promotes an information-sharing culture within and among communities for the purposes of both learning and mobilisation, and it demonstrates to communities the power of sharing information and raising awareness. In addition, strategic communication promotes and extends the voices of the poor in public dialogue, inclusion in community and development affairs, and the demand for greater and better service within their communities and from local governments and institutions (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:4).

The following section focuses on the communication plan which should be adopted in order to ensure successful development initiatives.

3.3.2 The communication strategy

Whilst the previous section referred to strategic communication, this section deals with the actual communication strategy to be embarked on for successful participatory development communication. It is important in the context of this study to understand the key phases of planning for development so as to ensure the successful implementation of a project. The IDS (2008) proposes six phases in the development communication process which coincide with the five phases which Bessette (2003)

suggested. The afore-mentioned phases have been incorporated into Mozammel and Schechter's (2005:7) five-step guide to strategic communication for community-driven development. This five-step guide is discussed below in order to assist communication practitioners and development strategists in their development initiatives.

Table 3.1: Five-step guide to strategic communication

Phase 1:	Establish the communication management function
Phase 2A:	Conduct a strategic communication assessment
Phase 2B:	Conduct an operational communication analysis
Phase 3:	Develop a communication strategy and action plan
Phase 4:	Implement communication activities
Phase 5:	Conduct monitoring and feedback activities

In view of the fact that the various steps in the communication process constitute the basis on which participatory development communication should be conducted, the identification and discussion of these steps in the communication plan are deemed essential in the context of this study. The communication approach adopted by the GCIS, which is under investigation in the current study, will indicate the actual activities of government and will be compared against the guidelines for strategic communication outlined in this chapter.

3.3.2.1 Step 1: Establish the communication management function

The first step in developing, implementing and scaling up a strategic communication intervention involves ensuring that communication professionals are assigned to the project to develop, manage and implement the communication activities throughout the project cycle. It must be borne in mind that the lack of a continuous management of the communication activities poses as an obstacle to successful communication interventions. In other words, it is essential that GCIS employ trained communication

specialists to manage the development communication project throughout its entire life cycle in order to ensure that the project achieves its maximum output.

As revealed in this study, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) forum coordinates the implementation of a programme, including the development of the roll-out plans, while the Provincial Intersectoral Steering Committee (PISSC), the National Intersectoral Steering Committee (NISSC) and the Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) have been identified as the key management committees in establishing and maintaining the various Thusong Service Centres. A detailed description of each of these committees is provided in the following chapter.

Once the communication management function has been established it is important to provide a road map – see following step.

3.3.2.2 Step 2a: Conduct a strategic communication assessment

The initial stages of a development project should include a strategic communication assessment in order to identify the relevant strategic issues and to assess the communication capacity and dynamics of the initiative. This assessment, which examines the following issues, will provide the necessary guidelines as mentioned above.

- *Enabling communication environment*

It is important to assess the existing communication channels and capacity at each level of the project implementation in order to assist the communication specialist in understanding the enabling environment in respect of the communication activities and existing structures.

- *Stakeholders' expectations, incentives and dynamics*

It is essential both to identify and to quantify the project's stakeholders, their level of involvement and expected influence in the operation, their geographical distribution, the power relations among them, and the tradeoffs and benefits for each stakeholder in relation to the project.

This assessment step, advocated by Mozammel and Schechter (2005:11), corresponds with *developing a research relationship with the local community* as advocated by Bessette (2004). The first step in this phase involves building relationships in order to establish mutual trust and understanding with the local community. This phase also involves negotiating a mandate in order to address the relevant needs of the particular community in terms of which the data collection or coproduction of local knowledge is to take place.

Participatory development communication suggests that development practitioners collaborate with community members and other stakeholders rather than merely extracting information from the community as the coproducing of knowledge is vastly different from simply collecting data. This plays an essential part in facilitating participation in the decision-making processes which are involved in the development project. This echoes Yoon's (2006) theory about the involvement of the community in the ownership of the development initiatives, as discussed in section 2.2.3. This phase is essential as it constitutes the foundation for the subsequent phases in the development initiative.

Lozare's (1994:242) contribution is also included in this phase when he states that this stage entails the opening and unfreezing of both people and development workers so that they look forward to the change. Lozare emphasises that it is essential that the participation of members of the developing community in a dialogue and planning exercise be seen in the context of a timeframe which extends beyond the planning

exercise itself because, for people to speak honestly, they must have some assurance of what will happen after the dialogue and planning exercise have been completed.

This phase relates to the assessment phase which is prescribed by the IDS (2008) and which involves the assessment of the situation at hand based on information already available to the team in order to determine the focus of the field appraisal. Consequently, this assessment leads to formal research and it is strongly in favour of a Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA) as this is a participatory research method that involves the community in the process of communication programme planning from the outset.

In terms of PRCA, the needs and problems of the developing community are identified, defined and prioritised while opportunities and solutions already existing in the community are uncovered. A baseline study, when combined with PRCA, becomes an extremely useful tool in arriving at clear communication objectives that assist in the planning, implementing and managing of effective communication activities with the community. Belbase (1994:457) adds that, through PRCA, a relationship of trust and honesty may be established with the community and that this relationship of trust is needed to build a sense of belonging with the community which is, in turn, a requirement in terms of the realisation of true participation.

- *Political dynamics*

According to Mozammel and Schechter (2005:20), the identification of political dynamics is one of the key areas in the assessment stage of a development project and involves both the supporters and opponents of community empowerment and decentralisation efforts, power factors as well as the level of public trust and confidence in government on the part of the various stakeholders.

- *Cultural characteristics and diversity*

It is essential that the communication specialist identify any diversity in language and religion, traditions regarding gender roles and common symbols and customs that may be relevant to the development project and which will contribute significantly to the assessment phase (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:11).

- *Role and capacity of civil society*

Mozammel and Schechter (2005:11) claim that it is imperative that the extent of the involvement of civil society in public dialogue and its capacity to facilitate community mobilisation be understood. This involvement includes community-based organisations (CBOs), advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, intellectuals and journalists.

- *Existing and related development efforts and communication campaigns*

It is during this step that synergies, partnerships and learning opportunities are identified in the communities and/or countries in which successful development initiatives have been implemented (Mozammel & Schechter 2005:11; Servaes, 1996a:19). Once the strategic communication assessment step has been completed the project will require that an operational communication analysis be conducted that will, in turn, serve as the development communication project's foundation for subsequent activities – see next section.

3.3.2.3 Step 2: Conduct an operational communication analysis

A development project's operational analysis consists of two steps. The first step involves a review of the project's operational components and sub-components as well as the identification of all operational elements that either depend on or may be significantly enhanced by a communication intervention. The second step involves identifying the primary strategic communication objectives that are linked with each operational characteristic.

Bessette (2004) refers to this step as *the identification of problems, potential solutions and implementation of concrete initiatives*. Traditionally, development practitioners used to identify problems within a community and then carry out experiments to find solutions with the collaboration of members of the developing community. However, with participatory development communication, the development practitioner is recognised as a facilitator of the process which involves both local communities and other stakeholders in either the identification and resolution of a problem or the realisation of a common goal. In this study the initiator and facilitator of the process is the GCIS which should, thus, engage the community during this phase of development and also relates to the information input stage as advocated by Lozare (1994:242). It is during this stage that the development of trust and an enduring work relationship between the development practitioners and the community is a necessary precondition for any progression in the development communication process.

Mozammel and Schechter (2005:12) identify participatory planning as essential in the building of trust, ownership, understanding and commitment on the part of stakeholders in respect of the operational objectives, processes and the other stakeholders. Participatory planning also ensures periodic and ongoing programme evaluation and adjustment which are fundamental in a development project. A development communication project requires that an operational communication analysis be conducted in order to provide an essential foundation for the development of a realistic, comprehensive and sound communication strategy and action plan.

The next logical step in a development communication project is aimed at providing a strategy to guide the development of an action plan that will define appropriate activities (see next section).

3.3.2.4 Step 3: Develop a communication strategy and action plan

The aim of a development communication strategy is to guide the progression of an action plan which will address very specific activities in order to realise the objectives of the project. This communication strategy may be in the form of a document with a set of guiding principles that provide the scope and outline for planning, designing, implementing, supervising, managing and scaling up a systematic communication intervention throughout the project. The strategy would rely on the findings of both the *strategic communication assessment* and the *development communication analysis* (see steps 2a and 2b in 3.3.3.2 and 3.3.3.3 above).

The drawing up of a communication action plan involves the development of a comprehensive and detailed matrix that provides an explanation of the major communication objectives as identified in the communication strategy. The action plan is designed after the communication strategy has been developed and involves brainstorming sessions or workshops in which all stakeholders of the development project participate. These stakeholders include project staff, government officials from different levels, community members, civil society representatives and other individuals who are either directly or indirectly involved in issues related to communication, information, participation, public relations and partnerships. It is recommended that these brainstorming sessions or workshops involve a small group of people so that all participants may be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of each element of the action plan.

The action plan will now be discussed:

- *Setting communication objectives*

The objectives identified in the communication analysis (step 2 above) all constitute elements in the action plan. These objectives should be realistic and they should be based on the socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics of the specific community.

According to Bessette (2004) the planning phase also includes the identification of communication needs and objectives. These needs may be broadly categorised into both material and communication needs. Any development problem, as well as any attempt to resolve the problem, will present needs relating to material resources and to the conditions which are necessary both to acquire and to manage these material resources. Other needs that involve communication include, *inter alia*, sharing information, influencing policies, mediating conflicts, raising awareness, facilitating learning, supporting decision-making and collaborative action. Nonetheless, it is essential that all the above-mentioned needs be addressed in a systemic way by the development effort.

- *Addressing strategic issues*

Strategic issues refer to those issues that must be taken into account when designing the development communication messages, selecting the activities and identifying the channels or networks through which the communication intervention will operate.

The following should be considered when addressing the strategic issues in a development initiative:

- A development initiative requires the extensive participation of all stakeholder groups during the initial stages of project design as careless management of these engagements may create unrealistic expectations, disappointment and eventual distrust and cynicism.

- It is important to understand the issues of power relations and dynamics because these relationships may determine either the success or the failure of a development effort. It is essential that these relationships be clearly identified, acknowledged and addressed at the outset of the programme.
- Social exclusion by elite groups should be prevented by clearly articulating the incentives, requirements and safeguards for participation and inclusion in the guidelines of the initiative.
- Messages should be delivered in an appropriate manner by taking into account the level of literacy within the community, its cultural symbols and customs and its religious diversity. It is important that messages be in the language or languages which are spoken in the community.
- The community development personnel should recognise and work with government incentive structures.
- The sender of a message or the source of information for an activity should be clearly identified as it is important that all messages be clearly identified as emanating from a specific source.
- The communication specialist needs to establish the two-way, horizontal communication flows among all stakeholders (not just top-down flows) which are necessary in order to create meaningful dialogue.
- It is recommended that credibility and trust be built amongst all the stakeholders. This includes credibility of information.
- It is important to maintain momentum in order to achieve the development objectives and sustainability of the project. One way of accomplishing this momentum is to ensure that the information flow is consistent throughout the project.

These guidelines, highlighting the importance of the socio-cultural context, are summarised in theoretical statement 5.

Text box 3.3: Theoretical statement 5 (socio-cultural context)

GCIS should consider the socio-cultural context of each community during the development communication process. This socio-cultural context includes the community's indigenous knowledge and cultural identity as a necessary foundation in order to achieve social integration. Participatory development communication requires the recognition and validation of both the indigenous and expert knowledge within communities and it is essential to find an effective way of blending the two with due attention to existing social and cultural norms.

- *Identifying stakeholders*

A communication action plan specifies different sets of stakeholders in order to achieve different objectives although, it should be noted that, within a community, perceptions, needs, ideas and conditions are extraordinarily diverse, depending on age, socioeconomic status and gender. An understanding of the differences among and within stakeholder groups and approaching each group with modified messages, appropriate media, methods and format is important for maximising inclusion, participation and empowerment.

Bessette (2004) agrees that development communication planning includes the identification of different community groups and that simply addressing a general audience such as "the community" is insufficient to involve people in communication. Schoen (1996:261) argues that one will seldom find one problem or one target group only in a development project, and, thus, segmentation of the total audience is crucial. Factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, occupation and social and economic conditions should be taken into account when involving community members in the development communication process. The stakeholders may include project

management teams, central, regional and local government, the community, civil society and international organisations.

- *Formulating messages*

It is recommended that the communication specialist formulate messages for each specific group and that he/she choose the appropriate media, methods and format in order to ensure inclusion, participation and empowerment. Ideally, the development of messages for each group of stakeholders should emerge out of exercises such as brainstorming sessions, consultation workshops and inputs from communication working groups.

- *Developing activities and tools*

During the 1970s, development workers began to abandon the questionnaire methods which tended to take too long to administer, and which were often extremely rigid in their format and did not take into account the local reality and complexity in processing and analysing (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:18). The aforementioned authors explain that development workers discovered that the most illiterate and semi-literate people were able to communicate effectively issues that affected them with the assistance of visual representations and this gave birth to Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA constituted a great improvement on the questionnaire methods since, with RRA, data was gathered quickly, reports on the findings were prepared speedily and the needs of the developing community addressed more efficiently (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:18). However, the researchers, after having collected the data in the villages, still took the information away from the developing community in order to analyse it in on their own and with their own assumptions. This is the main reason why RRA is considered to be mainly extractive in nature as outsiders controlled the process.

Bessette (2004) claims that, as RRA came to be applied more extensively, the emphasis on participation began to grow. It became clear that the communities needed

to be involved not only in data collection, but also in the prioritisation and analysis of their problems and needs. Accordingly, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and, later, Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods emerged, which recognised that the researchers and subject-matter specialists were ignorant on a number of issues and the solution was to be found in the involvement of the communities in the development effort (Bessette, 2004).

However, in this vein Bessette (2004) also suggests that members of the community might lack some of the technical knowledge that the experts may have to offer in solving some of the problems of the community. Accordingly, knowledge sharing became an essential component of PRA which led to the introduction of Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA) which focuses specifically on communication systems, and ways in which to improve information sharing among all stakeholders in a development effort (Bessette, 2004).

According to Bessette (2004) PRCA is a communication research method that utilises field-based visualisation techniques, interviews and group-work in order to generate information for the design of effective communication programmes, materials, media and methods for development purposes so as to ensure relevance and ownership on the part of the developing community. PRCA facilitates dialogue both among the developing community themselves and with development workers so as to enable all parties to reach both mutual understanding and a plan of action (Bessette, 2004).

Bessette (2004) adds that PRCA is an interactive process which is characterised by the exchange of ideas, information, points of view and experiences between persons and groups. In terms of PRCA communication is a two-way process in which all the participants are considered to be important sources of information and ideas. Passiveness does not exist because of the requirement of mental cooperation on the part of all the developing community involved until a common awareness and understanding are reached. PRCA is therefore a process during which all participants decide on a course of action together.

Mozammel and Schechter (2005:14) provide examples of key activities and communication components in respect of the way in which strategic communication activities should be mainstreamed into all the operational components of a development initiative. This topic will be discussed next.

A. Major communication activities during project identification and preparation include the following:

- During the initial stages of project design and implementation it is recommended that customised, sensitisation workshops be conducted for each stakeholder group. These workshops should include relevant information about the proposed project including the project objectives, procedures, stakeholders, time-frame and project cycle.
- It is recommended that stakeholder consultations be introduced. These stakeholder consultations should emphasise bottom-up communication, a voice for the poor, the development of trust, ownership by and relationships among all stakeholder groups, as well as the exploration of needs, concerns, incentive structures, power dynamics, capacity, experience, potential roles, benefits and tradeoffs.

B. Major communication activities during the initial stages of project launch include the following:

- Training of the various stakeholders in the development project is essential during this stage and it is recommended that user-friendly operational manuals, related materials and other awareness-raising activities be used to train the various stakeholders in the development programme.
- A management information system (MIS) should be developed at project launch and used throughout the implementation of the project. This tool is used to collect,

analyse, store and disseminate information that may be useful for decision-making and it builds on the success of a project while, at the same time, using lessons from earlier experiences to improve project performance.

C. Major communication activities throughout implementation and evaluation include the following:

- Awareness campaigns which should be used to raise general awareness about the development project.
- During the initial stages of the development project and throughout implementation, knowledge sharing among stakeholders may help to identify project synergies and best practices, and to establish an overall community of practice. Ongoing activities may include workshops, seminars and other networking activities with the aim of sharing knowledge which is related to project issues.
- The creation and implementation of participatory and two-way targeted public information and education campaigns should also be considered. In terms of these campaigns messages, channels and tools are customised and clearly segmented to selected topics and stakeholder groups. It is recommended that such activities be designed based on focus group consultation and stakeholder feedback and they should also include monitoring and evaluation.
- Mozammel and Schechter (2005:21) further identify the following specific PRCA activities during this stage:
 - *Community mapping.* In this exercise groups within the community make drawings depicting the way in which they perceive their community. Each group decides both what it wants to represent in its map and how, which usually generates enthusiasm among the participants. Since this mapping is carried out by various social groups separately, it both enhances the voice of each group

and fosters dialogue among the groups – the foundational theoretical aspect in this study.

- *Semi-structured interviews.* The semi-structured interview is an excellent tool for gaining insights into a particular issue but, in order to ensure free expression by the vulnerable, it is recommended that the interviews be carried out in subgroups in the form of focus groups.
- *Transect.* A transect consists of a walk through a neighbourhood and it is during this walk that community members discuss the various aspects of their physical reality. The findings and conclusions which arise from the walk are subsequently sketched as a diagram that may be shared with the other members of the community. It is important that the groups be mixed – that men, women, young and old walk together – thereby enhancing the value of the transect.
- *Venn diagram.* The Venn diagram is a method used for visualising and analysing the relationships among actors within a community. By drawing this diagram community members express their perception of the relations between groups within the village and with outsiders. It is important that each group in the village draw its own diagram in order to highlight instances in which certain groups benefit more from external service providers than others.
- *Identification of priorities.* In diagnostic exercises community members usually identify a long list of problems. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that these priorities must be set by the communities themselves.
- *Problem and solution analysis.* The priority problems that villagers identify are often too large, complex and difficult to handle, and, thus, “problem trees” are created to help community members analyse their priorities by identifying the causes that lead to a problem (“the roots”) and the consequences (“the branches”). The construction of a problem tree raises the awareness among participants that problems which may at first have seemed overwhelming and

difficult to address are, in fact, caused by factors that are determined by the community members themselves. The demystification of perceived problems through the creation of problem trees is a powerful tool for heightening the awareness of community members of their capacity to influence their own environment.

- It is important that the Community–Local Government Authority (LGA) relationship building and performance monitoring activities be performed. Examples of such activities include the following:
 - *Participatory meetings and field visits.* Communication activities involving local communities and their representatives should aim to facilitate the building of trust and collaboration between these two stakeholder groups. Such activities may include the involvement of LGA representatives in the development process as both observers and contributors of knowledge and information (without control), thus promoting the participation of the community representatives.
 - *Citizen report cards* are an effective and participatory communication means which enable community members to give voice their feedback and their demand for service provision on the part of local representatives. Citizen report cards are recognised by both community members and representatives of local government as constituting both a reliable and a consistent source of feedback and communication as they allow community members to use information with which to monitor their local governments and to hold them accountable for service delivery.
 - *Governance scorecards.* Governance scorecards are a communication tool with which to monitor government service delivery and community empowerment. Based on a set of practical indicators which are linked to several key performance areas and criteria, these scorecards may be used to assess and then to monitor local government performance and competence in respect of

service provision to communities. The primary objective of the governance scorecard is to provide a practical, simple and systematic strategy for establishing a universal benchmark of local government association performance standards. Based on this universal benchmark these associations may be assessed and selected for programme participation.

- Community-based critical reflection and learning days. Related communication activities aim to enable communities both to reflect on their activities, processes, contributions and the impact on local development efforts during the sub-project cycle and to enhance their understanding and appreciation of their own resources and capacities. Learning days may include recreational and entertainment activities together with public announcements, discussions, reporting and presentations by the community management committee and other participants.
- Grassroots media capacity development and programming. The following discussion highlights the primary methods involved in using the media in development projects.
 - *Development of community radio capacity and radio programmes.* Community radio is one of the most effective communication tools in the developing world because of its capacity to build awareness, provide information, educate, change behaviour, build relationships and monitor performance. The building of grassroots radio capacity may, therefore, constitute a key empowerment tool for local communities and may involve the establishment of new radio stations, the distribution of radios to communities, the training of local people as radio managers and journalists, and the purchasing of airtime for project-related programming (interviews, documentaries, public relations campaigns and public service announcements).
 - *Use of community communication centres.* Telecentres are local establishments that aim both to stimulate and to respond to the demand for information and communication services. However, resources may vary according to the needs of

a particular community. In Tshwane, the Thusong Service Centres are used as community centres for the purpose of development communication.

- *Information and communication technology.* Information and communication technologies (ICTs) empower communities by providing them with access to information. This technology may provide communities and individuals with easy access to market information and communication as well as access to the internet, e-mail and e-learning. However, the use of this technology does depend on the level of education, income, socio-economic status and cultural dynamics of the target audience. However, development workers may use a combination of tools to ensure that the message has maximum reach.

- *Identifying channels and networks*

The identifying of channels and networks is essential for delivering messages, disseminating information and eliciting feedback. In many instances the selection of a specific activity will indicate the type of communication channel or network to be used.

- *Defining a timeline and determining the frequency of interventions*

The defining of a timeline for and the determining of the frequency of an activity is critical to the success of a development project, and, thus, should be considered as a strategic issue in the development of a communication action plan. A well-planned, but flexible, timeline uses human and financial resources efficiently.

Certain key issues related to the timing of communication interventions in CDD include the following:

- Communication for relationship building and the facilitation of ownership, trust, buy-in and knowledge based decision-making are key during project design and project launch.

- Communication activities related to the managing of expectations are also essential.
 - It is essential that communication activities for effective and accountable management be maintained frequently through newsletters, meetings, electronic communications, workshops and seminars.
- *Assigning responsibility*

The assigning of responsibility is extremely important in order to ensure the successful and timely implementation of activities as well as the efficient use of both human and financial resources. The division of responsibility between various government and non-governmental groups, units and departments in collaboration with the communication specialist or team in the project management unit will help to develop ownership of the intervention – an important characteristic of development communication.

- *Preparing a budget*

The drawing up of a budget which includes all cost factors associated with each activity recommended in the action plan, will assist the communication specialist to map the strategic process of the communication activities and to focus on the most realistic and important activities. Once a budget has been calculated for the various elements of each activity, then a total budget for the entire communication component must be drawn up. It is important to identify the total cost of the operation in order to prevent the termination or delay of communication activities during the project because of a lack of resources.

- *Monitoring indicators*

By identifying appropriate indicators the communication specialist is able to articulate the connection between the communication objectives and the specific implications of a

desired change. These indicators may refer to any monitorable change in awareness, behaviour, access to knowledge and services, attitudes, or other measures through the use of surveys, focus groups and questionnaires.

Besette (2004) states that participatory development communication leads participants through a planning process which begins with the identification of both the specific groups and their communication needs and objectives. Thereafter, the development team, together with community members and other stakeholders who are involved, identify the appropriate communication activities and communication tools that are needed in order to attain these objectives.

The phase which addresses communication strategy design, as prescribed by the IDS (2008), Lozare (1994:242) and Besette (2004), entails the translation of PRCA and baseline results into useful accounts and their utilisation designing a communication strategy that will assist in achieving the development objectives of the initiative.

This communication strategy is based on the focal problems which have been identified and which are then translated into objectives. The strategy will indicate the priority of the interaction groups in the community which are most affected by the focal problems and it will specify the most appropriate communication approaches such as information, motivation, promotions, training and education. It is during this phase that the financial, material and human resources required for solving the problem will be specified (IDS, 2004).

According to the IDS (2008) it is during this phase that the formulation of the instructional and group mobilisation strategies should take place. This would involve creatively translating the basic messages and discussion topics from rough core content into appealing and thought provoking messages and discussion themes for the various communication channels and the media. Discussion themes refer to ideas which are designed specifically to focus the attention of a group on a familiar problem and to generate dialogue about the nature of the problem and possible actions to be taken.

According to Schoen (1996:262) it is important to recognise that, while it may be relatively easy to make plans and draw up strategies, the implementation of these plans and strategies may not be always be as effortless. The critical factor in the implementation of strategies is the amount of effective and relevant teamwork during the strategy development phase which will, in turn, ensure the sustainability of a project.

Both a communication strategy and action plan is necessary in a development communication project in order to guide its progression. Belbase (1994:455) emphasises that the design of the project should answer local needs and it involves local initiative and expertise.

The aim of the following step in the development communication plan is to conduct the implementation of the communication activities for the initiative. This step may be effected only once the strategy and its action plan have been properly drawn up.

3.3.3.5 Step 4: Implement communication activities

Implementation may begin once the preceding steps have been accomplished. During this phase of implementation officials in the project management or implementation unit take various preparatory steps in order to put into practice each of the communication activities as laid out in the action plan matrix. It may be useful to prepare and to maintain an implementation calendar with a detailed timeline of activities and related preparatory work.

Lozare (1994:242) and the IDS (2008) maintain that this phase involves the development of communication methods and materials in terms of which the messages and discussion themes are converted to actual materials for use in the field, for example, posters, flipcharts, drama and radio programmes. The IDS (2008) views the actual implementation as a separate phase but, for the purpose of this study, this actual implementation is incorporated into the fourth phase, as prescribed by Bessette (2004) and Mozammel and Schechter (2005:27). According to the IDS (2008) this phase

involves the actual implementation of the proposed communication activities, whereby the in-depth training of field staff on interpersonal communication skills and facilitation is essential to ensure effective interaction with the community.

The IDRC (2004) identifies various categories of communication which are used in participatory development communication. The first category, interpersonal communication, includes discussion and debate, visioning sessions, focus group discussions, Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques, role-playing, visits, tours, workshops and exhibitions. The second category, group media, includes photography, drawings, flipcharts, posters, banners and video and audio recordings. Theatre, songs, music and stories fall into the third category of traditional media while mass media constitutes the important fourth category in participatory development. This fourth category includes community radio, local press and television. Finally, the computer as a slide show projector and the internet constitute the fifth category of information and communication technology (ICTs).

The effective implementation of activities in a development communication project is a critical step, and, thus, it is essential that appropriate communication techniques and methods be employed in accordance with the needs of the community which have been specifically identified.

3.3.3.6 Step 5: Conduct monitoring and feedback activities

The IDS (2008) deems it necessary to measure the overall effectiveness of a programme once the programme has been implemented. This process of measuring is also discussed in the IDS's *final phase* in the communication planning process – the summative evaluation. This summative evaluation measures the impact of the communication programme on the community and the extent to which the activities have contributed to the realisation of the objectives of the communication programme.

The aforementioned information may be obtained by conducting a comparative analysis using the post-implementation baseline study and the benchmark study which was carried out at the beginning of the programme. Freire (in Nair & White, 1994a:184) notes that reflection is a significant part of the liberation of the individual since it is through reflection and introspection that insights are gained. It is the process of reflection that will result in higher levels of knowledge which will consequently recycle into a redefinition and refinement during the assessment phase.

Monitoring and feedback mechanisms may be designed in different ways, for example, a simple feedback system may include an evaluation questionnaire administered after the conclusion of a workshop or a content analysis of a particular issue which may have emerged from the various media channels. A more comprehensive feedback system may be established for understanding or measuring the impact of the overall strategic communication intervention and this should include the development of a set of indicators based on socio-cultural, economic and behavioural issues which have been affected by the strategic communication intervention. Feedback mechanisms include attitudinal or opinion surveys, opinion research, focus groups, course evaluation and media monitoring. These activities could form part of the action plan itself, or else a separate matrix for feedback mechanisms could be developed.

Monitoring and feedback allow the impact of communication activities to be assessed and they help refine the strategy and action plan during the project cycle to ensure the effectiveness of the communication intervention. Monitoring and feedback may be used both to measure the effectiveness of the communication activities listed in the action plan and to measure the impact of the entire strategic communication intervention in the development project.

From the abovementioned, it is clear that strategic communication could enhance the participatory approach and it could be further argued that participatory communication should be strategic. Against this background, theoretical statement 6 is formulated.

Text box 3.4: Theoretical statement 6 (strategic communication)

GCIS should ensure that its development communication efforts involve the responsiveness of the community as well as strategic planning together with the community. In other words, ad hoc activities have no place in participatory development communication.

Bessette (2004) maintains that participatory development communication is a means that reinforces the process of participatory development, and that it aims to facilitate community participation as well as the sharing of knowledge. It further combines communication research and action in an integrated framework, and involves all stakeholders in the various phases of the development process as mentioned above. In addition, participatory development communication links directly with the agenda of the communities and it seeks to reinforce their efforts to improve their living conditions.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the challenges in participatory development communication and dealt specifically with how development efforts may incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with the communities.

The Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane constitute the primary area of investigation in this study. Accordingly, the details of their mandate and operational underpinnings will be discussed in the following chapter which will, thus, provide a contextual framework for the study.

CHAPTER 4

THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

4.1 INTRODUCTION

“With all hands on deck, and committed to conduct our business in an unusual and more effective fashion, we shall sustain the process of our reconstruction and development and take it to even higher levels.”

President Thabo Mbeki, State of the Nation Address, 8 February 2008 (SoNA, 2008).

According to Lor and van As (2002) the advent of democracy in South Africa has resulted in significant progress in respect of freedom of expression and freedom of access to information. This, in turn, reflects a shift in the style of governmental decision-making in the direction of greater transparency and public participation.

This chapter provides both an overview of the Thusong Service Centres as the primary vehicle for addressing development communication in South Africa, as well as the policy framework which governs their existence. This chapter answers research question 3 – “*How do the Thusong Service Centres communicate with the communities they serve?*”

According to the GCIS (2009):

Access to integrated government information and services ‘to build a better quality of life for all’ is the vision of the Thusong Service Centres. The mission is ‘to roll out the Thusong Service Centre programme in order to ensure equitable and effective access to government information and services by 2014’, through working in partnership with local communities, the private sector and civil society; and the coordinated and integrated efforts of the three spheres of government.

This study focuses on the City of Tshwane, the second largest municipality in the Gauteng province situated in South Africa. It covers an area of 2 198 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 2.2 million.

According to the Government Communication Information Systems (GCIS) (2009) one of the cardinal requirements of effective and sustained development is the political will to drive programmes which are aimed at improving the life circumstances of the poor and disadvantaged. In South Africa this political will has been demonstrated through various government policies and programmes aimed at improving both service delivery and access to government information and services. These policies which will be discussed in the following section will also be analysed and reported upon in detail in chapters 6 and 7 against the background of the realities that exist in the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane.

4.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Government's mandate and approach to the Thusong Service Centres are aligned to a number of policies. The concept of development communication is promoted in these policies which make provision for ample interfacing between government and its citizens in order to facilitate access to information and progress at a local level (GCIS, 2009).

According to the GCIS (2009), at the "Information Society and Development" conference of May 1996, held as an action framework to build Africa's information and communication infrastructure, the Deputy President at the time, Thabo Mbeki, identified the Thusong Service Centres (known at that time as Multi-Purpose Community Centres - MPCCs) as one of the South African Information Society's pilot projects. A number of policy prescripts drive the Thusong Service Centre initiative and are discussed below.

4.2.1 Communications 2000: A vision for government communications in South Africa

In 1996, the former Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, set up a task group on government communications (known as Comtask) to examine both communication within government, and all general governmental communications. In October 1996, Comtask produced a report entitled *Communications 2000: A vision for government communications in South Africa*, which emphasised the need for improved communication between the government and its citizens, with special prominence being given to the disadvantaged communities in rural and urban areas. The report identified the Thusong Service Centres as a means of such communication (Lor & van As, 2002). The afore-mentioned communication relates to Freire's *dialogic communication* as well as to Buber's theory in Thomas (1994:52) which describes the *I–Thou* and the *I–It relationships* (see section 2.3).

Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) was formally launched on 18 May 1998 as a replacement for the South African Communication Service (SACS) which had represented a legacy of the apartheid regime. The GCIS brief was to deal with issues of government message, communications strategy and corporate image and to ensure coherence and consistency in both the content of message and the method of delivery. Included in the major priorities of GCIS is the provision of development information. It was in order to supply this information that GCIS embarked on the development of the Thusong Service Centres (noted in The Comtask Report (1996) as focal points for empowering historically disadvantaged communities in collecting, analysing and sharing information related to their developmental needs (Lor & van As, 2002).

GCIS (1996:33–38) states that there is a need for Thusong Service Centres, which are an effective way in which to facilitate development in South Africa. The Comtask Report (1996) addresses the lack of a culture of free flowing information in South Africa and it states that this lack stems from a number of factors, including the fact that the print

media does not reach the majority of the population as a result of the fact that both the communications infrastructure and the public infrastructure have ignored the many millions of urban poor and rural masses. The latter is one of the reasons behind establishing the Thusong Service Centres in the county as information is both a right and an essential ingredient in economic development and, in the absence of such information, South Africa will be unable to generate sustained growth to meet the developmental needs of its population (GCIS, 1996:38).

GCIS (1996:33-38) states that an efficient government information system should make provision for a two-way system of communication which emphasises dialogue as the prerequisite for authentic development. This dialogue process in the context of development communication involves a two-way horizontal flow of communication (see section 2.3) rather than a vertical, linear communication process GCIS, 1996:33-38). A general goal for all approaches to government information management is the development of a public service, and the meeting of objectives in connection with the reform of the public service so as to render the public service open, transparent and accountable. The developing community should be able to express their views to government and vice versa which, in turn, implies the application of an interactive means of communication.

Aligned with the discussion above, the Comtask Report (1996) states that participation in innovative strategies of information sharing for human development and the playing of a leading role in the production of state-of-the-art development information have been identified as important features of the development communication system. The report also noted that, before any centre moves from concept to reality, the community should be involved in the establishment of that centre – this relates to Freire's proposition that the act of critical reflection is important if meaningful dialogue is to occur and that this meaningful dialogue will, as a consequence, result in sustainable and self-reliant development (Taylor, 1993:56-57). The following section discusses the notion of participation through the eight Batho Pele principles.

4.2.2 *White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997*

The *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (WPTPS) (1997) sets out eight transformation priorities with the transformation of service delivery as the key. This transformation of service delivery is, indeed, the key as a transformed South African public service will be judged in accordance with one main criterion, namely, that of effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens. It should be noted that public services are not a privilege in a civilised and democratic society, but, rather, a legitimate expectation (WPTPS, 1997). The WPTPS (1997) emphasises that the government's approach to service delivery is based on the premise that that people should come first and that the community is larger than the individual and any attempt by individuals to provide a service should take into account all eight of the Batho Pele principles. The WPTPS (1997) is relevant in this study because its agenda is directly applicable to all areas and employees of the public sector which is the main theme of the study on the way in which the Thusong Service Centres communicate with communities.

The following is a summary of each of the eight Batho Pele principles.

4.2.2.1 Batho Pele principles

According to GCIS (2009),

Thusong Service Centres serve as a base from which information and communication activities take place. This 'one-stop shopping' programme has had a positive impact on the lives of citizens where government is now more accessible and visible, and information and services are provided with a human face, based on Batho Pele principles, which means "People First".

The Department of Public Service of South Africa (DPSA) (2009) discusses the eight Batho Pele principles that were developed to serve as an acceptable policy and legislative framework in respect of service delivery. These principles are also aligned

with the constitutional ideals which are, inter alia, intended to respond to the needs of the developing community by encouraging citizens to participate in policy-making. One of the ways in which this may be achieved is through the Thusong Service Centres. This principle of participation in policy-making is echoed by Yoon (2004) where he promotes the ideal of participation in decision-making (refer to section 1.2).

The Batho Pele principles, which are discussed below, include consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money (DPSA, 2009).

The first principle is *consultation*² which is a powerful tool that enriches and shapes government policies. There are many ways in which to consult the users of services including customer surveys, interviews with individual users, consultation with groups and meetings with consumer representative bodies. More than one method of consultation will often be necessary to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness, therefore the consultation process at the Thusong Service Centres is investigated in this study.

The second principle, *setting service standards*, reinforces the need for benchmarks to measure constantly the extent to which citizens are satisfied with the service or products they receive from departments. This second principle also plays a major role in the development of service delivery improvement plans to ensure a better life for all South Africans. Accordingly, it is essential that citizens be fully involved in the development of service standards.

Increasing access, the third Batho Pele principle, aims to provide a framework for the making of decisions about delivering public service to the many South Africans who do not have access to public services. Batho Pele also aims to rectify the inequalities in the

² This is not regarded as the ideal in participatory development communication, but rather as the initial means of contact with community members.

distribution of existing services. The Thusong Service Centres represent one initiative of government to improve access to services.

Service providers are required to empathise with the citizens and to extend to them both consideration and respect. In this vein *ensuring courtesy* is also one of the eight Batho Pele principles. The public service, which is committed to continuous, honest and transparent communication with the citizens of the country, involves the communication of services and products, and the identification of problems which may hamper or delay the efficient delivery of services according to the standards promised. If applied properly, this principle will help demystify the negative perceptions that the citizens in general have about the attitude of the public servants.

Information is another core requirement that is defined by the Batho Pele principles in terms of which information about services and development should be made available to community members.

A key aspect of Batho Pele is *openness and transparency*. This principle stipulates that the public should know more about the way in which national, provincial and local government institutions operate, how well they utilise the resources they consume, and who is in charge. It is anticipated that the public will take advantage of this principle to make suggestions about the improvement of service delivery mechanisms, and to hold government employees accountable and responsible by raising queries with them.

The principle of *redress*, which is a part of Batho Pele, emphasises a need to identify quickly and accurately when services are falling below the promised standards and to have procedures in place to remedy such a situation, which should take place at the individual transactional level with the public, as well as at the organisational level. Public servants are encouraged to welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve service, and to deal with the complaints so that weaknesses may be remedied speedily for the good of the citizens. This principle implies participation as the public have a say in the quality of service delivery.

Several of the improvements that the public envisage often require no additional resources and may sometimes even reduce costs. This addresses the Batho Pele principle of *value for money*. Any failure to provide a member of the public with a simple, satisfactory reply to an enquiry may, for example, result in an incorrectly completed application form which will take time to rectify.

The above key principles are directly aligned with participatory development communication in terms of which communities will be able to empower themselves through information synthesis and knowledge creation, thus generating a sense of conscientisation (Yoon, 2006) which, in turn, informs the process of development.

4.2.3 Cabinet Memorandum No. 15 of November 1999

This memorandum mandated GCIS to provide information to the public to enable the members of the public to become active participants in changing their lives for the better. This includes the facilitating and coordinating of the establishment of the Thusong Service Centres.

4.2.4 President's State of the Nation Address (SoNA), MAY 2004

President Mbeki's policy statement made during his SoNA in May 2004 when he indicated that, over the forthcoming 10 years, one Thusong Service Centre would be established in each local municipality, is closely associated with Giddens and Pierson's (1998:25) structuration theory which affirms that participatory development communication will be successful if it is situated in the centre of democratisation by transformation. President Mbeki's SoNA emphasised and endorsed the development of the Thusong Service Centres at the various municipalities. This study examined President's Mbeki's address in order to ascertain whether the actions of GCIS are aligned with their mandated policies.

4.2.5 Thusong Service Centres Government Communications: Business Plan 2006–2014

According to GCIS (2009) the South African government's increased commitment to integrated service delivery and communities' access to services and information underpins the 2006–2014 business plan of the Thusong Service Centres. The *business plan* forms part of the drive by government to develop a comprehensive access strategy for all citizens, thus facilitating improved engagement with government.

The five legislative and policy documents, which were briefly discussed above, set out the broad vision of government's efforts to promote two-way communication and to bring government information and services closer to the developing community. These documents and policies make it clear that the mandate of GCIS may be realised through the Thusong Service Centres – see next section.

4.3 THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA

A significant aspect of the process of developing both a new policy and structural framework for the South Africa's government information system has been the approach of providing development communication and information to communities so as to ensure that these communities become active participants in changing the lives of their community members for the better. *Thusong*, a Sesotho word meaning 'a place to get help or assistance', has been the focus of government in carrying out its mandate in respect of development communication in South Africa (GCIS, 2009).

GCIS (2009) states that Thusong Service Centres should incorporate face-to-face interactions between government and the developing community and incorporate information and communication technologies (ICTs). In addition, these services centres should be characterised by political neutrality as well as community participation, which is echoed by the GCIS in its Business Plan (GCIS, 2006) when it states that one of the

strategic objectives of these centres is to create a platform for increased dialogue between the citizens and their government.

Aligned with this principle is the United Nation's Declaration on Human Rights (Srampickal, 2006) as well as Belbase's (1994:457) assertion that local participation is essential in building the confidence of a community during the development process.

GCIS was mandated to champion and to coordinate the Thusong Service Centre process – see section 4.3.1

4.3.1 Management of Thusong Service Centres

It is essential that the Thusong Service Centres be administered and managed efficiently if development communication is to be realised, and, thus, consultative forums were formed both nationally and provincially. The national forum on Thusong Service Centres, *the National Intersectoral Steering Committee* (NISSC), comprises government departments, parastatals, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), academic institutions and representatives from the private sector. The NISSC is mirrored in each province by a similar structure which is known as the *Provincial Intersectoral Steering Committee* (PISSC) of which the main role is to mobilise, streamline, integrate and coordinate roll-out plans of the various stakeholders in the development communication process mentioned above. The final structure that forms part of the Thusong Service Centre is the *Local Intersectoral Steering Committee* (LISSC) which comprises leadership from local community based organisations, local government and local business as well as traditional leaders (GCIS, 2009).

It is important to note how essential it is that development within a particular community operate within certain parameters or structures and, in view of the fact that the abovementioned government structures have the power to effect the necessary changes, it follows that these government structures need to work with the communities

if there is to be development. Giddens and Pierson's (1998:10) subject-object dialectic may be applied in this context (refer to section 2.4).

The following section briefly discusses the objectives of the Thusong Service Centres which are then further investigated and reported on in greater detail in chapter 6.

4.3.2 Objectives of the Thusong Service Centres

The Thusong Service Centres were developed by government with specific objectives in mind. These objectives address the enhancement of the quality of life of the developing community, and align with Buber's (Thomas, 1994:52) theory of the community as the beneficiary of development programmes, as well as with Giddens' and Pierson's (1998:10) assertion that members of a community are subjects who should be respected.

The following include the various objectives which were stipulated by the GCIS (2009):

Text Box 4.1: GCIS objectives

- To identify community information and service needs
- To provide access to integrated, cost-effective and responsive government information and services, particularly to people in rural areas
- To enhance the quality of life in under-serviced communities
- To provide government information to the members of the public in a manner in which it may be used to improve their lives
- To provide two-way communication between government and the developing community
- To improve community participation in government decision-making processes
- To enhance cooperation among the three spheres of government in terms of delivery

- To manage and control government resources properly
- To enhance the decentralisation of government services
- To provide access to, and facilitate the use, of ICTs

In order for the Thusong Service Centres to realise their objectives, as stated above, certain key requirements need to be fulfilled and they are discussed below.

4.3.3 The key elements of Thusong Service Centres

Thusong Service Centres are part of the governmental structure and, in order for these centres to fulfil their intended purpose, it is essential that the power structures meet the requirements outlined below. Giddens and Pierson's (1998:10) structuration theory, which deals with the power institutions as an enabler or constraint factor in the development process, may be applied in this context (see section 2.4).

One of key elements of the Thusong Service Centres is *political neutrality* in terms of which it is important that these centres remain non-political community institutions that bring services closer to the developing community. The *ICT infrastructure*, a second key element, is intended to aid the delivery of efficient services to the developing community and, as such, it will expose the people in developing areas to modern technologies. *Integrated service delivery* is another key element of Thusong Service Centre as these service centres provide people with access to information and services from the various service providers. *Information from all sectors* is essential to Thusong Service Centres and, thus, it is essential that government information, policies and plans be communicated through these institutions to the communities, and finally, there should be *continuous research, monitoring and evaluation* of the centres.

Thusong Service Centres provide communities with the opportunity of receiving services which they were unable to obtain in the past, and to participate in activities that allow for two-way communication between the government and the developing community, both of which are essential if development is to take place. These

development interventions which will benefit both the community and the country at large are discussed below.

4.3.4 Benefits of Thusong Service Centres

The GCIS (2009) has listed the following specific benefits to communities:

Text Box 4.2: Benefits of Thusong Service Centres

- Local economic development
- Integrated service delivery in line with the requirements of the Municipal System Act
- Improvement in infrastructural development
- Education and skills development, Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), and government programmes
- Access to information and services closer to the developing community
- Access to technology: telecentres provide access to *Batho Pele* Gateway and computer training
- Platform for partnerships which would empower communities through, for example, sustainable projects that encourage ownership and self-employment, as well as the employment of others.

The abovementioned benefits are crucial in establishing a community that will be self-reliant in the long term. The initial reaching out to communities, as advocated by Buber (Rahim, 1994:120) is vital, but it is Freire's critical reflexivity (Thomas, 1994:50–51) which will ensure sustainability and authentic development, which separates the development process from the dependency paradigm of economic and social disparity (White, S, 1994:25). The following benefits of the Thusong Service Centres are a demonstration of the aim of these centres to bridge this gap. The various services offered by the Thusong Service Centres are captured in *The Six-Block Service Model* which was developed by the GCIS (GCIS, 2009).

4.3.5 Services offered by Thusong Service Centres

The Six-Block Service Model reflected below describes an “ideal” Thusong Service Centre. In view of the fact that community needs are the driving factor in service provision, this model has been modified to suit the unique context and environment of each Thusong Service Centre.

Table 4.1: Services offered by Thusong Service Centres

Broad service offered	Operational service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government social and administrative services 	Grants Personal documents Housing applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office services 	Phone, fax, scan, copy and print Desktop publishing Postal services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and skills development services 	Adult Basic Education and Training Further Education and Training Specialised training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local economic development (LED) services 	Small business advice and development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business services and community opportunities 	Small, medium and micro enterprises Other private-sector services such as retail and ATMs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and communication activities 	Government information and on-site guidance regarding services Community information and awareness

According to the GCIS (2009) the services listed above should be incorporated into the infrastructure of the various Thusong Service Centres which would have been developed in accordance with the needs of the various communities. Further to this,

different types of delivery in the form of hub, satellite and mobile. Thusong Service Centres allow for flexibility in terms of the order, variety and frequency of service provision. Although no ideal regional infrastructure establishment model exists, successful regional roll-out would employ specific models that would respond to the particular settlement and service-provision context. These service centres may be further categorised in respect of their configuration as some centres may house all services under one roof while others may adopt the cluster approach whereby a number of service-providers are housed in separate buildings within approximately 500m of each other.

It is important to acknowledge that, in spite of the fact that all Thusong Service Centres are characterised by generic features, problems and solutions, each centre is unique to a specific community and, therefore, the services mentioned above will need to be modified accordingly (GCIS, 2009).

GCIS has developed a business plan (Thusong Service Centres: Government Communications, Business Plan 2006-2014) to ensure that the momentum and continuity of the roll-out of the Thusong Service Centres is maintained while, at the same time, seeking to ensure that issues are addressed, and that the continued roll-out is based on a sound approach, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programme (GCIS, 2009). This business plan will be further investigated in chapter 6 with the emphasis on the implementation of government's commitments contained therein.

4.3.6 Thusong Service Centre operations

The GCIS (2009) asserts that, while the process of establishing Thusong Service Centres should have laid a sound basis for their operationalisation, it is essential that multiple checks occur on an ongoing basis. The criteria include a fully functional management committee, the appointment of a centre manager, a developed promotional plan, signed service level agreements (SLAs) with heads of departments,

signed lease agreements between owners and service providers and the meeting of all minimum service requirements. These checks are important in ensuring ongoing alignment and coordination in the day-to-day provision of services which, in turn, is essential if the ideal of integrated service delivery implicit in the Thusong Service Centre model is to be realised.

The *community development worker* (CDW) is also of importance in the development process in South Africa. This CDW has been identified as one of the enablers of participation in the development process. The CDW enables dialogic communication and helps in the reaching out to communities which is necessary in the development process. This CDW aligns with Buber's theory of extending oneself to meet the "other" for the purpose of liberation and enhancement (Thomas, 1994:52) (see section 2.3).

It was the view of the South African Cabinet that the development worker would become an operational arm of the government's access strategy which included the development of Thusong Service Centres. Accordingly, the CDW Programme was launched as one of the initiatives to provide service delivery to the poor (DPSA, 2007), by enhancing transactional communication for mutual understanding. This is echoed in Van Schoor's analytical model of communication when he states that transactional communication is critical in creating the sense of trust which is necessary in order to attain the ultimate goal of mutual understanding amongst the parties involved (Van Schoor, 1982:28–29).

4.4 SUMMARY

Government has stated in various legislative and policy documents (see section 4.2), that it places a high priority on free access to information in support of the ideals of an open democracy. It is essential that the principles referred to in these government policy documents be implemented at the various Thusong Service Centres so as to enable the transactional communication which is aligned with the critical reflexivity advocated in

both Freirean dialogue (Taylor, 1993:56-57) and the structuration theory of Giddens and Pierson (1998:76).

The following chapter outlines the methods to be adopted in order to investigate the synergy between the policies and plans and the grassroots reality, by reporting on the interviews which were conducted with the key role-players involved in development communication in Tshwane. Personal observation, which is also fundamental in exposing the veracity of these policies, is discussed in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, the research design centres on the use of qualitative research methodologies which relate to the general aim of the study, that is, to determine how the communication of Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication.

This chapter describes the research method used in this study to investigate the various initiatives discussed in chapter 4 in respect of government's commitment to act on its policy framework for participatory development communication. Although a brief outline of the qualitative research methods and design employed to address the research intentions of this study has already been given in section 1.9, this chapter discusses these methods in more detail. The research methods chosen for this study include semi-structured interviews, qualitative qualitative content analysis and personal observations.

5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:43), the aims of exploratory studies vary quite considerably. This study used exploratory research to gain insights into the phenomenon of participatory development communication at Thusong Service Centres. As exploratory studies usually lead to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of replicable data, they frequently involve the use of interviews, which is one of the methods this study employed for collecting data. The important mistake that should be avoided in exploratory studies is allowing preconceived ideas to exercise a determining influence on the direction or nature of the research. This study is situated in

a qualitative paradigm which is appropriate because of its contextual nature, which is discussed in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

Qualitative research is a process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur in an attempt to describe such events as a means of determining the process in which the events are embedded. It also considers the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction to derive possible explanations on the basis of the observed phenomena (Gorman & Clayton, 2005:3; Boulton & Hammersley, 2006:246).

In other words, qualitative research is contextual in that it uses the natural setting in which events occur. In a qualitative research model, the researcher does not remain remote or detached from events, but actually enters the context or situation, collecting data and enhancing these raw data collected first-hand from the insights gained from actually being on site. This approach was deemed appropriate for this study because of the personal interaction that the researcher was able to establish with the interviewees.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

It is important to understand the research aims of a study in the context of the theory. This section therefore restates and relates the research aims (stated in section 1.6.2) and specific research questions (stated in section 1.6.1) to the theoretical statements of this study (see chapters 2 and 3).

5.3.1 Research questions

The specific research questions are as follows:

- 5.3.1.1 According to the literature, what are the principles of participatory development communication? (see chapter 2)

- 5.3.1.2 How could Thusong Service Centres incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with the communities they serve? (see chapter 3)
- 5.3.1.3 How do Thusong Service Centres communicate with the communities they serve? (see chapter 4)

In an attempt to answer these questions, specific theoretical statements were compiled in chapters 2 and 3 of this study and are discussed below.

5.3.2 Theoretical statements

The following theoretical statements were constructed in chapters 2 and 3 in order to answer the research questions.

5.3.2.1 Theoretical statement 1: self-reliance

The GCIS's goal should be to provide communities with opportunities for self-reliance in order to become independent participants in the development process, and not to fall into a paradigm of dependence whereby cultural imperialism and cultural domination destroy native cultures and compromise communities' independent thinking.

5.3.2.2 Theoretical statement 2: dialogue

This study uses the concept of dialogue as the common and grounding factor, and as the basis for participatory development communication; therefore, Freirean dialogue is used as a benchmark. Transactional communication is not a 'one-way' persuasion process, but a dialogue in which the sender and the receiver of messages interact over a period of time to arrive at shared meanings. The environment for participatory development communication is expected to be supportive, creative, consensual and facilitative, leading to the sharing of ideas through dialogue.

5.3.2.3 Theoretical statement 3 - empowerment

The GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the development project, therefore the GCIS should plan together with communities by creating structures that offer communities and developers equal power, and introduce activities that will empower communities, which suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue.

5.3.2.4 Theoretical statement 4 - community participation

In accordance with the principles of dialogue, one of the primary emphases of a participatory approach is to invite communities to actively participate in the entire development communication initiative. Thus, in order for development to occur, trusting relationships have to be built and appropriate planning carried out together with the developing community throughout the programme.

5.3.2.5 Theoretical statement 5 – socio-cultural context

During the development communication process, the GCIS should consider the socio-cultural context of each community, such as the community's indigenous knowledge and cultural identity, as a foundation for achieving social integration. In addition, participatory development communication requires the recognition and validation of both indigenous and expert knowledge within communities, as well as finding an effective means of blending the two, always taking into consideration existing social and cultural norms.

5.3.2.6 Theoretical statement 6 - strategic communication

The GCIS should ensure that its development communication efforts involve the community's responsiveness by means of participation as well as strategic planning with the community. In other words, ad hoc activities have no place in participatory development communication.

These theoretical statements were gathered from the literature review of participatory development communication and were further broken down into theoretical constructs which informed the compilation of the questions for the interview guide used for the semi-structured interviews (see text box 5.1). The purpose of these interviews was to evaluate the GCIS's participatory development communication against normative principles of participatory development communication.

5.3.3 Data gathering methods

This study adopted three methods for collecting data: semi-structured interviews, personal observations and qualitative content analysis. These methods are discussed in detail below.

5.3.3.1 Qualitative content analysis

In this study, qualitative content analysis was the first method used to gather data in order to ascertain the communication approach used by Thusong Service Centres in their development communication initiatives in Tshwane. Henning (2004:98) and Mason (2002:103) suggest that a qualitative content analysis reveals meaning in research by critically examining relevant documents. This study used semi-structured interviews and personal observations, and the data gathered from these were informed by the background information obtained from the qualitative content analysis.

- **Qualitative content analysis format**

The documents analysed are listed in table 5.1 and this analysis formed part of the study's information gathering techniques. The table also provides an overview of the relevance of each of these documents to this study. These documents provide the mandate for Thusong Service Centres as the primary vehicle for development communication in South Africa, and are therefore relevant.

Table 5.1: Documents analysed

Document	Relevance to study
Comtask Report 1996 (see section 4.2.1)	This report emphasises the need for improved communication between government and its citizens, with special focus on disadvantaged communities in rural and urban areas. Thusong Service Centres are identified as a means of such communication.
White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997 (see section 4.2.2)	The document, the Department of the Public Service of South Africa (DPSA) (2009), discusses the eight Batho Pele principles which were developed to serve as an acceptable policy and legislative framework for service delivery. These principles are aligned to various constitutional ideals, and include responding to people's needs by encouraging citizens to participate in policymaking. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through Thusong Service Centres.
Cabinet Memorandum No. 15 of November 1999 (see section 4.2.3)	This memorandum mandates the GCIS to provide members of the public with information that enables them to be active participants in facilitating and coordinating the establishment of Thusong

	Service Centres.
President's State of the Nation Address, (SoNA) May 2004 (see section 4.2.4)	The relevance of this document to the study is President Mbeki's policy statement made during his SoNA in May 2004, during which he emphasised the value of establishing Thusong Service Centres in every local municipality.
Thusong Service Centres: Government Communications Business Plan 2006–2014 (GCIS, 2006) (see section 4.2.5)	The South African government's commitment to integrated service delivery and access underpins the 2006–2014 business plan for Thusong Service Centres and forms part of the drive by government to develop a comprehensive access strategy for citizens, allowing improved engagement with government.

5.3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

- **Selection**

The second method used was semi-structured face-to-face interviews and selection of interviewees was guided by purposive sampling in an attempt to reach the appropriate respondents at Thusong Service Centres. According to Boulton and Hammersley (2006:244), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in terms of which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher on the basis of a variety of criteria, including specialist knowledge of the research issue, or the capacity and willingness to participate in the research. In other words, the researcher chooses subjects who best fit the criteria of the study.

This study used a purposive sampling technique and focused on all six Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. The Tshwane geographical area was chosen because of a population concentration of 2.2 million within its 2 198 square kilometres (Tshwane, 2010). Tshwane is the second largest municipality in Gauteng and is a large developing

community. Although the results of this study may not be generalised to the other Thusong Service Centres in South Africa, they may be deemed useful when planning development communication initiatives because of the previously mentioned reasons for choosing Tshwane as the focus of the study.

The population involved in the investigation consists of the key role players responsible for the functioning of Thusong Service Centres. Interviews were not conducted with centre managers as was originally intended, as none of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane employ centre managers. This gap is discussed in greater detail in section 6.3.5.2.

Wilson and Sapsford (2006:95) assert that the interview is a method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions. Typically, an interview represents a meeting or dialogue between people where personal and social interaction occurs, which enables the interviewer to follow up and probe responses, motives and feelings. Interviews were, thus, especially appropriate for gathering accurate information for the study on a first-hand basis. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews also allowed the researcher the flexibility to ask additional questions during the interview.

It is important that the interviewer ensures that the proper environment for conducting the interviews is created. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005:136) a good interviewer will be thoroughly prepared before each interview; will put people at ease; will ask only one question at a time; will ensure that each question is clear and unambiguous; will listen to what is said and what is not said; will react only with interest and sympathetic concern to what is volunteered and never with surprise, disapproval or shock; will not contradict a respondent even when information known to be incorrect is supplied; and will certainly never begin to argue. Note taking during and audio taping of the interview are required to ensure that the interaction is captured accurately.

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured face-to-face interviews with senior GCIS personnel (see table 5.2 below) in an attempt to discover how communication with communities on issues of development was conducted. The researcher introduced herself and stated the purpose of the study whilst assuring the interviewee of confidentiality, which meant that the interviewee would not be presented in an identifiable form when the research results were published or made known. During the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees were asked questions that related to their communication with communities for the sake of development.

For the detailed interview guide, refer to text box 5.1 below. An interview guide comprises a list of questions compiled by the researcher in order to guide the interview. According to Ghauri, Gronhaug and Kristianslund (1995:66) and Henning, 2004:73) these questions should be compared with the research problem several times in order to test the consistency between the two and to see whether the questions are thorough and correct enough to find out what the researcher wants to know. The researcher in this study ensured that the interview guide in text box 5.1 did indeed comprise questions that are relevant to the research problem and the specific research questions investigated in this study. This was done by scanning the literature and research problem in conjunction with the interview questions to ensure that the questions derived from the theory and literature adequately addressed the problem.

Text box 5.1: Interview guide

Interview questions posed to Senior Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) personnel

Brief

This interview is based on GCIS's development communication initiatives. The purpose of this interview is to investigate GCIS's stance on development communication in Tshwane.

QUESTION 1: dialogue

How does the GCIS engage communities in development projects?

Prompts

- 1.1 What methods of communication do you use when communicating with communities on development?
- 1.2 How do you elicit ideas from the communities on development? (**community participation**)

QUESTION 2: self-reliance

What initiatives are implemented by government to stimulate the communities' self-reliance?

Prompts

- 2.1 What activities are introduced to encourage independence with the aim of developing a community?
- 2.2 How is communities' intellectual creativity stimulated for the purpose of development?

QUESTION 3: empowerment

How are communities involved in the planning process of development projects?

Prompts

- 3.1 How do communities participate in the problem analysis process in development projects?
- 3.2 Who are the key stakeholders in the planning process of development project/s?

QUESTION 4: empowerment

How is the community involved in the decision-making process of development projects?

Prompts

- 4.1 What role do communities play in the problem-solving process during development?
- 4.2 Who are the key decision-makers in the development process?

QUESTION 5: socio-cultural context

How are the communities' unique needs considered during the development initiatives?

Prompts

- 5.1 What activities are implemented to attain the communities' social integration?
- 5.2 How does the community's indigenous knowledge benefit the development planning process?

QUESTION 6: strategic planning

What does GCIS communication planning for development initiatives entail?

Prompts

Phase 1

- 6.1 Who is responsible for managing the project throughout its life-cycle?

Phase 2

- 6.2 How do you create an enabling communication environment for development?
- 6.3 Discuss the level of involvement and influence of each stakeholder in the development process.
- 6.4 Discuss the power relations that exist between stakeholders in the development process.
- 6.5 How are relationships with local communities developed?
- 6.6 How is Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA) incorporated as a participatory research method in the development process?
- 6.7 How are cultural characteristics and diversity of the community considered in development initiatives?

Phase 2B

6.8 How do you identify development problems that are to be addressed in a community?

Phase 3

6.9 Discuss the communication action plan that you use in your development projects.

Phase 4

6.10 What are the major activities that are implemented for development in this community?

6.11 What communication techniques and methods are employed during development initiatives?

Phase 5

6.12 What feedback activities are employed to measure the effectiveness of communication activities?

QUESTION 7: general

What recommendations would you make to improve community participation in development initiatives in Tshwane?

- **Semi-structured interviews format**
 - **Pre-planning**

On 8 September 2009, an orientation meeting was conducted with GCIS's Acting Provincial Director for Gauteng to discuss the relevance of the study and the proposed semi-structured interviews, after which a list of GCIS employees to be interviewed was agreed on. As a result of this meeting, the interview questions were reviewed and subsequently approved. In addition, on 6 November 2009, a telephonic conversation was conducted with the GCIS's Chief Director to explain the purpose and significance of

the study. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview questions underwent a rigorous pre-testing process in that they were forwarded to GCIS head office personnel in Pretoria for suggestions and ethical clearance.

- **Semi-structured interviews**

Personal interviews were conducted on site at the Thusong Service Centres indicated in table 5.2 below. The interviews lasted between one to two hours each and were audio-taped for transcription and coding purposes during the analysis process. Gorman and Clayton (2005:5) assert that qualitative research attempts to describe occurrences. In this study, this was made possible with the use of a digital recorder which aided in the transcription of these conversations for subsequent description.

In addition, detailed comments from the interviews were noted at each session for subsequent cross referencing. In the world of qualitative research, the written word dominates; hence lengthy verbatim records of the interviews with the participants themselves were used to ensure that the essence of events was included in the reporting. Qualitative research is based on the view that the meaning we attach to reality is socially constructed and then expressed in language, therefore the task of the qualitative researcher is to understand the meaning that people create in context and then to describe and interpret that meaning. Schwandt (c2001:19) states that one should suspend judgement about the existence of the world, and “bracket” or set aside the existential assumptions made in everyday life. In this study bracketing was applied throughout the study to ensure the fairness of the results, particularly during the interviews and the coding process in order to avoid the bias that could have been created by the researcher’s assumptions.

Table 5.2: Interview schedule

Date and time	Individuals interviewed	Position	Thusong Service Centre
02 December 2009 14h00–16h00	Mrs Esme Modisane	Senior Communications Officer (GCIS)	Mamelodi
07 December 2009 10h00–12h00	Mr Thomas Huma	Senior Communications Officer (GCIS)	Soshanguve, Atteridgeville and Olivenhout
08 December 2009 10h00–12h00	Mr George Moeketsi	Senior Communications Officer (GCIS)	Hammanskraal and GaRankuwa
22 December 2009 11h00–12h30	Mr Peter Gumede	Provincial Director (GCIS)	Manages all Thusong Service Centres in Gauteng

5.3.3.3 Personal observations

The third and final research method used in this study was personal observations of all six Tshwane Thusong Service Centres.

Gorman and Clayton (2005:40) define observation studies as those that “involve the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting”. Structure in observation takes two forms, namely, more-structured observation and less-structured observation. According to Foster (2006:60) the essential characteristic of more-structured observation is that the purpose of the observation, the categories of behaviour to be observed and the methods by which instances of behaviour are to be allocated to categories are worked out and clearly defined before the data collection begins. On the other hand, less-structured observation aims to produce detailed, qualitative descriptions of human behaviour that illuminate social meaning.

Furthermore, observation may be conducted in various ways, for example as complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant (Foster, 2006:72). In this study, the researcher's role was that of complete observer, in terms of which the researcher was present on the scene, but did not participate or interact with insiders to any great extent; her role was to listen and observe. According to the University of Illinois (2006) the complete observer role of the researcher adds value when used in conjunction with other data collection techniques. This study used observation in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis.

The duration of the observation at each of the six Thusong Service Centres ranged from 2 to 3 hours with the objective of observing the authentic environment under study in order to gather first-hand data.

Table 5.3: Observation schedule

Date and time	Thusong Service Centre
2 December 2009	Mamelodi
7 December 2009	Hammanskraal
8 December 2009	Soshanguve
13 January 2010	Atteridgeville
14 January 2010	GaRankuwa
15 January 2010	Olivenhout

- **Selection**

Selection of the Thusong Service Centres was guided by purposive sampling in an attempt to observe the development communication activities and approach, therefore personal observations were conducted at all the centres in Tshwane.

- **Personal observation format**

Table 5.3 above shows that personal observations were carried out on site at the six Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. A detailed running commentary was made at each site in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions of the communication model, as well as the activities carried out at these centres.

5.3.4 Data analysing methods

Data analysis may be described as part of three concurrent flows of activity, that is, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. These are discussed below.

5.3.4.1 Data reduction

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) and Henning (2004: 6-7) define data reduction as the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions. This process was completed before any attempt was made to display the data.

The transcriptions of and the researcher's notes on the semi-structured interviews, notes made during personal observations and information extracted from the qualitative content analysis were read repeatedly in order to ensure that the correct meanings were extracted from the conversations, observations and qualitative content analysis during the data reduction process.

5.3.4.2 Data display

Once the data reduction process was complete, the data could be displayed in an organised and compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11; Henning, 2004:127). This section discusses

the themes that were identified together with verbatim quotations used to reinforce the data.

The theoretical statements referred to in section 5.3.2 were used to develop theoretical constructs, which were applied as the primary categories for analysis. These categories were further divided into the subthemes that are discussed in detail below. It should be noted that the researcher ensured an objective process as far as possible in that the information presented in this report is fair and a true reflection of the interviews, personal observations and the qualitative content analysis. In order to keep this process objective, salient points were noted during the interviews, over and above the audio recording. In addition, the audio recording was transcribed and later used to help eliminate bias as a method of cross checking or cross reference. The results of the semi-structured interviews were further verified by the two other data gathering methods.

Data reduction and data display are discussed in chapter 6, while conclusions are drawn and verified is displayed in chapter 7.

5.3.4.3 Thematic categorisation

As measurement criteria, the categories used to analyse the data gathered during the empirical study were generated on the basis of the theoretical foundation presented in chapters 2 and 3. Repetitive and thorough reading of the theoretical underpinnings of participatory development communication theory confirmed that these categories were relevant and appropriate in this study. The main themes outlined in table 5.4 below are not mutually exclusive, but their intention is to encapsulate the major concepts of development communication. These themes were used in the content analysis of the South African policy documents relating to development (see table 5.1); the semi-structured face-to-face interviews; and the personal observations.

The interviews were analysed by coding the data, which, according to Schwandt (c2001:26), is a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks them down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments. Verbatim quotes and evidence were organised in support of the patterns that emerged, and these were informed by the evaluation criteria outlined in table 5.4. Although open coding was used in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, theoretical constructs assisted in providing a foundation for analysis.

The data generated during the empirical study were tested against the theoretical statements proposed in chapters 2 and 3 and the findings were compared with each of the data gathering methods as a cross referencing mechanism for validity and reliability. This is reported on in chapter 6. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the documents are discussed in chapter 7, which also contains the recommendations that emanated from the conclusions.

Table 5.4 displays the themes and subthemes that were used to analyse the empirical data. Below is a listing of each theme and subthemes with an explanation of their relevance to the main theme.

Table 5.4: Thematic categories and subthemes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community participation ○ Communication methods ○ Key stakeholders ○ Needs identification ○ Communication environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cooperatives and partnerships ○ Commitment ○ Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrated Development Plan (IDP) ○ Ownership of project ○ Decision-making ○ Power ○ Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural sensitivity ○ Indigenous knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication professionals ○ Integration of service ○ Research ○ Communication action plan ○ Feedback

- **DIALOGUE**

This study argues that dialogue is a prerequisite for authentic development to occur and in the context of development communication, a dialogic communication process involves a two-way horizontal flow of communication, in contrast to a vertical, linear communication process (Nair & White, 1994b:347).

- **Community participation**

Community participation is related to the main construct of dialogue, because dialogue is a necessity before participation can occur, which is underlined by Thomas' (1994:52) assertion that true participation arises from dialogue. This study uses the concept of dialogue as the common, grounding factor and the basis for participatory development communication.

- **Communication methods**

This subtheme relates to dialogue because it is essential for development communication practitioners to use relevant and effective means to create an enabling communication environment in order to enhance dialogue with community members. Linear communication methods, which include mass communication and information dissemination meetings and workshops, are not ideal in the participatory development communication process and therefore will be detrimental to the dialogical process in development. Rather than using such linear communication methods, participatory means are encouraged which include open discussion forums, brainstorming sessions and interpersonal research methods. If linear communication methods are used, it will be at the expense of the dialogic process, and will subsequently translate into a top-heavy, vertical communication process, which will eventually cause a breakdown in the development communication process.

In this study, the various methods adopted were used to identify whether Thusong Service Centres were being used optimally to encourage dialogue.

- **Key stakeholders**

It is important for the development communication specialist to establish two-way, horizontal communication flows between all stakeholders. Key stakeholders in the process involves the drivers of development communication as well as the beneficiaries of the development initiative, therefore dialogue between key stakeholders is crucial for participation to take place.

- **Needs identification**

The process of needs identification involves the acknowledgement of gaps that exist in a particular community. Participatory development communication advocates needs identification as an all inclusive process. This means that focal development needs should be identified during a participatory horizontal communication process, as it is of no use to the community when development communication practitioners drive the course of action from a position of authority. Therefore, during the needs identification process, a dialogic communication process is required to ensure that the needs that are addressed are relevant to the community. However, in the absence of dialogue between development communication practitioners and the community, this will not be possible.

- **Communication environment**

It is important to assess the existing communication environment and its capacity for conducting and implementing the communication interventions that have been planned (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:12). In other words, an environment that enables communication activities and existing structures is essential in order for development to occur. Thusong Service Centres should have adequate signage and suitable facilities that aid and enhance the development communication process. If these factors are

absent, dialogue during the critical preliminary stage of development communication may very well break down.

- **SELF-RELIANCE**

The concept of self-reliance, discussed in section 2.2.2, is an integral aspect of participation, both as an outcome and as a part of the development process, and is an essential element for enabling people to move out of dependency relationships. This study acknowledges Thusong Service Centres as power structures that are required to initiate development communication that should include appropriate activities in its strategic communication.

- **Cooperatives and partnerships**

Partnerships and the mentoring of community members are essential in a development communication initiative because of the consciousness-raising benefits that accompany them. This relates to Freire's emphasis on the educator as the initiator of the conscientisation and dialogue process (see section 2.3). In this study it is GCIS's responsibility to ensure that communities are mentored through the conscientisation process in order to create a self-reliant community.

- **Commitment**

Commitment by all stakeholders is required to operationalise objectives and the development communication processes, thus it is important to make a firm commitment to ensure that the community benefits from the initiative in both the short and the long term.

- **Sustainability**

The concept of sustainability relates to self-reliance because it refers to maintaining and expanding the knowledge and skills acquired during the development process. Once community members are equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and information, they will be enabled to improve their lives exponentially and independently. Without such sustainability, there can be no real development.

- **EMPOWERMENT**

It is important that the community take ownership of the development communication project, which involves problem analysis and solutions, as well as meaning production in order to facilitate the community's empowerment. The following subthemes relate to the theme of empowerment.

- **Integrated development plan**

Integrated development planning is aimed at involving the municipality and the community in order to ensure the empowerment of the community and to find the best solutions for sustainable development. The IDP document serves as a strategic planning instrument that manages and guides all planning, development and decision-making in the municipality (Tshwane, 2010).

- **Ownership of project**

A good indicator of participation is when people are fully and authentically involved in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the change effort. Ownership, which forms part of empowerment and ultimately sustainability, is crucial for a successful development communication initiative (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.4).

- **Decision-making**

This study uses participation in planning and decision-making, prescribed by Yoon (2004), as one of its primary focus points in the realisation of development through development communication. Decision-making relates to empowerment because it allows community members a measure of control in decisions that will affect them directly (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.4).

- **Power**

Power is viewed within the context of the interests of the elite, as a form of domination over marginalised communities. Power, as a subtheme, is relevant here because it is the devolution of power and the responsible handling of power that will ultimately lead to empowerment of developing communities (see section 2.4).

- **ICTs**

In this study the use of communication technology is viewed as a potential source of empowerment, in that ICTs may be used to promote literacy in the development communication process (see section 2.3).

- **SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT**

Participatory development communication is set within a framework of the community's socio-cultural context, which means that the development communication initiative should take into account the community's *language* and culture, as well as its *indigenous knowledge*, as these are important aspects when implementing a development communication initiative (see section 3.3.3.4).

- **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

Strategic communication, an essential component of participatory development communication, should be incorporated into the initiative to ensure that development communication projects are well planned and informed by formal research.

- **Communication professionals**

A development communication project requires communication professionals to drive the process, which is important for realising strategic communication objectives. Furthermore, communication professionals should be adequately trained and qualified in the field of communication (see section 3.3.2.1).

- **Integration of services**

This subtheme relates to the process of strategic communication because of its association with synergy. Without synergy among the various key stakeholders and role-players at the Thusong Service Centres, strategic communication efforts would be futile (see section 3.3.3.4).

- **Research**

Research is necessary for strategic communication to be effected during the development process. It is vital for the development communication practitioner to implement formal research specifically focusing on communication systems and ways to improve information sharing among all stakeholders in a development effort (see sections 3.3.3.4 and 3.3.3.6).

- **Communication action plan**

Strategic communication involves a sound communication action plan to ensure that communication activities are not implemented on an ad hoc basis, but rather in a planned and systematic manner (see sections 3.3.3.4 and 3.3.3.5).

- **Feedback**

In order to measure the effectiveness of the communication activities and the impact of the strategic communication intervention, the development communication initiative has to have a good feedback system (see section 3.3.3.6).

The analysis of the findings against the criteria mentioned above will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

5.4 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRIANGULATION

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:91) and Gorman and Clayton (2005:56-57), it is a general principle that, in a research project, the inclusion of multiple sources of data is likely to increase the reliability of the study. In this study the researcher analysed all the material independently and the detailed records of the audio taped interviews, field observation notes, interview guide and the data analysis are available for the benefit of the reader, should there be a question of subjective interpretations.

Schwandt (c2001:311) explains internal validity as the extent to which conclusions drawn from the research provide an accurate description of what happened and why. Internal validity simply answers the question of whether the results obtained within the study are true (Gauri *et al.*, 1995:33; Clayton, 2005:58). It is important to ascertain whether the findings of the study make sense, and whether they are credible to the participants and the readers (Huberman & Miles, 1994:278; Gorman & Clayton, 2005:58).

In other words, it is important to note the authenticity of the study findings; as this answers the question of internal validity; it is also important to ensure that the events and settings that were studied were not contrived or modified by the researcher's presence and actions. This is important in order to assert that the findings accurately represent the phenomena to which they refer and, further, that the findings are backed by evidence (Gauri *et al.*, 1995:33; Gorman & Clayton, 2005:59).

In this study the phenomenon of participatory development communication at Thusong Service Centres was investigated by interviewing senior GCIS personnel who are the key drivers of this process. Furthermore, the five documents that were analysed include government policy documents mandating the functioning of Thusong Service Centres. Finally, personal observations confirmed the evidence found in the policy documents and interviews and served as a means for cross referencing.

The preceding discussion on validity, which refers to the soundness of the research, is possible through the effective use of triangulation. Triangulation, defined as the construction of a holistic analysis of phenomena by examining such occurrences through the use of multiple methods, and the examination of several data sources, does not merely imply that qualitative methods should be complemented with quantitative measures. By using several dissimilar methods and data sources, the interpreter's analyses may be limited to less biased understandings, thus giving credibility to the data and the researcher. Using triangulation it is possible to improve the accuracy of judgements and results (Ghauri *et al.*, 1995:94; Gorman & Clayton, 2005:59). During this process, different dimensions of phenomena are revealed, thus ensuring that the information gathered as well as the patterns that emerge are fuller descriptions of reality.

Schwandt (c2001:257) points out that triangulation is a procedure used to examine a conclusion, assertion or claim from more than one vantage point in order to check the integrity of the inference one draws. This study used source triangulation by analysing normative principles in the field of development communication, as well as the South

African government's policy documents on development communication. Method triangulation was acquired from interviews with the key role-players in this study, namely, Thusong Service Centre and GCIS personnel, as well as from qualitative content analysis and personal observations, which used the same categories of analysis to investigate GCIS's development communication approach.

Boulton and Hammersley (2006:246) argue that the shortcomings of qualitative research methods are often linked to a restricted sample size. In this study, the Tshwane region with all six Thusong Service Centres was used. However, the researcher will not be able to generalise the findings beyond the Thusong Service Centres that were used in this study.

The following section describes the challenges that were experienced in relation to the empirical study.

5.5 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

5.5.1 Qualitative content analysis

5.5.1.1 The researcher found that, in addition to the four policy documents that address the GCIS's mandate regarding Thusong Service Centres, there are also others that address development communication in great detail, for example the *Business Plan*. Hence, these documents were also analysed during the empirical study.

5.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

5.5.2.1 The initial idea for the empirical study was to interview centre managers as well as GCIS staff. However, this was not possible, since none of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane employ centre managers, although the

GCIS website provides the details of centre managers at each of the six centres.

5.5.3 Personal observations

5.5.3.1 The Thusong Service Centres did not have any branding to indicate that they were Thusong Service Centres. As a result, it was very difficult to decide whether community members visited the centre because it was a Thusong or because it was a municipal type office.

These challenges will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gorman and Clayton (2005:43–44) state that the rights of individuals involved in the research study include confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation and informed consent. Accordingly, this study employed several methods to ensure the requisite confidentiality and anonymity. Discussions during personal interviews were confidential, and interviewees were assured that reference would not be made to specific participants during the reporting. Instead, data were presented as a generalised whole with no reference being made to individuals, thus maintaining anonymity. In respect of the ethical considerations for this study, participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research in writing as well as verbally prior to the interview. Approval and ethical clearance from the relevant authorities were also sought and acquired prior to the fieldwork being conducted.

5.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the methodology employed in this study was described in relation to the research aims (see section 1.9.2). Semi-structured interviews, personal observations and document analyses were selected as data gathering methods in order to understand the Tshwane Thusong Service Centres' approach to the development communication. During the empirical analysis, an attempt was made to discover the way in which these Service Centres' development communication approach correlated with the specified norms of participatory development communication, and this is discussed in chapter 7. The next chapter, chapter 6, discusses the research findings. Before discussing these findings it was considered necessary to acquaint the reader with the research strategy, methods and techniques used to obtain them, hence these were presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES: PRACTISING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the data gathered from the empirical study (discussed in chapter 5) in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of participatory development communication (explained in chapters 2 and 3) with the intention of bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The results yielded during the semi-structured interviews, personal observations and qualitative content analysis are introduced in this chapter using thematic categorisation and the findings have been assessed and interpreted according to the category criteria provided in chapter 5 (see table 5.4).

6.2 BACKGROUND

The GCIS have field officers, called senior communications officers (SCOs) in their employ, who are based in various parts of South Africa. In Tshwane there are three SCOs based at Hammanskraal, Soshanguve and Mamelodi respectively, who work closely with community development workers (CDWs), ward councillors and ward committees. It should be noted that ward councillors are elected by the communities they serve. The ward councillor and ward committee members hold various portfolios, and are considered development stakeholders.

The Integrated Development Programme (IDP) coordinates the implementation of activities at Thusong Service Centres, including development of the roll-out plans, whilst

the Provincial Intersectoral Steering Committee (PISSC), the National Intersectoral Steering Committee (NISSC) and the Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) have been identified as the key management committees in establishing and maintaining the various Thusong Service Centres in South Africa (see section 3.3.2.1).

The following section discusses the categories and the subthemes that emerged during the empirical study and the literature review.

6.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.3.1 Construct 1: dialogue

An analysis of the Comtask Report (1996), section 8.21, reveals that the concept of *occasional consultation* is a key concept in the development communication process. This section also focuses on the process of building relationships with everyone in “our incredibly rich, complex society”. However, these two assertions of occasional consultation and building relationships with everyone, contradict each other in that regular reference is made to the importance of the consultation process with communities. This discussion is echoed by the State of the Nation Address (SoNA) (2004), which states that the South African government is committed to ensuring that the developing community of South Africa are mobilised voluntarily to act together to achieve the tasks of reconstruction and development.

The various subthemes of “dialogue” that emerged during the empirical study of the development communication process are discussed below.

6.3.1.1 Community participation

An analysis of the *Business Plan*, section 2.2, reveals the mandate for Thusong Service Centres. The *Business Plan* also refers to government’s commitment to integrated

service delivery and access, which forms part of the drive by government to develop a comprehensive access strategy for citizens, allowing improved engagement with government. Section 3.4.1 of the *Business Plan* indicates that one of the strategic objectives of Thusong Service Centres is to create a platform for increased dialogue between citizens and government, and this resonates with the principles of participatory development communication (see section 2.2.3). It should be noted that the mandate given to GCIS is that Thusong Service Centres should serve as hubs for development communication, which implies the participation of the developing community in the entire development communication process.

The issue of consultation was further investigated during the analysis of the *White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery* (WPTPS) (1997), which indicated that the public service is currently characterised by an inequitable distribution in terms of the services offered to communities, a lack of access to services, a lack of transparency, openness and consultation with regard to the required service standards, a lack of accurate and simple information about the services and the standards at which they should be rendered, and a lack of responsiveness. These were some of the reasons for the introduction and creation of Thusong Service Centres. In section 4.1.1, the document also refers to consultation, which is intended to give citizens the opportunity to influence decisions on public services. The qualitative content analysis also brought to light that consultation is considered critical in any attempt to foster a participative and cooperative relationship between the providers and users of public services.

In continuing the discussion on consultation, section 4.1.2 of the WPTPS (1997) states that consultation is essential in order to include the views of those who have previously been denied access to public services. It is important to note the consistent use of the concept of 'consultation' in this context and as stated previously, participatory development communication is wary of this term because of the linear nature of its implication. However, contrary to the normative principles of participatory development communication, the South African government promulgates the use of 'consultation' in

the context of development communication and services to the public. It is important at this stage to investigate the alignment of theory with GCIS's communication efforts.

Further progressing with the discussion on dialogue and public participation through the qualitative content analysis, the Comtask Report (1996) in section 5.1, refers to information as being both a right and an essential ingredient of development. It goes further to state that without extending access to information, South Africa will be unable to generate sustained growth to meet the developmental needs of its population. Section 5.4 of the Comtask Report (1996) further acknowledges the need for two-way communication whereby information-sharing occurs interactively.

A significant statement made in the Comtask Report (1996) in section 5.7.5 relates to dissemination of information and, more specifically, refers to the development of partnerships, including Thusong Service Centres, in order to disseminate such information to the community. This speaks to a linear process of communication, which is contrary to the principles of participatory development communication outlined in chapters 2 and 3.

It may be observed from the preceding discussion that in some instances the Comtask Report (1996) agrees with the principles of participatory development communication. The report indicates that communication theory is based on the notion of dialogue where the communicator must be both communicator and audience in order for successful communication to occur. The report refers to establishing a relationship with the community for mutual benefit and further indicates that government's ability to accomplish this will depend on its ability to reach the population and to engage people in meaningful dialogue, which has great significance for government's commitment to transparency.

The preceding discussion relates to a response from an interviewee regarding the communities' involvement in the Public Participation Forums: "I think our communities are passive and do not want to get involved in development communication activities.

Whenever there is an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process, then most of the people who attend those meetings are members of the political party that the ward councillor comes from". Bessette (2004) asserts that if PRCA (see section 3.3.2) were adopted in the development communication process, passiveness would be non-existent, because of the active mental cooperation of all the people involved in the process until a common awareness and understanding is reached.

When asked how community participation was encouraged, interviewees indicated that focus groups were conducted, working very closely with NGOs in communities. The youth and the disabled were also targeted, which provided valuable information on the needs per sector that were required. Interviewees also indicated that questionnaires were used in order to give the public a voice which could inform subsequent decisions.

As discussed in section 2.2.3 of this study, it is important to acknowledge that participation translates into the active involvement of the developing community at grassroots level (Baofu, 2006). The limited notion of 'consultation' is therefore insufficient for authentic development to occur, yet the interviews indicated that the communities were *consulted* on certain aspects of their development communication needs and, according to the theory, consultation alone does not constitute participatory communication. It is also of significance to note that practice has shown that community workers seldom work with the entire community, but rather focus on certain groups within the community that are known to be geographically functional (Lombard, 1992b:65). This study has shown that GCIS consults only certain groups within the community, and therefore may exclude key independent thinkers in the community.

6.3.1.2 Communication methods

The analysis of section 8.2 of the WPTPS (1997) showed that government acknowledges that radio and local community centres are important methods of communicating with the public. Section 8.19 of the Comtask Report (1996) concurs with this, indicating that radio could be used when speaking to communities with low literacy

levels, but that one should not reinforce illiteracy by assuming that this is the only means of communication open to communities. The use of print media is also encouraged as a means to communicate with communities to ensure that such communities become familiar with the written word. In addition, the report acknowledges that communities become empowered by being encouraged to read and deal with written texts. It is stated in COMTASK (1996) that "all people should have access to all forms of communication".

Building grassroots radio capacity is a key empowerment tool for local communities. During the interviews conducted in this study it was discovered that community radio is used to raise awareness and disseminate information. Once again, the concept of *information dissemination* was used by SCOs in their development communication initiatives (see section 2.3).

Interviewees indicated that the GCIS uses community radio and newspapers to remind communities constantly of the government services available to them. However, these methods are challenged by the costs involved and it was acknowledged that the GCIS does not always have the capacity in terms of the budget allocated to these centres and, as a result, community newspapers and radio are not used maximally.

During the interviews the SCOs disclosed that the methods they used to communicate with communities included publications, exhibitions, the distribution of printed material at various identified distribution points, drama, loud-hailing, face-to-face interactions during workshops, the use of community media (outlined in the preceding discussion) and public participation forums. The SCOs stated that they believed that the face-to-face interactions with community members created a relationship of trust with the community. However, the interviewees were aware that mere information dissemination is not ideal in development communication, as many of their communication efforts entail a linear communication process. This will be discussed in the following sections.

It became evident from the interviews that the additional platforms that have been introduced as development communication methods include the SMS system, whereby the GCIS forwards certain messages to strategic partners, including community members. Once again this demonstrates a linear communication approach, which does not engage the community or encourage discussion or debate.

Instead, government speaks to the community from an authoritative position and attempts to impart skills and knowledge to community members instead of allowing them the opportunity to participate in a process that is meant to change their lives.

Thusong Service Centres are used as information distribution points, which are the beginning of significant interaction with development stakeholders. Although these are the starting points of much-needed interaction with development stakeholders, it is still a linear means of disseminating information. The information gathered from the interviews corresponds with the analysis of section 4.5.3 of the WPTPS (1997), which revealed that communication leaflets were placed at the various *distribution points* in the community, including *spaza* shops, post offices, clinics, libraries, police stations and schools. The information contained in this printed material includes services offered by the Thusong Service Centre, thereby creating an awareness of the GCIS's existence. It should be noted that this document also makes regular reference to the concept of information dissemination.

Relating to the above, an SCO remarked during an interview: "The community must be able to liaise with you, to be able to encourage reciprocity, unlike information dissemination, which I am not in favour of."

The interviews thus reveal that SCOs are well aware in a theoretical sense of the importance of dialogue. However, the reality that emanated from the empirical study is that the development communication that is conducted is linear in nature, as is demonstrated by the above discussion.

The findings of the researcher's personal observations at the various Thusong Service Centres indicate that, although the centre could also be considered a distribution point for printed material, most of the centres' information kiosks were empty. Instead of containing the government information intended to empower the people of the communities the centres serve, the kiosks were bare and neglected, which does not reflect positively on centres that are considered to be development communication hubs.

The above discussion shows that Thusong Service Centres are sometimes used as distribution points for development communication. These centres were used by the GCIS as distribution points for printed material and places where initial contact could be made for the purpose of development communication.

6.3.1.3 Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders identified during the interviews included the kings (Indunas), NGOs, government structures, traditional leaders and the private sector. SCOs emphasised that it was imperative to work with government structures in order to support the community in development. These structures include the Premier's Office, provincial departments, the departments of Home Affairs Social Development, and the Department of Labour, and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), which are considered to be the anchors of the Thusong Service Centres. The municipality and the various community representative bodies were also identified as being key stakeholders in the development communication process.

The issue of stakeholders is discussed in the *Business Plan*, and the Comtask Report (1996) confirms the afore-mentioned interview findings regarding key stakeholders. However, according to the researcher's personal observations, these community organisations were not visible at most of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. This should perhaps be seen against the background of a comment made during an interview: "The community as a stakeholder in the development communication process

is generally a superficial exercise. Yes, community members are consulted but not fully involved”.

An analysis of the Thusong Service Centre Business Plan (2006–2014) document indicates that an overlap of duties between role-players exists, for example a duplication of activities in the development communication process exists between the SCOs, the CDWs, the municipality and the various government departments, including the DPISA. Sections 5.3 and 5.4.7 of the Thusong Service Centre Business Plan (2006-2014) state that this overlap within and across components leads to the need to identify a way of identifying and coordinating actions to ensure they are harmonised. This was also confirmed by an interviewee who alluded to the lack of coordination within Thusong Service Centres, which eventually leads to confusion in the development communication process.

The empirical study demonstrates that the key stakeholders identified for the development communication process were appropriate. However, the level of influence and involvement of each stakeholder was not equal, with certain stakeholders exercising more power and control in the process.

6.3.1.4 Needs identification

Attention should be given to the fact that the identification of information needs is distinct from community participation. The identification of a community's needs indicates a linear process, whereby the GCIS identifies the needs and acts on them accordingly. This study has shown, however, that in order for the development communication process to be successful community participation in the entire process is needed.

An analysis of section 5.6.1 of the Comtask Report (1996) found that reference is made to determining the information needs of clients, which relates to the interviews, in which SCOs indicated that stakeholder forums were held in order to identify their information needs. GCIS personnel indicated that, during the stakeholder forums, trust and an enduring work relationship are created between the development practitioners and the community, which are precursors to the information input stage.

An interviewee indicated: "SCOs are viewed as the foot soldiers of government, conducting door-to-door community outreach programmes together with CDWs. During such programmes, a needs identification analysis is conducted, with SCOs visiting the wards, interviewing community members and seeking information on their particular needs". The emphasis is on information needs and it should be noted that all projects are informed by the communities. Thereafter, ward councillors are informed of the community needs before workshops based on those needs are organised. In short, the GCIS facilitates the referral process and ensures that appropriate information is provided to the relevant community.

The above discussion shows that one of the GCIS's primary functions in the development process is to identify the communication needs of the community. However, the researcher found that this process is performed on an ad hoc basis with no evidence of formal methods of needs identification being used.

6.3.1.5 Communication environment

In sections 3.4.2 (c), 5.2 (a), 5.4.7 and 6.1.2, the *Business Plan* emphasises branding as a priority for promoting the identity and image of Thusong Service Centres in communities. However, the problem identified during the interviews was that community members are unaware of the Thusong Service Centres because signs on the centres state that they are municipal offices.

A response from an interview was as follows: “Many of the buildings in which Thusong Service Centres are located are owned by the municipality, therefore priority is given to the municipality’s branding”. Although the analysis of the *Business Plan* indicates that all Thusong Service Centres should have common branding elements, personal observations revealed that none of the Thusong Service Centres had any visible branding or identity.

Interviewees stated that although the Thusong Service Centres were popularised by ward committee meetings and ward councillors, community members still found them difficult to identify with because of the lack of branding at the venues themselves. According to the *Business Plan*, a general services counter should be available at Thusong Service Centres to allow for a platform for providing communication and information services to the community. However, personal observations revealed that these are absent at most Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane.

The interviews further revealed that there was currently no memorandum of agreement in place relating to branding or political principles. The idea of co-branding was a challenge, as legislation was necessary in order to address this problem. This issue relates to *inadequate promotion*, which is referred to by Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:8) (see section 3.2). It has been reported that a merger of Thusong Service Centres and municipalities had been approved, which will subsequently translate into launching a new brand and a new look which will integrate both brands. This is scheduled for 2010.

Relating to the issue of co-branding, an interviewee remarked:

Because the centre is historically a Tshwane Municipality service point, how do they maintain their brand – how do we bring in the Thusong brand, but also, how do we ensure that we do not confuse the client? Discussions and debate around co-branding are currently taking place. Whilst the Thusong brand will fly high, there is also the Tshwane municipality brand to consider.

It is a matter of concern that, so many years after the launch of the Thusong Service Centre concept, these centres do not at present have any form of branding allocated to them, which ultimately affects their effective functioning as development communication hubs.

In essence, the empirical study showed that the GCIS considers consultation to be an important process in the development communication process. This is clearly demonstrated by their consistent reference to information dissemination and needs identification as part of community participation. However, once again it should be noted that these are linear communication processes.

Furthermore, apathy on the part of the community would not exist if PRCA methods were adopted, yet the study did not show any deliberate signs of PRCA in the GCISs development communication initiatives. It is evident that only certain groups within the community were included in the development communication discussions, which does not demonstrate any transparency in the process. Additionally, communication methods that were adopted incorporate diffusion methods, which encompass a vertical communication mode and not participatory communication where people are given the opportunity for self-expression. It was noted that the use community media (see section 6.3.1.2) is not always viable for development initiatives because of the lack of budget capacity regarding Thusong Service Centres and as a result messages are not given maximum reach. With regard to the issue of power, it was found that the government communicates from a position of authority, thereby discouraging the participatory element in the development process.

It was found that the inclusion of the community, as a stakeholder in the development communication process, was generally a superficial exercise, whereby community members were consulted but not fully involved. The study also found that there is an overlap between the duties of role-players, which leads to a lack of coordination within Thusong Service Centres, which affects community response to the communication process. The unequal level of influence of the various stakeholders results in certain stakeholders holding more power than community members, which creates a barrier in the dialogical process of development communication.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the empirical study demonstrates that, in the main, the GCIS engages in consultation and linear information dissemination processes with communities, which is contrary to the principles of Freirean dialogue (see section 2.3).

6.3.2 Construct 2: self-reliance

The normative principles of development communication refer to the community's independence and autonomy, in terms of which the community should be able to generate its own knowledge through its capacity for intellectual creativity. This would enable communities to become self-reliant and self-managing, which are requirements for the devolution of power, which is discussed in the following section (Ferraro, 1996).

The various subthemes relating to self-reliance in the development communication process that emerged during the empirical study are discussed in the following section.

6.3.2.1 Cooperatives and partnerships

The qualitative content analysis revealed that chapter 11 of the WPTPS (1997) requires national and provincial departments to "identify potential partnerships with the private sector, NGOs and CBOs, which will provide more effective forms of service delivery (including communication needs)". This is echoed in the *Business Plan*, which in section

2.4 refers to the need for partnerships in order to ensure sustainability and effective delivery. This relates further to participatory development communication, which speaks of empowering and equipping the community with the requisite knowledge and skills for creating and ensuring long-term self-reliance.

In section 6.3, the WPTPS (1997) further explains the need for cooperatives, but once again the document refers to *consultation* as a way of involving the community in partnerships with government. Examples of sustainable programmes include food gardening initiatives, which include partnering with the Department of Agriculture. Community members identify a piece of land and the Department of Agriculture provides the resources necessary to mobilise the project, which creates sustainable jobs. The SCOs assist throughout this process and monitor subsequent progress for future projects.

By means of Economic Opportunity Programmes (EOP), which assists people who want to start or improve their own small businesses by providing the necessary skills training and support services to ensure that their business ventures are sustainable, the GCIS identifies youth who are out of work and school using *on the ground* research. Subsequently, a business idea is initiated and the youth work through the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP), a Gauteng based organisation established to provide both financial and non-financial support for the benefit of businesses in Gauteng, to draw up a sound business plan, which is then channelled to the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) (former Umsobumvu) for loans and grants. This leads to job creation which is instrumental in alleviating poverty.

The results of the interviews emphasised that, in the economic sector, cooperatives are encouraged to ensure that the skills and knowledge of community members are supported by the appropriate government department to ensure the sustainability of a particular project. Subsequently, partnerships are formed and mentoring of community members occurs throughout the various development programmes, which relates to Freire's emphasis on the educator as the initiator of the conscientisation and dialogue

process (see section 2.3). In this study, the initiator of the development process is the South African government and, should the initiator not start the process, then the dependent communities would be disadvantaged. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the GCIS to ensure that communities are mentored through the conscientisation process in order to eliminate future dependency.

The empirical study revealed that the GCIS initiates cooperatives and partnerships between the community and various government departments, but that these cooperatives and partnerships operate mainly within a linear framework.

6.3.2.2 Commitment

Community participation is a process and a measure of how much is being done by the developing community for themselves (see section 3.1). Without dialogue and a two-way communication process, it may not be easy to create self-reliance in communities in need of development in Tshwane.

An important factor when implementing strategies is the amount of effective and relevant teamwork that occurs during the development initiative, as this will ensure the sustainability of the project. Development of social trust, according to Servaes (1996a:17), precedes task trust, because it is important to acknowledge that when we treat people the way we ourselves would like to be treated, we learn to work as a team, and this brings about commitment from the developing community. Thus, honesty, trust and commitment from government are envisaged in order to elicit honesty, trust and commitment from the grassroots communities as well, which will result in true participation. Authentic participation will result in appropriate policies and planning for developing a country within its cultural and environmental framework.

In section 5.4.1, the *Business Plan* states that it is essential to ensure a “strategic level of alignment” among the drivers of the development communication process. The crucial factor that was omitted in this section is that the community should also be involved from the outset of the initiative. This statement is indicative of a one-sided

commitment, in that government is required to give a commitment but no mention is made people in the communities making one. This once again leads the discussion in the direction of true participation, which allows people to become the subjects of their own development and not simply the objects of processes (Thomas, 1994:49).

The interviews revealed certain challenges in terms of commitment to integrated services for communities. An interviewee indicated: “A group of people from the community were interested in initiating a home- and community-based care business, whereby they would provide medication to people suffering with HIV/Aids. They had identified a gap in this area because people were not taking the medication as they should. Subsequently, the Department of Social Development was contacted to provide the necessary information and to support the community members interested in this business. However, the Department did not provide the necessary information or support and, as a result, the initiative could not be put into action”. This lack of commitment impacts on the end in itself, which is the development of the people. In other words, not all key stakeholders in the development communication process are equally committed to providing communities with the tools needed for self-reliant development.

6.3.2.3 Sustainability

It is important to note that independence and autonomy are possible in communities provided development initiatives are sustainable. In the absence of sustainability, self-reliance as a reality becomes challenging; therefore in this study sustainability is discussed as a subtheme of self-reliance.

An analysis of Cabinet Memorandum No. 15 of 1999 revealed that there is a major shortage of resources for Thusong Service Centres to operate effectively. In the various documents analysed in this study (see section 4.2), government has mandated the GCIS with the task of using Thusong Service Centres as the primary vehicle for development communication, yet it does not provide the capacity for carrying out the

programme effectively. Furthermore, investigation during the interviews indicated that communities are provided with information and skills transfer programmes during workshops, which occasionally translate into projects, but in the main are not adequately capacitated to sustain ongoing programmes.

The empirical findings discussed above clearly demonstrate that government's efforts to equip and empower Tshwane communities with the ultimate tool of self-reliance are inadequate, which relates to the dependency paradigm of development communication (see section 2.2.2). Community members need to take ownership of development communication projects in order to ensure eventual success. This is discussed in the next section, which reports on the way the South African government encourages the empowerment of communities.

6.3.3 Construct 3: empowerment

Section 3 of the *Business Plan* states that one of the principles of the centre includes "participation for empowerment, which is a core element of the programme as it reinforces the development communication approach whereby citizens access information and services and engage in government programmes for their own empowerment". Although this statement refers to the issue of dialogue, it is lacking in the area of participatory development communication because of its reference to *access only* and not *participation for empowerment*.

The analysis of the Comtask Report (1996) indicated that Thusong Service Centres may be used as focal points for empowering historically disadvantaged communities by collecting, analysing and sharing information relating to their developmental needs. In section 5.9.2, it further states that the Thusong Service Centre concept should be an open structure that encourages a network for development information, whereby such information should not be seen as an end product in itself, but rather as a means for the growth and development of communities. However, this will only be possible if communities are fully involved in the development communication process from its

inception in order to inform the entire process in a meaningful way. This would be aligned with the guidelines for participatory development communication (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.4).

A good deal of relevant information emerged from the empirical study of communities' involvement in the planning process for development projects and this is recorded below.

6.3.3.1 Ownership of project

Ownership, a part of empowerment and, ultimately, sustainability, is important in the development communication initiative. Interviewees indicated that in order to become empowered, the community should own the project, yet there was no indication of tangibility in this statement as is discussed further.

From personal observations it was noted that community members were unaware of the services provided by Thusong Service Centres: instead they accessed the centres for municipal services. It was ascertained that two to three Thusong Service Centres were allocated to each SCO in Tshwane, which translates into two to three areas that he/she was responsible and accountable for. This lack of capacity further results in inefficiencies in the system as far as output and the sustainability of projects are concerned, which related to Servaes' (1996a:16) assertion that since dialogue and face-to-face interaction are inherent in participation, the development communicator will find him/herself spending more time in the field in order to ensure that rapport and trust are developed with community members. Owing to system inadequacies, however, this is not being fully realised by the SCOs in Tshwane.

Consequently, these system inadequacies result in a lack of robust development communication activity by the SCOs in the communities, and the interviews indicated that this resulted in community members distancing themselves from development projects and not taking ownership of them. Instead, interviewees disclosed information

that reflected the ward committees as the power authorities in the communities, and this authoritativeness was identified as the source of poor service delivery.

Freire emphasises that the mere transfer of knowledge by an authority source to a passive receiver does nothing to help promote growth in the latter as a human being with an independent and critical consciousness, capable of influencing and changing society (IDRC, 2004) (see section 2.2.3). The empirical study shows that not enough is being done to empower communities by acquiring knowledge. This is evident from the lack of government initiative in creating capacity for communication specialists on and off the field. Therefore, instead of simply transferring information, it is essential to create opportunities for the production or construction of knowledge. There is in fact no development without empowerment.

6.3.3.2 Integrated Development Plan (IDP)

Part of the SCOs' role is to participate in the municipality's IDP process. Integrated development planning provides a strategic planning instrument for managing and guiding all planning, development and decision-making in the municipality. 'Integration' means to consolidate the various plans and actions of the municipality, in order to achieve the vision and mission of the community (Tshwane, 2010).

The GCIS personnel indicated tacitly that they have become a monitoring instrument in terms of the implementation of the IDP document, because it is this document that informs the municipality's strategy. The GCIS assists in popularising the document, and further ensures that communities are aware of its contents. The *Business Plan* refers to the municipal IDPs as one of the critical guiding mechanisms of the Thusong Service Centres and development communication.

A GCIS staff member commented:

Whilst the process is unfolding, we also encourage ward councillors and ward committees to give feedback in terms of what has been achieved, because we have learned that some of the issues that communities complain about are issues that have been addressed but never communicated. This process also manages the issue of ward councillors not engaging the communities thereby bringing forward uninformed priorities to council and indicating that they have been informed by the communities.

SCOs indicated that it is this type of engagement that encourages feedback, thereby entrenching a level of participation among key stakeholders. However, whether an environment of engagement and dialogue is really encouraged at such forums could be investigated in a further study, but this was not the focus of the current study.

6.3.3.3 Planning and decision-making

According to the literature, development communication involves the participation of the community during planning through to the actual implementation and evaluation of the communication intervention.

Interviewees indicated that during a development communication initiative, members of the relevant forum and government departments together with ward committee members were invited to help plan the project. These are the key stakeholders who are involved in planning the communication intervention strategies and the GCIS is the link between the community and the identified service providers. Of significance here is the lack of depth of the GCIS's intervention in ensuring communities' participation from the inception of development communication projects. Although communities were *consulted* regarding their needs, it was done on an ad hoc basis in the absence of formal strategic planning. This section reports on the investigation regarding the development communication decision-making process.

It was found that participation in decision-making is promulgated by the WPTPS (1997), in which section 1.1.2 refers to the Constitution of 1996, which stipulates that public administration should adhere to a number of principles, including that of people's needs. The document further states that "the public should be encouraged to participate in policy-making and that it should be accountable, transparent and development-oriented" (WPTPS, 1997). However, the analysis of section 6.2.2 of the *Business Plan* indicated that the decision-making on the initial and subsequent implementation of communication activities at the Thusong Service Centres did not include the developing community's input or participation in the process.

Interviewees emphasised the difference between infrastructural projects and development projects and they further indicated that their directive involved communication projects and interventions only, whereas the actual development projects were the responsibility of the ward councillor and the ward committee. The GCIS is involved in communication interventions in terms of identifying community projects, which is done through ward liaison. The planning in this regard involves identifying communication champions, that is, people who have influence in the community, for example Indunas, traditional leaders and church leaders. This indicates the lack of integration of the various functions in a project.

The interviews and qualitative content analysis indicated that the GCIS lacked strategic communication and it has been noted that there are very few foundational principles for dialogue and authentic participation, as advocated by participatory development communication literature (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.3). This is also to be seen in the lack of meaningful planning with SCOs indicating that communities were only empowered during their involvement in the operationalisation of projects, which degenerates into an ineffective and incomplete decision-making process within this development paradigm.

When SCOs were asked about the issue of decision-making, they responded by indicating that decisions on priorities were made by the GCIS in conjunction with the community and anything beyond this was outside their mandate. The results of the

afore-mentioned interviews indicate a lack of depth in projects regarding authentic participation, for example interviewees indicated that their duties involved engaging a particular department able to provide the information necessary to the public. Thereafter, the project was coordinated logistically. One interviewee said the following: “We engage the required government department regarding communication needs of a particular community”, which reiterates the GCIS’s lack of intensity in the development process.

In essence, the interviews revealed that the ward councillor, a political appointee, is the person who makes the decisions on matters that affect the community, because he/she has been appointed by that particular community and it is they that the GCIS meets with and who informs it of the communities’ needs. Ward councillors also have a link with the mayor’s office as well as with committees that provide services via local government and municipalities, which strengthens their level of power in the decision-making process.

6.3.3.4 Power

According to Servaes (1996a:16) genuine participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society and it involves a more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantages of certain groups. This relates to the issue of the ward councillor, which has been discussed previously and emerges once again in respect of the concept of power in the development process. According to Mozammel and Schechter (2005:27), the identification of political dynamics is one of the key areas in the assessment stage of a development project. These dynamics include supporters and opponents of community empowerment and decentralisation efforts, power factors and public trust, and the various stakeholders’ confidence in government .

It was evident from the data gathered from the interviews that some of the power lies with the ward councillor, although it is the inertia of the community and the ward committee members that gives the ward councillor such power. Interviewees indicated

that if community members attended meetings it would result in informed decisions and, if this does not occur, the councillor is at liberty to make the decisions thereby awarding him/her the power that ordinarily should lie with the entire committee. This relates to another question as to why the community is inactive – why does it have a sense of powerlessness or worthlessness and therefore not engage in community forums?

Relating back to the preceding discussion, one interviewee commented, “If we participate, then power lies with us because we are driving the process, but if we don’t, then power lies with the ward councillor, because he/she will do as he/she likes”. In other words, the necessary structure does exist for the devolution of power, but it requires the participation of communities. In addition, interviewees indicated that communities may only see their ward councillor when it is close to elections and it is the community members who have the power to condemn such actions and behaviour and to ensure the councillor’s presence in the community on a regular basis. However, this is not always possible because of a lack of conscientisation among community members (see section 2.3 for a full theoretical discussion).

Interviewees indicated that the speaker’s office at the Thusong Service Centres was the entry point to the community and is manned by a community liaison officer. When a Public Participation Forum (formerly known as an Imbizo) is scheduled, the community liaison officer is the first person to be informed so that they can invite other stakeholders to form a task team in order to implement the activities of the communication intervention. One of the interviewees said, “Sometimes they would decide not to invite us and these are some of the challenges that we face. CDWs also experience the same challenges in this regard”. These challenges impact on the quality of the public participation programme, which SCOs are expected to attend and to provide subsequent feedback. Therefore the interviews revealed that, in terms of power, the Speaker’s Office holds a substantial amount and to some extent exploits it.

SCOs and CDWs have consequently decided to form a structure which is represented by all service providers and the various departments, which is intended to alleviate the

omission of key stakeholders at events organised by the speaker's office. Although this is a temporary solution, it demonstrates a lack of integration, teamwork and a common understanding among drivers of the development process.

In this study it is argued that power is viewed within the context of the interests of the few elite (see section 2.4) and the ward councillor may be considered the elitist in the development initiatives. If the ward councillor's principles are not aligned with those of participatory development communication, he/she could obstruct sustainable development.

6.3.3.5 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

An analysis of section 8.10 of the Comtask Report (1996) reveals that the advancement of information technology is advocated in order to improve the lives of people who live in remote and isolated areas and are out of touch with the rest of the country. Therefore ICTs are seen as a possible medium for empowering communities. Section 8.19 of this report advocates that "all people should have access to all forms of communication" (COMTASK, 1996). This is echoed in the *Business Plan*, which also emphasises that a high premium is placed on the introduction of ICTs to communities to address the development paradigm. This document also outlines the aim of introducing ICTs to developing communities in attempt to promote literacy and access to technology.

The *Business Plan* makes reference to Gauteng Online, a free technological tool driven by the premier's office and based at Thusong Service Centres. This tool is meant to empower communities with information about government. However, the GCIS personnel indicated that this tool has not been supplied to all the centres, and furthermore, even if it has been installed, it does not function properly, which demonstrates a certain degree of apathy on the part of government.

The SoNA (2004) also contains information on government's undertaking to ensure that modern ICTs are introduced at the identified development nodes as quickly as possible to assist in all developmental and governance efforts. This use of communication technology is referred to by Servaes (2000), who advocates the use of cyberspace as a potential source of empowerment.

In reality, however, personal observations revealed that the Thusong Service Centres do not make provision for people to access diverse forms of communication. Various reasons contribute to this inefficiency, which include the lack of free facilities at the Thusong Service Centres. According to Chitnis (2005), empowering people in the development communication arena means allowing them access to resources in order to overcome existing oppressive forces; however, this is not possible at Thusong Service Centres because they lack these empowering tools. Although government policy documents advocate the introduction of such tools, it is clearly not viewed as a priority by government.

It is evident from the above discussion that Tshwane communities are compelled to deal with power structures throughout the development communication process, which impacts negatively on their progress, which is contrary to the principles of self-sustainability and empowerment in terms of structuration theory (see section 2.4). It is also evident from this discussion that the power lies in the hands of government departments and leaders and there is a danger that this power could lead to dependent development (see section 2.2.1).

It should be noted that, according to Campbell and Jovchelovitch (2000), a "critically transitive" thinker feels empowered to think and to act on the conditions that shape his/her living, which aligns with Freire's theory on conscientisation (see section 2.3). The initiatives that were investigated in this study indicate that the GCIS is not making use of opportunities to create communities that are critically transitive thinkers, but instead is maintaining communities with intransitive and semi-transitive thought, which creates challenges for communities' sense of empowerment (see section 2.3).

6.3.4 Construct 4: socio-cultural context

Development communication projects should be designed in accordance with the community's unique needs in mind, and within the framework of government structures. In order to achieve social integration, this should be done by taking into account the community's socio-cultural context, which includes its indigenous knowledge and its cultural identity (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005:17).

The various subthemes concerning the socio-cultural context of the development communication process that emerged during the empirical study are discussed below.

6.3.4.1 *Cultural sensitivity*

The analysis of sections 4.3.2 and 4.5.2 of the WPTPS (1997) found that the existence of social, cultural and linguistic barriers that need to be considered when communicating with the public was acknowledged. Moreover, an analysis of sections 5.7.1 and 8.18 of the Comtask Report (1996) concurs with this finding and advocates publishing information in the appropriate languages of the community. It was found that the GCIS takes into account the various cultural and language issues before communicating to its public.

All the interviewees indicated that information sent out to communities is available in all eleven official languages, and this was confirmed by the personal observations. Interviewees further indicated that partnerships had been formed with members of the community, including traditional leaders, and the developing community's specific cultures were considered when projects are planned.

However, another challenge faced by the SCOs is that some of the communities prefer printed material in English and not in their own language, because they perceive English as a language of status. Another challenge is that some people can speak their own language but cannot read it. Linked to this is the fact that some of the terminology

that is used is foreign to the developing community, even if it is in their own language. The researcher found that although GCIS information is available in different languages this still does not mean that Thusong Service Centres actually empower communities, as the information presented does not address the appropriate cultural contexts. Language alone does not bridge cultural differences as will become clearer in the discussion on indigenous knowledge.

6.3.4.2 Indigenous knowledge

The Comtask Report (1996) acknowledges that informal, indigenous information plays a significant role in developing countries. A major development challenge is to harness this latent potential in order to make a coherent contribution to the needs of the government communication service. Indigenous information is largely unstructured, very informal in extent and content, spontaneous and embedded in a cultural context, which is underlined by Tri (1986b:37) (see section 3.2). The afore-mentioned discussion regarding the communities' contribution of indigenous knowledge, does not mean 'integration' or 'incorporation', but the involvement of all stakeholders, including community members, on an equal footing.

The interviewees agreed that the collective wisdom of the developing community is essential for the development process. Aligned with this, the analysis of in sections 5.7.6 and 5.10 of the Comtask Report (1996) concurred with information gleaned from the interviews by acknowledging that informal or indigenous information plays a significant role in informing the development communication process in developing countries. In other words, the intention of incorporating indigenous knowledge in development communication efforts in Tshwane is important.

During the interviews, GCIS personnel indicated that the involvement of communities in the planning process of development projects is facilitated by religious structures, Indunas and the churches, as these are influential in the respective communities and may be used by the GCIS to influence community members.

During the empirical study it was found that although the GCIS places a high premium on people's indigenous knowledge by inviting community members to provide input in terms of their indigenous knowledge during the development communication process, the focus was not on the devolution of power or participation in decision-making.

The following section analyses the GCIS's strategic communication efforts. Strategic communication that is specific to participatory development communication is necessary to ensure that initiatives are well planned and that they are based on informed research that has been conducted prior to implementation.

6.3.5 Construct 5: strategic planning

Strategic communication activities are needed to empower communities to make changes to their environment that will eventually lead to positive changes in their lives. For the purposes of this study it is argued that strategic communication could be the means by which the principles of participatory development communication are operationalised.

For analytical purposes, strategic communication was further divided into subthemes which are discussed below. The communication plan outlined by The Institute for Development Studies (IDS) (2008) and discussed in section 3.3 was used as the benchmark for participatory communication planning. It offers a systematic and logical framework for communication planning for development and is imperative for identifying focal problems and setting long-term objectives. It also serves as a means for providing practical guidelines for field applications.

The importance of strategic communication is demonstrated in the discussion of the subthemes below.

6.3.5.1 *Communication professionals*

According to Mozammel and Schechter (2005:27), it is imperative that, during a development project, activities are continuously managed and this should be done by communication professionals.

Section 8.7 of the Comtask Report (1996) aligns with the preceding discussion in that it states that professional communicators are required to ensure that communication with communities is successful. According to the *Business Plan* and the GCIS's website, a centre manager should be present at each of the centres in order to coordinate activities. However, personal observations revealed that none of the centres in Tshwane employ centre managers. Some of the SCOs who were interviewed indicated that they are not prepared to encroach on the mandate of government departments situated at the Thusong Service Centres and which they had no influence over. However, it is clearly stated in the *Business Plan* that the GCIS has been mandated to integrate and harmonise the various service providers at the centres, yet there is a strong sense and indication of a lack of synergy.

During the interviews, it the researcher was told that the GCIS personnel who are employed to carry out the development communication mandate are qualified communication professionals, but that insufficient staff were employed to carry out the work efficiently. Only three SCOs were employed to oversee six Thusong Service Centres as well as the specific wards that are attached to these areas. However, the study does acknowledge that the GCIS is in consultation with the Council of Construction Trade Associations (COCTA) regarding the management of the Thusong Service Centres. The GCIS has proposed that COCTA take over the management in the future, with the GCIS being one of the service providers at the centre.

If the GCIS were to carry out its mandate as specified in the policy documents discussed in section 4.2, then there would be a greater integration of services and the

ultimate goal of providing people with development communication would be attained. This is discussed further in the next section.

6.3.5.2 *Integration of services*

It is clear from the analysis of the *Business Plan* that Thusong Service Centres were established as hubs of development communication based on Batho Pele values and principles, which put the developing community first. Cabinet Memorandum No.15 of 1999 supports this by indicating, in section 2.2, that the various government departments operating and/or rendering services in Thusong Service Centres should be seen as adding value to the centres' activities and ensuring that the needs of the community are addressed.

Section 2.2 further states that it is the GCIS's responsibility to ensure that centre managers are capacitated to deal with the complex and challenging needs of administering the Thusong Service Centres. However, contrary to the contents of this document, SCOs indicated during the interviews that each department at these centres makes its own decisions, even though SLAs are in place.

Once again, the issue of the centre manager arises, as this presents a serious challenge to Thusong Service Centre operations in Tshwane. Interviewees indicated that, in Gauteng, these centres have been incorporated into the municipal customer care centre, which employs a designated centre manager. The solution in the future is for Executive Directors to be approached on the issue of integrating the municipality and the Thusong Service Centre. This issue should be resolved in 2010.

Interviewees stated that it is the GCIS's responsibility to coordinate the service centres and to ensure that they operate according to the *Business Plan*. The LISSC meets monthly or quarterly to ensure that services are properly rendered to the public, whilst the GCIS monitors and evaluates the service centres on a monthly basis.

However, despite the abovementioned assertions, the researcher found that this monitoring and evaluation is undertaken to create dialogue or engagement, but merely to report to the SCO's manager on centre activities. This is illustrated by a remark made by one of the SCOs:

I can give you an example. We used to have the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) as part of the services provided at the Thusong Service Centre, but SASSA left. It is my responsibility as GCIS through the monitoring and evaluation programme to inform my office of this change because of the reasons that are provided to me.

The issue of lease agreements for accommodation and SLAs is related to this. Currently, the SCOs handle this function, although it is actually the duty of the centre manager.

The idea of a service provider's forum was mooted in order to coordinate activities, yet it has still been found that each department arranges their activities in isolation. As a result, activities, programmes and projects offered to the same target audience in the community are conducted in a fragmented fashion, which results in duplication and ineffective communication.

It is important that services at the Thusong Service Centres and beyond are integrated in order to enable the development of a communication strategy and action plan. This is essential to ensure transparency when paving the way for a development communication initiative. Without such synergy, such a project may not be fully realised.

6.3.5.3 *Research*

Bessette (2004) advocates the development of a *research relationship with the local community* (see section 3.3.3.2). The coproduction of knowledge is not merely collecting data – it is essential for facilitating participation in the decision-making processes involved in a development project.

The content of the WPTPS (1997) indicated that it is important to compile a strategic plan; however, in order to do so a consultation exercise first has to be conducted. Yet again, the qualitative content analysis shows that the concept of consultation is important to the South African government, which, as mentioned previously, is contrary to the normative principles and standards of participatory development communication.

In section 8.4, the Comtask Report (1996) acknowledges that strategies and objectives are imperative in communication, in terms of which a culture in which the continuous evaluation of needs, audiences and objectives is fostered. The report indicates that ad hoc communication is expensive and often fails to meet targets and reach audiences. This relates to Anyaegbunam *et al.*'s (2004:7) assertion regarding poor planning in the development communication process (see section 3.2).

The interviews indicated that the research that SCOs conduct with communities is not formal in nature. However, certain GCIS personnel form part of the Forum for South African Director Generals (FOSADG), where formal research issues are discussed. One SCO commented: "They do the formal research, but I am not sure how they conduct it; maybe quantitative, maybe qualitative, I'm not sure. My research is finding out exactly what is happening in terms of identifying needs in the community or identifying a gap or something that is wrong."

The interviewees indicated that formal research was only conducted if the need arose, which signifies a reactive rather than a proactive process where little prior planning occurs on the part of the GCIS. It was further noted that some of the formal research that is conducted is outsourced because of a lack of capacity in the research department. At national level the chief directorate for research keeps track of what is happening in government.

According to the IDS (2008), a baseline study becomes an extremely useful tool to arrive at clear communication objectives in order to plan, implement and manage

effective communication activities with the community. However, this study revealed that this is not common practice, nor a requirement of GCIS personnel. The interviews indicated that PRCA, an ideal research tool that incorporates the issues essential for successful development communication research, is not used by the GCIS. Furthermore, GCIS personnel are not familiar with the PRCA concept which creates a gap in the research aspect of development communication and strategic communication planning.

6.3.5.4 *Communication action plan*

The interviews conducted with GCIS personnel revealed that communication plans incorporate information dissemination activities. Although community participation was addressed in some of the action plans, such as the *GCISs Consolidated action plan, Gauteng, 11 February 2010* and the *Thusong Service Centre – Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Communication Plan*, the ways in which this can be elicited and encouraged by means of development communication principles were not addressed.

The SCOs indicated that they have a general format which they developed to suit their own action plan. Upon examining some of the action plan documents, the researcher found that the principles of authentic participation, in order to conscientise and empower communities, were not evident. This situation is prevalent in all the above-mentioned action plans that the GCIS has formulated in the light of development communication, which demonstrate that operational planning in the main has little or no focus on strategic planning.

The above-mentioned evidence is confirmed by an SCO's response: "A template from head office is not required because of the expertise that we have in communication". However, it is essential for development communication specialists to deliberate collectively on an appropriate action plan using input from all stakeholders. In the absence of this input, the development communication process would not be considered participatory, which would ultimately result in community members not

taking ownership of such initiatives. Furthermore, a template could contribute an emphasis on the participatory approach. Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that a rigid template might not be appropriate for different centres, but there should at least be broad guidelines that could be followed.

Feedback received from the interviews further indicated that the planning for development communication initiatives originated mainly from national commemoration days and instructions from head office regarding the types of project that are rolled out. As previously mentioned this does not constitute a participatory process and excludes key stakeholders in the development communication process. The action plan which SCOs refer to is a functional and basic document containing no strategic tenets in respect of a specific plan for development communication, which is distinct from other communication plans.

Chapter 3 of this study discussed the creation of a communication action plan involving the development of a comprehensive and detailed matrix explaining the major communication objectives identified in the communication strategy. The action plan is designed once the communication strategy has been developed and involves brainstorming sessions or workshops in which all stakeholders of the development project participate. However, interviewees indicated that a communication action plan is not applied to all projects that they engage in, only to major projects. The findings also revealed that there are two levels of planning: firstly, a communication action plan that is provided by the national office for the provinces, which is customised for each province, and, secondly, an action plan that SCOs develop for development activities in their areas.

From the above information gleaned from the interviews it is clear that the GCIS, in the main, does not use appropriate development communication techniques to communicate with communities, as prescribed by the literature. According to Bafo (2006), however, what is critical in participatory development communication is the process of planning and the use of communication resources, channels, approaches

and strategies in programmes designed to bring about some progress, change or development, and the involvement of the developing community in change efforts.

The following discussion incorporates the subthemes that emerged from the GCIS's communication activities in Tshwane.

Section 6.2.3(a) of the *Business Plan* states that various communication activities are used in development communication initiatives, and these include national road shows, public participation forums, service provider workshops, newsletters, Thusong Service awards and a website. After an investigation into the accuracy of this information, it was found during personal observations and semi-structured interviews that service provider workshops require a more rigorous process of coordination. It was also discovered that the newsletter published by the GCIS, *Vuvuzenzele – Wake up and do things for yourself*, contains information on the presidential hotline, the 2010 World Cup, 'faces' of government, health issues and economic opportunities and was a valuable means of reaching the communities because of its offering in all eleven official languages.

However, it was also noted that the website contained incorrect information, such as the details of the centre manager. As reported earlier, none of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane employ centre managers, yet the GCIS website state that they do. Section 6.2.3(b) refers to national events and campaigns at Thusong Service Centres, as well as corporate presentations and videos as part of the communication activities to be implemented. However, according to the interviews with the SCOs, the centres are not structures for development communication activities, but rather sources of information. This is contrary to the information presented in the *Business Plan* document, which promotes the centres as "hubs of development communication activity".

Interviewees also indicated that centre activities include workshops, which are conducted for the purpose of creating awareness and educating on various topics. In addition, the GCIS assists in creating networks between community members and various stakeholders. Interviewees indicated that the development communication

activities that they engage in include motivational speakers and empowerment workshops for skills development, during which the relevant department is requested to provide information relating to the particular needs of the community. In Tshwane, the GCIS works closely with the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP), which is part of the Department of Finance in Gauteng, in view of the need for creating economic opportunities in the country.

Although the GCIS states in their policy documents that Thusong Service Centres are the hubs of development communication, interviews revealed that these centres are merely a source of information to the public. However, this may be debated further in light of the researcher's personal observations, which revealed that some of the centres contained no printed information that could be made available to the community and therefore failed even in its claim of being a source of information to the community.

6.3.5.5 *Feedback*

The literature indicated that a good feedback system should be employed to measure the effectiveness of the communication activities and the impact of the entire strategic communication intervention (see section 3.3.3.6). In order to accomplish this, a valuable method to adopt is that of a comparative analysis of the post-implementation baseline study and the benchmark study carried out at the beginning of the programme (see section 3.3.3.2).

An analysis of in section 9.0 of the *Business Plan* found that there is a need to conduct detailed monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Thusong Service Centres on a local level in order to assess whether they are operating effectively and delivering the information and services to the extent and in the manner that the communities need them. Section 9.1 further states that it is the GCIS is responsible for the overall monitoring and evaluation of the programme, including the coordination of research and data collection, which is aligned with participatory development communication principles (see paragraph 3.3.3.2).

The analysis of the *Business Plan* also showed that priority is given to the centres' performance monitoring and impact assessment. It is proposed that each centre develop a performance monitoring and impact assessment component as part of its business plan. The afore-mentioned document also states that, in order to monitor the centre's progress, research should be conducted by administering surveys, setting up suggestion boxes, holding focus group meetings with service providers and compiling standardised reporting templates.

The researcher's personal observations confirmed that suggestion boxes are absent at most of the centres and staff at the centres that do have them state that they are ineffective, as community members do not use them. Furthermore, the GCIS personnel indicated that the centres' performance is discussed at stakeholder management forums and communication officers capture their online monitoring and evaluation reports on a monthly basis. However, the type of monitoring and assessment that the GCIS engages in covers performance monitoring and not impact assessment as alluded to in the *Business Plan*.

Interviewees indicated that, after a project has been implemented in a community, they would follow up on service delivery through verbal comments and recommendations to the SCO. Focus groups are another method adopted by the GCIS to evaluate projects. These are conducted in a sectoral manner in order to elicit valuable feedback. The literature on participatory development communication indicates that a summative evaluation of a project is necessary (see section 3.3.2). This information may be obtained by conducting a comparative analysis with the post-implementation baseline study, as suggested in this chapter in section 6.3.5.3 above, and the benchmark study carried out at the beginning of the programme.

The foregoing discussion relates to Freire's assertion (in Nair & White, 1994a:184) that reflection is a significant part of the liberation of the individual. However, it was noted

from the interviews that evaluation and feedback methods that are implemented by the GCIS relate to operational activities and do not reflect impact and effectiveness studies.

It was further noted that the SCOs believe community members to be apathetic towards the concept of development. However, Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004:8) indicate that the initiators of development commonly blame communities for being resistant to change and not having the appropriate attitudes and values to recognise the usefulness of the solutions offered. In other words, the GCIS has observed the apathy of community members, yet does not address this issue strategically.

6.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the analyses of the findings that were derived from the empirical study, which included semi-structured interviews, personal observations and qualitative content analysis. The empirical study revealed that in most instances dialogue is not employed by the GCIS in their development communication efforts with communities. Instead, a linear process of information dissemination is generally observed. Of significance is the GCIS's inertia in creating opportunities for self-reliance for community members. It is the responsibility of the development communication driver to initiate such programmes in the absence of which self-reliance suffers. It was noted during the empirical study that communities were generally not involved in an authentic manner in the entire development communication process, and therefore the efforts lacked the foundational principle of empowerment.

The study showed that the socio-cultural context was usually considered in information dissemination efforts, but of significance was the fact that in most instances government did not provide evidence that it considered community members to be equal partners in the development communication process. This is indicative of the modernisation and dependency paradigm of development communication, whereby powerful forces exercise their control during this process.

The study indicated that the principles of participatory development communication were not fully practised by the GCIS which is mandated with the responsibility for initiating and driving the development communication process in South Africa. This implies that Thusong Service Centres have a tendency for dependency, which results in the widening of the knowledge gap in society. The dependency paradigm in development communication maintains that information and opportunities for decision-making becomes power in the hands of a privileged few. The Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane display these dependency principles, which lead to communities' lack of self-reliant practices owing to a lack of participation throughout their development. Freire criticises this dependence because of the lack of consciousness-raising opportunities it affords community members.

Finally, during the analysis an attempt was made to test the specific theoretical statements of this study against the actual practice of participatory development communication at Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. The findings that emerged during the qualitative content analysis and the personal observations were measured against the perspective of senior GCIS personnel using semi-structured interviews, which were reported on above. The empirical findings revealed that the GCIS did not place a high premium on strategic communication, which is a fundamental feature of development communication. Furthermore, GCIS documents showed a strong emphasis on the operationalisation of activities, and not on conceptual planning.

Whilst this chapter discussed the findings and analysed them according to the theoretical framework of Freirean dialogue, the next chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations that emanated from the empirical study in conjunction and consultation with the literature review.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding discussions argued that in order for development communication to be sustainable, it has to be participatory. This chapter concludes the discussions on the communication initiatives at Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane in relation to the normative principles of participatory development communication according to the literature in order to assess the GCIS's current communication practices. This is done by answering the specific and general research questions. This chapter then concludes with a discussion on suggestions for further research.

The next section deals with each specific research question as well as the general research question, together with the related research aims. The literature study and the theoretical background addresses specific research aims 1 and 2, whilst the empirical study addresses research aim 3.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS: ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH AIMS

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:11) the third stream of analysis activity in research is conclusion drawing and verification, and it is during this process that the researcher decides what the information gathered actually means. Examples include patterns, explanations, causal flows and propositions. The operational constructs in this study are used as a benchmark for the analysis together with the conclusions derived from the empirical study. Suggestions for further research are also made in this chapter to close the gaps that were exposed by this study.

7.2.1.1 Principles of participatory development communication

In order to achieve research aim 1, a literature study was done to determine the principles of participatory development communication.

This research aim was addressed during an extensive literature review based on participatory development communication (see chapters 2 and 3 for a complete discussion on development communication) and is answered in the discussions below.

- **Participatory development communication requires *sustainability and continuity*.** Participatory development communication is not merely about disseminating information in a community; it is also important to encourage communities to become self-reliant, in contrast to the era of dependency where communities were solely reliant on power structures for their sustainability. This study acknowledges the Thusong Service Centres as power structures that are required to initiate development communication and critical thinking for further sustainability. (See section 2.2.2 for a discussion on the concept of “*self-reliance*” as a norm in participatory development communication.)
- ***Dialogue* is the essence of participatory development communication.** Participatory development communication is a transactional process whereby there is an interchange of communicator–receiver roles and, horizontality, of communication links at all levels of society. It thus involves dialogic mechanisms concerning the information being transferred. It is also fundamentally about engagement processes being managed at community level. In other words, authentic development, which respects the individual in the community as a full participant and decision-maker in changing his/her life, will not occur if only participation in evaluation is practised in the process, thus one should caution against mere consultation and/or feedback in the development communication process. According to the literature, participation in decision-making is the most important form of communication in the development

process. (*'Dialogue'* as a norm in participatory development communication is discussed in section 2.3.)

- **Empowerment** in the development communication arena means allowing community members access to resources and knowledge in order to overcome the existing oppressive forces. The GCIS should ensure that communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of development projects by planning with communities to create structures that offer communities and developers equal power. The introduction of activities that will empower communities is encouraged, which suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue (refer to section 2.4).
- **Community participation is a requirement of participatory development communication.** In accordance with the principles of dialogue, a primary emphasis of the participatory approach is to get the communities' active participation during the entire development communication initiative. Building trusting relationships and doing appropriate planning with the developing community throughout the programme is necessary for development to occur (see section 3.1).
- **The community's socio-cultural context should be considered during the participatory development communication process.** The GCIS should consider the socio-cultural context of each community during the development communication process, which includes the community's indigenous knowledge and unique cultural identity as a foundation for achieving social integration. Participatory development communication requires the recognition and validation of both indigenous and expert knowledge within communities. An effective means is needed of blending the two with due care being given to existing social and cultural norms (see section 3.3.34).
- **Participatory development communication is responsive and requires strategic communication.** Participatory development communication requires strategic planning and strategic communication initiatives. It does not provide useless

information that people do not want to know, but which central planners deem to be crucial. People understand their own needs better than the authorities, and through this approach communication becomes a means of planning in the development process and not merely a mechanism for convincing communities once unpalatable decisions have been made (see section 3.3.3.6).

7.2.1.2 Conclusion

One of the points of criticism against the participatory approach is that it is only normative and lacks practical application. The next research aim was to show the applicability of the principles of participatory communication for the Thusong Service Centres.

7.2.2.1 The application of the principles of participatory development communication to the case of the Thusong Service Centres

How could Thusong Service Centres incorporate the principles of participatory development in their communication with the communities they serve?

For each of the above-mentioned principles of participatory development communication, a specific theoretical statement was formulated in order to indicate the relevance of the principles for Thusong Service Centres.

- **Theoretical statement 1: self-reliance**

The first theoretical principle defined in research aim 1 relates to participatory development communication being sustainable and continuous; therefore it should be *the goal of GCIS to provide communities with opportunities for self-reliance in order to become independent participants in the development process, and not to fall into a paradigm of dependence whereby cultural imperialism and cultural domination destroy native cultures and compromise communities' independent thinking.*

Self-reliance was identified as the central construct in this theoretical statement because it is deemed important for communities' growth and sustainability in ultimately realising the goal of development. For sustainability to be realised in developing communities in Tshwane, the GCIS should endeavour to create self-reliant communities that are able to eventually generate their own knowledge through their developed capacity.

It is essential for Tshwane communities to become self-reliant in order to avoid falling into the dependency paradigm of development, which is discussed in section 2.2.2. In other words, these communities need to engage in activities that allow long-term sustainability of their livelihoods, for example knowledge acquisition as a starting point is imperative.

Thereafter, building capacity among community members in respect of skills development will assist in creating and sustaining meaningful developmental initiatives in that community. Structuration theory also comes to the fore during self-reliance efforts in development communication, which explains why participation aimed solely at an individual cannot result in sustainable social change owing to the larger structural forces. This is where the GCIS is considered to be a crucial link in the developmental process, because it has the means to initiate self-reliant activities which will facilitate sustainability within the community (see section 6.3.2).

Furthermore, there needs to be a firm sense of *commitment* from both the community and government (see section 6.3.2.2). This two-way commitment may be pledged in an agreement between both parties whereby government provides the community with incentives during the development process, for example structural and resource aid for projects and government as well as community members should be held accountable for the pledge.

Additionally, to realise sustainability and self-reliance, *cooperatives and partnerships* should be formed between government and the community to ensure that communities

are able to sustain themselves in the future. Communication between stakeholders in these formations is transactional by nature.

- **Theoretical statement 2: dialogue**

The second theoretical principle identified in research aim 1 refers to participatory development communication as a transactional process, therefore *the communication specialist needs to establish two-way, horizontal communication flows among all stakeholders, and not just top-down flows.*

The central construct in this theoretical statement is **dialogue**, which employs a horizontal flow of communication and may be realised by using the most appropriate channels and methods for the specific development project or programme. Section 3.3.3.5 discusses the most appropriate methods to use during participatory development communication.

In addition, participatory and two-way public information and education campaigns could be created and implemented to align with Freire's dialogic mode of communication. This would eliminate the danger of passive communities, which would do away with the modernisation and/or dependency paradigms of development communication. Messages, channels and tools should be customised and clearly segmented to selected topics and stakeholder groups and such activities should be designed on the basis of focus group engagement and stakeholder feedback, which should include monitoring and evaluation.

- **Theoretical statement 3: empowerment**

The third theoretical principle in research aim 1 refers to community members having access to the necessary resources and knowledge in order to overcome existing oppressive forces. Therefore the *GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the development project. They should plan with communities by creating structures which offer communities and*

developers equal power, and introduce activities that will empower communities, which suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue.

Empowerment was identified as the central construct in this theoretical statement. GCIS's use of Thusong Service Centres as local establishments that aim to stimulate and respond to the demand for information and communication services is the first step towards empowering communities; thus the necessary and appropriate resources should be made available at each centre to aid communication activities.

Secondly, ICTs may be used to empower communities by providing them with access to information and facilities. Development of community radio capacity and radio programmes is an effective means that the GCIS can use through Thusong Service Centres (refer to section 3.3.3.4).

It is also important that development communication officials and community members involved in projects are held accountable by stakeholder forums in respect of development communication initiatives. Stakeholder forums should consist of representatives of the community and government, and should therefore be able to make unbiased decisions devoid of hidden agendas. This sense of accountability and shared responsibility will provide communities with the power they need to change their circumstances. An essential factor in participatory development communication is that community members should be included in the decision-making process (see section 6.3.3.3).

The GCIS should also provide community members with opportunities for initiation programmes or projects, for example skills development programmes, literacy programmes and educational tools, to create consciousness-raising. This is aligned with Freire's conscientisation and his concept of critical thinking (see section 2.2.3). The provision of literacy programmes is crucial in developing communities in order to provide long-term solutions in the quest for knowledge production in the community. In this way, the GCIS will be helping the community to help themselves. These initiatives

could form a basis for the creation of networks of economic opportunities within the community.

- **Theoretical statement 4: community participation**

The fourth principle referred to in research aim 1 is the requirement for inclusive planning and the communities' involvement throughout the development project. Building trusting relationships and doing appropriate planning with the developing community in accordance with the principles of dialogue is a primary emphasis of the participatory approach and should therefore be a priority for the GCIS to bring about communities' active participation in the entire development communication initiative.

Community participation was identified as the central construct in this theoretical statement as it is a necessary element of participatory development communication. In order to achieve this, however, communities need to be part of the structures that are involved in the planning. PRCA is one way in which this may be achieved (see section 3.3.3.2).

Knowledge sharing among stakeholders can assist in identifying project synergies and best practices and establish an overall community of practice. Ongoing activities can include workshops, seminars and networking activities with the aim of sharing knowledge about project issues (see section 3.3.3.4).

One of the major communication activities that may ensure that the GCIS encourages community participation is the inclusion of customised sensitisation workshops for each stakeholder group to be implemented at the initial stages of project design and implementation (refer to section 3.3.3.4).

Other activities that are appropriate for development communication in Tshwane include community mapping, semi-structured interviews, transects, Venn diagrams, identification of priorities, problem trees, community-based critical reflection and learning days, training of stakeholders, involvement of key stakeholders in the

development communication process, stakeholder meetings and workshops and developing a research relationship with the local community, which GCIS may implement to elicit community participation through the various Thusong Service Centres (see section 3.3.3.4).

It is essential for community participation to occur during the development of the community in order to ensure that the modernisation and/or dependency paradigms do not manifest. With community participation development communication is aligned with the participatory paradigm which, according to Freirean dialogue, is an emancipatory experience which is part of the development process (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.3).

- **Theoretical statement 5: socio-cultural context**

The fifth theoretical principle defined in research aim 1 refers to the uniqueness of each community. The GCIS *should therefore consider the socio-cultural context of each community during the development communication process, including the community's indigenous knowledge and cultural identity in order to achieve social integration.* Participatory development communication requires the recognition and validation of both indigenous and expert knowledge in communities, as well as finding an effective means of blending the two with due care being given to existing social and cultural norms (see section 3.3.3.4).

The community's **socio-cultural context** was identified as the central construct in this theoretical statement, in terms of which the GCIS should consider factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, occupation and social and economic conditions when involving participants in the development communication process. Segmentation of the total audience is essential to ensure that the most appropriate methods and messages reach the intended audiences.

It is also important that messages are delivered in an appropriate manner by considering the level of literacy of the community, its cultural symbols and customs and

religious diversity. All messages (written and spoken) should be in the language or languages spoken in the community. Additionally, the GCIS could use individuals in the community to provide valuable input on indigenous knowledge (see section 3.3.3.4).

It is through authentic participation that appropriate policies may be formulated and planning for developing a country within its cultural and environmental framework may occur. If the communities' socio-cultural context is not considered there is the danger that cultural imperialism will come to the fore, in which case development would fall into the dependency paradigm (see section 2.2.2). For this to be avoided and successful development communication to be take place, the GCIS should use the communities' socio-cultural nuances as building blocks in development communication initiatives, which would then include the genuine participation of the developing community.

- **Theoretical statement 6: strategic communication**

The final theoretical principle defined in research aim 1 relates to participatory development communication being responsive, thereby adopting strategic communication as a solution. It is therefore purported that the GCIS should ensure that its development communication efforts involve the community's responsiveness and strategic planning with the community. In other words, ad hoc activities have no place in participatory development communication.

Strategic communication was identified as the central construct in this theoretical statement; hence, the GCIS should implement strategic communication to ensure prior planning. Ideally, messages for each group of stakeholders emerge from exercises such as brainstorming sessions and workshops (see section 3.3.3.4).

It should be noted that in order to ensure the successful implementation of a development project, it is insufficient to include the participation of community members during the operational phase only. What is required is the participation of the community from the beginning of a development communication project. According to Mozammel

and Schechter (2005:4) the key strategic phases are used as a guideline for such implementation (see section 3.3.2).

Part of the development communication strategy should be to build teamwork among all stakeholders, which also contributes to the sustainability of the project. This relates to structuration theory (see section 2.4) which suggests that we rid our society of the present structures of domination in the development communication effort, thereby creating a conscientised, empowered and self-sustaining community. The preceding discussions on strategic communication that are specific to the development communication arena will assist in making development communication initiatives successful.

7.2.2.2 Conclusion

The above planning initiatives are necessary if authentic participation is to be included during the development process. The preceding discussions which addressed research question 2 are ways in which GCIS could incorporate the principles of participation in their communication with communities to align with the foundational theoretical principles of this study, Freirean dialogue.

7.2.3 Empirical study

Using the above-mentioned guidelines for the application of participatory development principles to the Thusong Service Centres, the third research aim was to determine how Thusong Services Centres communicate with their communities.

7.2.3.1 Thusong Service Centres' communication with communities

Reaching research aim 3 was done by investigating the Thusong Service Centres' communication by analysing policy documents and personal observations, as well as

the semi-structured interviews held with senior GCIS personnel by using the abovementioned theoretical statements as guidelines.

- *Participatory development communication requires sustainability and continuity*

The following discussion provides an overview of Thusong Service Centres' status regarding their engagement in activities for developing self-reliant communities in Tshwane.

An important issue that arose during the empirical study was that there is a lack of *commitment* from certain stakeholders, which negated the intention of the development efforts and consequently resulted in a deficiency in providing communities with opportunities for self-reliance (refer to section 6.3.2.2).

The empirical study indicated that although GCIS initiates *cooperatives and partnerships* between the community and various government departments, these display a linear structure (see section 6.3.2.1). In other words, communities are not given equal levels of influence and decision-making authority, thereby preventing community members from actively sustaining development efforts independently.

One of the objectives of Thusong Service Centres during their development communication initiatives should be to create networks of economic opportunities, in order to address the socioeconomic conditions in developing communities. The empirical study indicated that this is being implemented in Tshwane through workshops, but on a small scale. However, no actual networks are created for continuity, sustainability and eventually self-reliance. Instead, community members are provided with information linearly, and there is no evidence of follow-up with community members (see section 6.3.2.1).

The study provided evidence that the Tshwane communities' *own knowledge* was not generated in the development communication process. Community members were not sufficiently capacitated to generate further knowledge within the particular community. Ultimately, not enough was being done to equip the developing communities in Tshwane with knowledge and skills and sufficient opportunities to create self-reliance among (see sections 2.2.2 and 6.3.2.1). As a result, development in Tshwane may be considered as falling into a dependency paradigm.

- *Participatory development communication is a dialogical process*

The environment for participatory development communication is expected to be supportive, creative, consensual and facilitative, leading to the sharing of ideas through dialogue.

The following discussion highlights the communication flow between Tshwane Thusong Service Centres and their developing communities.

The various *communication methods and channels* identified during the literature review that are specific to participatory development communication are not entirely utilised by the GCIS in their development communication efforts. Some of the methods that the GCIS uses are appropriate and include workshops, public participation forums and stakeholder forums. However, there is no sign of visioning sessions or participatory rural appraisal techniques to encourage dialogue with the community. Furthermore, video and audio recordings are only used at centres with video facilities. It was further asserted that cyber-dialogues were used at certain centres. However, the researcher's personal observations did not find any indication of this at any of the centres in Tshwane. Additional methods adopted by the GCIS in their development communication initiatives included loud-hailing and sms's, which once again did not support the dialogic communication process (see sections 2.3 and 6.3.1.2).

In respect of *engagement* with the community, it was found that government officials communicate from a position of authority, whereby knowledge is imparted to community members (see section 6.3.1). This once again demonstrates a linear information dissemination process. Furthermore, the Thusong Service Centres' branding was non-existent (see section 6.3.1.5) which impacts on community members' awareness of the existence of government's development communication hubs, and ultimately translates into a lack of engagement with key stakeholders, which reflects the modernisation paradigm of development (see section 2.2.1).

The interviews revealed that community radio was used to ensure awareness and information dissemination, which again indicates that a unidirectional method of *information dissemination* is used by SCOs in their development communication initiatives (refer to sections 2.2.1 and 6.3.1.2).

Feedback received from community members for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of the appropriateness of programmes was verbal, informal and on an ad hoc basis. There was no evidence of structured feedback from communities (see section 6.3.1.4).

In summary, the empirical study shows that the GCIS does not engage in meaningful dialogue with its communities, although this is a prerequisite for authentic development to occur, and their actions are contrary to the principles of Freirean dialogue discussed in section 2.3. The results further demonstrate that the GCIS incorporates the principles of diffusion theory in its communication with communities (see section 2.2.1).

- *Empowerment of the developing community is necessary for participatory development communication to be realised*

The GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the development project and they should plan with communities by creating structures that offer communities and developers equal power,

and introduce activities that will empower communities. This suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue.

The study revealed that communities did not take *ownership* of development communication initiatives, because the Speaker's Office and the ward councillor retained power structures during the process, as was disclosed during the empirical study (see sections 2.4 and 6.3.3.4).

ICTs, an empowering technological tool that communities could use for their developmental benefit, are not freely available for community members' use at Thusong Service Centres, which is contrary to the intention of providing empowering opportunities for communities (see section 6.3.3.6). In the current digital age that we live in, exposure to *technology* is essential for the purpose of empowerment (see section 2.3).

Further empowering activities, such as building *grassroots radio* capacity, whereby community members are trained as radio managers and journalists, do not feature as one of the GCISs development communication activities.

Another theoretical principle that participatory development communication regards as crucial is the joint *decision-making* process. Participation in decision-making is discussed in section 3.1 where Yoon (2004) claims that *participation in decision-making* gives people control of their lives and their environment. Not all stakeholders at the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane have equal influence, as some have more power therefore ownership of initiatives is problematic during the development process (see section 6.3.3.3).

Finally, Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane do not display evidence of the *literacy* programmes necessary for people's empowerment, yet these communities are in dire need of such interventions (see sections 2.3 and 6.3.2.1).

- *In order for participatory development communication to be put into practice, the element of community participation should be prevalent.*

In accordance with the principles of dialogue, a primary emphasis of the participatory approach is to involve the communities' active participation during the entire development communication initiative. Building trusting relationships and appropriate planning with the developing community throughout the programme is necessary for development to occur.

The interviews indicated that community participation was elicited through focus group sessions as well as public participation forums. The discussions above relating to power structures addressed the notion that government authorities dominate the development communication process and, as a result, obliterate the authenticity in community participation. Furthermore, the study indicated that the activities that the GCIS engages in to promote community participation are insufficient for eliciting valid commitment from the community (see sections 3.1, 3.3.3.2 and 6.3.1.1).

The qualitative content analysis showed that government policy emphasises the concept of consultation, which is contrary to dialogue, engagement and authentic community participation. However, in certain instances, the information contained in documents encouraged authentic dialogue and government transparency; in other words the documents were not consistent in their assertions (see section 6.3.1.1).

Of significance is the lack of depth of the GCIS's intervention in ensuring communities' participation from the inception of development communication projects. Although the implementation of 'consultation' is insufficient for authentic development to occur, the interviews revealed that the communities were *consulted* on certain aspects of their development communication needs (see sections 3.1 and 6.3.1.1).

The empirical study demonstrates that relevant key stakeholders were identified for the development communication process. However, the issue of power and control comes

to the fore once again, whereby government stakeholders hold a higher level of influence in this process. This does not reflect positively on the GCIS's effort to build and maintain a relationship of trust, credibility and transparency among all stakeholders (refer to sections 3.3.1 and 6.3.1.4).

The personal observations revealed that community members were unaware of the Thusong Service Centre concept, and accessed the centres only for the basic functions that the municipality had to offer (see section 6.3.3.2), which indicates that all stakeholders of the development communication process were inadequately involved in the process from its inception. The GCIS conducts stakeholder forums at Thusong Service Centres, but it was discovered that there is a top-heavy communication approach, which further results in an apathetic attitude in the community (see sections 2.4 and 6.3.3.4).

The study showed no evidence of *PRCA*. In other words, basic *PRCA* techniques were not introduced during the development communication programme to ensure relevance and ownership of the project by the developing community (see sections 3.3.2, 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.5.3).

The GCIS conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions to gain communities' insights during the informal needs identification process, which is aligned with participatory development communication principles. However, this activity was conducted on an ad hoc basis, and no formal structure in respect of research principles existed (see section 6.3.1.5). It was found that opportunities for communities to voice their opinion regarding abuse of power only arose during stakeholder and public participation forums, where community members may be sceptical about bringing such issues to the fore.

Part of incorporating community participation in the development communication programme involves establishing common ground with communities. The following discussion provides highlights and insights in this regard.

During the literature review, it was found that, at the stakeholders' forums, it is important to include an independent body that is not affiliated to any political structures (see section 3.3.3.4); yet this was not evident in the empirical study. In other words, the GCIS does not incorporate an unbiased structure into the development communication process. The key stakeholders of the development communication process did not include a centre manager. This presents a challenge, because there is a definite need for such a position at Thusong Service Centres in order to coordinate and integrate activities. Currently, departments and structures operate in a generally fragmented manner which is contrary to the intentions of the Thusong Service Centre concept (see section 6.3.5.2).

It was found that although community members were involved during the needs analysis process, this did not bring about mutual trust because of a lack of involvement of the community in the adoption of research procedures (see section 6.3.5). Freire's (1985:73) critique of the dependency paradigm (discussed in section 2.2.2), that is, that the dependent society is by definition a silent society, may be related to the preceding discussion. He further states that the silent voice is not an authentic voice, but merely an echo of the voice of the authorities in every way – the authorities speak, the dependent society listens. It may be deduced from the above discussion that community members' apathy towards development communication may be attributed to their dependence on government for their mobility, which results from a lack of community participation in the development process.

- *Participatory development communication involves due consideration of the communities' socio-cultural context*

The interviews indicated that the GCIS considers its communities' cultural and language issues in its communication efforts. This was evident from the assertion by interviewees that information sent out to communities is available in all eleven official languages, which was also confirmed during the personal observations. During the interviews, it

was noted that partnerships had been formed with members of the community including traditional leaders. These partnerships allow community members' to make inputs regarding their indigenous knowledge during the development communication process. However, what was clear is that the foregoing considerations are not applicable from the outset or throughout the development communication initiative. Therefore it may be deduced that partial participation is used in this instance (see sections 3.3.3.4 and 6.3.5.3).

- *Participatory development communication involves strategic communication*

The GCIS should ensure that its development communication efforts involve the community's responsiveness and strategic planning with the community. In other words, ad hoc activities have no place in participatory development communication. The GCIS's strategic communication efforts through the Thusong Service Centres are discussed below.

The interviews indicated that formal research was only conducted if and when the need arose, which signifies a reactive rather than a proactive process where little or no prior planning on the part of the GCIS has been done. The study confirmed that, generally, no baseline research study is carried out, nor is it a requirement of GCIS personnel during their development communication (see sections 3.3.3.2, 3.3.3.4 and 7.2.3.2).

The first phase of strategic planning according to the literature indicates that the *communication management function* should be established. The Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane employed trained communication professionals, but it was found that the existing staff lacked the capacity to cover all six areas adequately (see sections 3.3.2.1 and 6.3.5). The personal observations revealed that none of the centres in Tshwane employed centre managers, which has a negative impact on a sound action plan for the Thusong Service Centre.

The second phase in participatory development communication planning requires that a *strategic communication assessment* be conducted. The empirical study shows that the

GCIS engages in informal research only by way of a needs analysis. No formal research methods were detected with no sign of PRCA methods being adopted (see sections 3.3.3.2, 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.5.3).

Phase 2B involves an *operational communication analysis*, which requires that all stakeholders be involved in identifying problems and potential solutions and implementing concrete initiatives in a collaborative way. The study shows that the only sign of such activity is during the informal needs analysis process which is conducted on an ad hoc manner (see sections 3.3.3.3 and 6.3.5.2).

The third phase involves the development of a *communication strategy and action plan*. The interviews and analysis of *GCISs Consolidated action plan, Gauteng, 11 February 2010* and the *Thusong Service Centre – Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Communication Plan* indicated that the GCIS compiles an action plan for each project but does not address participatory development communication principles as their focus. Although an action plan exists, it only addresses the operational planning and not strategic issues. It was noted that there is a lack of meaningful planning from the GCIS. Although there was some degree of prior planning, the emphasis was on commemoration days in the government calendar which indicates that there is a serious gap with regard to formal research (see sections 3.3.3.4 and 6.3.5.3).

The study acknowledged the IDP, which is the strategic planning instrument for development and is used to manage and guide all planning, development and decision-making in the municipality. However, it was noted that this document did not integrate the activities of each of the departments at Thusong Service Centres, which impacts negatively on the entire development communication process (see section 6.3.3.2).

The fourth phase in strategic planning involves the implementation of communication activities, which should use appropriate methods and techniques according to the identified needs of the community. It was found during the study that various

government departments implement activities in isolation, therefore the danger of duplication and a lack of information sharing exists (see sections 3.3.3.5 and 6.3.5.4).

Phase five incorporates *monitoring and feedback activities*. The interviews indicated that there was no comparative analysis between the *benchmark study and a post-implementation baseline study*. However, it was found that the GCIS uses the Ward-level Information Management System (WIMS) programme as its Management Information System (MIS), which works well for the communication officers. It was found that the GCIS does not use feedback activities to monitor its development communication activities scientifically (see sections 3.3.3.6 and 6.3.5.5).

The empirical study shows that although the GCIS monitors and evaluates the Thusong Service Centres, it was found that this was merely in order to report on the activities of the centre to the SCO's manager and not to create dialogue and engagement.

For the complete empirical analysis of the Thusong Service Centres, refer to chapter 6.

7.2.3.2 Conclusion

The discussion above used the empirical findings to answer research question 3. The six theoretical statements were used as the foundational principles to benchmark against. It was largely found that Tshwane communities are communicated to by government structures in a vertical, linear manner. Furthermore, a lack of strategic planning exists, which impacts negatively on the participation of communities, and translates into ineffective development communication initiatives.

7.2.4.1 General research question

How does the communication of the Thusong Services Centres in Tshwane compare with the normative principles of participatory development communication?

This question led to the general aim of the study which was *to compare the existing communication of Thusong Service Centres with the normative theoretical principles of participatory development communication.*

In other words, the findings of the empirical study reported on in chapter 6 were compared with the theoretical underpinnings of the literature study conducted and reported on in chapters 2 and 3. The six theoretical statements were used as the categories to answer the general research question.

- **Theoretical statement 1: self-reliance**

It should be the goal of the GCIS to provide self-reliant opportunities for communities to become independent participants in the development process, and not fall into a paradigm of dependence whereby cultural imperialism and cultural domination destroy native cultures and compromise communities' independent thinking.

One requirement regarding GCIS's responsibility to provide communities with opportunities for self-reliance in order to become independent participants in the process of development (see section 2.2.2) was not met by the GCIS and is reported on in section 6.3.2. This implies that development communication in Tshwane falls within the dependency paradigm because of its development domination tendencies.

- **Theoretical statement 2: dialogue**

This study uses the concept of dialogue as the common, grounding factor and the basis for participatory development communication. Transactional communication is a dialogue wherein the sender and the receiver of messages interact over a period of time to arrive at shared meanings. The environment for participatory development communication is expected to be supportive, creative, consensual and facilitative, leading to the sharing of ideas through dialogue.

Freirean dialogue, the theoretical underpinning of this study involves dialogic communication (see section 2.3) which was not fully met by the GCIS in their development communication initiatives in Tshwane (see section 6.3.1).

- **Theoretical statement 3: empowerment**

The GCIS should ensure that the communities participate actively in the planning, decision-making and ownership of the development project. The GCIS should plan with communities by creating structures that offer communities and developers equal power, and introduce activities that will empower communities. This suggests a process of engagement in the form of dialogue.

The study found that the GCIS does not fully adhere to the theoretical principles of empowerment (see section 2.4) which are a prerequisite in the participatory development communication process (see section 6.3.3).

Yoon's (2004) *participation in decision-making* (see section 3.1) is not apparent in development initiatives in Tshwane, which indicates that community members fall within the dependency paradigm of development. The empirical study shows that Tshwane communities operate within the framework of structures of domination (see structuration theory in section 2.3), which makes empowerment challenging.

Furthermore, the lack of empowering opportunities creates communities that may be perceived as *intransitive* or *semi-intransitive*, and lack the skill and cognition to be *critically transitive* (see sections 2.3 and 6.3.3.5).

- **Theoretical statement 4: community participation**

A primary emphasis of the participatory approach is to involve the communities' active participation during the entire development communication initiative.

An essential component for successful participatory development communication is the active involvement of the community (see section 3.1). However, the study shows that the GCIS does not fully meet this requirement (see section 6.3.1.1).

Martin Buber's thinking (refer to section 2.3), which deals with two types of relationship, the *I-Thou* and the *I-It* relationships, is a precursor for successful development communication initiatives. The relationship that the GCIS establishes with community members in Tshwane does not encompass the *I-Thou* relationship as - recommended by Buber (see section 6.3.1.1).

- **Theoretical statement 5: the socio-cultural context of the community**

The GCIS should consider the socio-cultural context of each community during the development communication process, which includes the community's indigenous knowledge and cultural identity as the foundation in order to achieve social integration. Participatory development communication requires the recognition and validation of both indigenous and expert knowledge within communities, and to find an effective means of blending the two with due care given to existing social and cultural norms.

A requirement stated in section 3.3.2 regarding the socio-cultural context of the community was not fully realised by GCIS and is reported on in section 6.3.4.

It is required of GCIS to shift its focus regarding the communities' socio-cultural context and indigenous knowledge in its participatory development communication from mere inclusion to authentic participation in decision-making of the communities' traditional and cultural leaders.

- **Theoretical statement 6: strategic communication**

GCIS should ensure that their development communication efforts involve the community's responsiveness and strategic planning with the community. In other words, ad hoc activities have no place in participatory development communication.

The study shows that strategic communication, which includes meaningful planning (see section 3.3.2), is insufficiently practised by the GCIS in Tshwane (see section 6.3.5). The GCIS lacks strategic communication and this is evident from its lack of foundational principles in respect of dialogue and authentic participation as advocated by the participatory development communication literature.

7.2.4.2 Conclusion

An analysis of the communication of Thusong Service Centres with Tshwane communities shows that there is inadequate alignment with the theoretical underpinnings of participatory development communication.

Against the backdrop of Chin Saik Yoon's four ways of observing participation in development projects, the study indicates that Tshwane communities participate in implementation and in benefit, but not in evaluation or decision-making. Furthermore, using Freirean dialogue as a benchmark it is concluded that Thusong Service Centres do not fully meet its required principles. Lastly, it is noted that Tshwane communities are not enabled with the requisite knowledge and opportunities to engage in "critical transitivity", at the expense of empowerment and self-reliance. It is in light of these inadequacies that it is deduced that the GCIS's communication with developing communities in Tshwane falls within the dependency paradigm.

These inadequacies may be addressed by using appropriate activities and techniques that are specific and tailor-made for participatory development communication, and this

is discussed in the next section where recommendations are made to cater for the needs of the GCIS's communication shortfalls.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATION BY THE GCIS

7.3.1 Self-reliance

When cooperatives and partnerships are formed, there should be an assurance of devolution of power, whereby all stakeholders are equal partners in the development communication process. The GCIS should take on this responsibility by monitoring such activities to ensure that this is realised.

The study further suggests that networks of economic opportunities for self-reliance are introduced for the sustainability of each community. These may include current initiatives, but the suggestion is that the GCIS publicise such initiatives robustly in the community and assists those who are currently passive receivers of information to action such initiatives for their sustainability.

7.3.2 Dialogue

It is also recommended that the GCIS introduce an independent, unbiased body that is not affiliated to any political structures as a key stakeholder at stakeholders' forums.

The study indicated that the position of centre manager at each of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane is unoccupied; therefore it is recommended that these positions be filled in order to ensure the proper coordination and integration of activities at each of the centres. It is recommended that the GCIS employ additional staff to be positioned at each Thusong Service Centre as the current staff status is inadequate. Furthermore, once centres have adequate staff in place, branding of the centre should be a priority to ensure that the Thusong Service Centre concept realises its maximum potential.

In addition, the integration of community workers is necessary in order to create a cluster approach in terms of which each cluster conducts their own quarterly meeting, but meets collaboratively to report back within a bigger structure in order to align activities and policies. This would keep each department informed about happenings and occurrences in the various sectors, which would alleviate overlapping of projects, repetition and confusion. This would involve a collation of information that could be fed to a cluster for the purpose of providing focused information to the community, which should be linked to provincial and national goals.

7.3.3 Empowerment

It is recommended that Thusong Service Centres provide free computer services, which may include limited internet connectivity for community members. A further suggestion would be to have community members register for computer services that the Thusong Service Centre provides. Subsequently members would be given a membership card which he/she may use at the centre.

It is recommended that Thusong Service Centres create empowering opportunities, such as a community radio station or community newspaper in order to create training and job opportunities for community members.

Literacy and numeracy programmes should be introduced in partnership or collaboration with tertiary institutions as part of their community engagement programmes. For development communication to be effective, it should be linked not only to the process of acquiring technical knowledge and skills, but also to awareness-raising, politicisation and organisation processes.

The proposition that oppressed and marginalised individuals can free themselves if they are given a voice, and the ability to take control over their surroundings, seems to exclude the role of structure as played out by the institutions involved. The study therefore recommends that the development communication process incorporate the

communities' participation in decision-making. Not only should this principle be built into government policy documents, but it should also be incorporated in the day-to-day operations of Thusong Service Centres in their development communication initiatives, which will further enhance community autonomy.

7.3.4 Community participation

This study strongly recommends that the development communication programme at Thusong Service Centres include the following participatory activities in order to promote development in the community:

- Visioning sessions and participatory rural appraisal techniques to encourage dialogue with the community.
- Community mapping, which provides insight into the community's current status in respect of development.
- A transect, a walk through a neighbourhood to gain insight on the community's physical reality.
- Introduce the Venn diagram which is used for visualising and analysing relationships, and may be further used to eliminate corruption and abuse of power.
- The concept of problem trees should be introduced, whereby community members identify their own priorities.
- The Thusong Service Centres' research capacity should be broadened. A comparative analysis should be conducted of benchmark studies and post-implementation baseline studies.
- Citizen report cards, a way in which reliable and consistent feedback and communication for accountability may be obtained, should be introduced.
- Governance scorecards should be used as a tool to monitor government service delivery and the empowerment of the developing community.

It is also recommended that a stronger commitment from government be introduced in the form of deliverables to communities during the development communication process.

7.3.5 Socio-cultural context

This study acknowledges the high premium that the GCIS places on its communities' socio-cultural context. Culturally sensitive communication and use of communities' indigenous expertise is encouraged in order for participatory development communication to be useful. However, it is recommended that such indigenous expertise be included throughout GCIS's development communication initiative in an authentic participatory manner with communities.

7.3.6 Strategic planning

Coordination of events, activities and initiatives requires a structured strategic plan. This plan should incorporate all key stakeholders and integrate the activities of the various departments and the Thusong Service Centres should be responsible for the initiation and coordination of such activities.

The GCIS does not engage in formal research with the Tshwane communities. It is therefore recommended that the GCIS conduct intensive research studies on the impact and effectiveness of their programmes together with perception studies. This may be done in conjunction with informal research studies that are currently being conducted.

The study showed that Tshwane communities are apathetic about development. Linking with the preceding recommendation, it is further suggested that the GCIS conduct formal research to determine the reasons for such behavioural patterns. The findings of such research will inform subsequent plans of action to resolve communities' apathy towards development. Instead of merely acknowledging that community members are apathetic, government should be working to combat such circumstances for the greater good of the nation, which formal research will help to facilitate.

7.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The contribution that the study made was in the field of development communication with an emphasis on participation. The study used qualitative research methods to explore the six Thusong Service Centres' development communication with communities in Tshwane. However, since the study made use of qualitative research, the findings that were generated could not be extended to Thusong Service Centres throughout South Africa. As a result, the findings were relevant only to communities and Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane and could not be generalised to the rest of the country. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted to investigate development communication in each of the remaining eight provinces of South Africa. The results emanating from such a study could be used in a comparative study to ascertain trends in rural and urban development communication.

This study focused on interviews with GCIS personnel, analyses of government policies and personal observations. For future research, it is recommended that a study incorporating the communities' perspectives be conducted, with a representative sample of community members from each province.

The GCIS alludes to the fact that stakeholder forums are used to elicit community members' participation in the development communication process. Whether an environment of engagement and dialogue is really encouraged at these forums, should be investigated in a further study.

A follow-up study on the GCIS's consultation with COCTA regarding the change of management of Thusong Service Centres could be conducted to ascertain the progress and success of this initiative.

Further research could focus on designing a normative model of participatory development communication that is specific to Thusong Service Centres and development in South Africa, which should incorporate theoretical principles of

participatory development communication. This model could be used across Thusong Service Centres in the country in order to grade their development communication status. Such measures could be used as a self-reflective tool to ensure that the participatory development communication mandate is carried out.

It was discussed previously that the GCIS does not engage in formal research with developing communities. It is thus recommended that further formal research emanating from this study be conducted in collaboration with the GCIS.

7.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the trends that emerged during the empirical investigation of the Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane. By means of semi-structured interviews with senior GCIS personnel, qualitative document analyses and personal observations, the investigation revealed that Thusong Service Centres are not fully practising the normative principles of participatory development communication.

A huge shortfall in GCISs communication efforts is the lack of strategic communication and planning, which can add value as an operational tool by helping to identify development-related perceptions and the level of knowledge and learning needs. This in turn will enable subsequent development communication planning. The idea of knowledge and learning needs is emphasised in this study, because of the history of developing communities in South Africa, and more specifically in this study, Tshwane.

Chapter 1 outlined the history of South Africa and its disadvantaged communities, which aligns with the necessity to fast-track the development process in the country. The study included a literature review which informed the foundational principles of development communication, which were presented in the form of six theoretical statements which were used as a benchmark for a comparison between Thusong Service Centres' communication with Tshwane communities and the theoretical principles of participatory development communication. Although the study found that that the way in which

Thusong Service Centres communicate with community members in Tshwane is generally inadequate and in the main does not follow the guidelines of participatory development communication, this study makes sound recommendations that could be followed to ensure successful and appropriate development communication in the future.

The participation of the developing community at every juncture of the development communication process will promote the adoption of new practices, empower communities, and build networks and capacity among stakeholders, which is essential for successful and sustainable development communication. With such commitment from all key stakeholders, fast-tracking of the development process will be an attainable reality.

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