

# **A CSR communication model for empowering business and society towards sustainability**

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Romans 11:36 (AMP)

*For from Him [all things originate] and through Him [all things live and exist] and to Him are all things [directed].*

***To Him be glory and honor forever! Amen.***

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is accepted widely that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a dual purpose, namely to generate a strategic advantage for business and contribute to the sustainable development of society. It is argued that the communication function should contribute to this dual focus. However, it would seem that in research and practice, the focus of CSR communication is mainly on creating a strategic advantage for business.

The purpose of the present study was to conceptualise an integrated CSR communication model that incorporates principles from a corporate as well as development communication perspective, guided by the mentioned dual purpose of CSR. This was done by firstly exploring the different theoretical fields and theories of corporate and development communication relevant to CSR communication, to identify and evaluate these principles. Thereafter these respective principles were utilised within two different CSR communication approaches: one from a corporate communication perspective (as creating a strategic advantage for the business) and one from a development communication perspective (as contributing to sustainable development). These principles informed the concepts and constructs that was used to conceptualise a proposed model for Integrated CSR communication. This model focused on the mutual purpose of sustainability with empowerment for both business and society as the outcome. The strategic, rapport and action processes were identified as the continual communication processes within the model. The reflective strategist, reflective facilitator and reflective participant were described as the responsible roles within those processes. The model also provided guidance on the identification of stakeholders within whom engagement will take place within these processes. The nature of communication within the engagement was identified and described as contributing to the outcome of empowerment towards sustainability.

The mentioned model was evaluated empirically in qualitative research through semi-structured interviews with prominent communication academics to verify the theoretical foundation of the model. Thereafter, the model was adapted, based on their feedback and input. As CSR initiatives are predominantly initiated by business, the adapted model was evaluated through semi-structured interviews with senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR and CSR communication in various South African organisations. This was done to gain input on the practical relevance of the model. The data was analysed through qualitative content analysis. Based on the participants' feedback and input, the model was revised anew.

It was found that although most academics and practitioners perceived CSR as contributing to the sustainability of both business and society, CSR communication was found to benefit mainly the sustainability of business. After presenting the model to the participants all agreed on the necessity of such a model focussing on the mutual purpose of sustainability for both business and society. Feedback from the participants that contributed to this mutual purpose was included to refine the model.

There was thus an overall agreement among the academics on the theoretical foundation of the model and the practitioners on the accuracy, necessity, and workability of the model in practice in the South African context and globally. All the participants did however raise their concerns about the term “CSR” within CSR communication. Based on the overall feedback, the CSR communication model was adjusted to the Sustainable-citizenship communication model.

### **Keywords**

Corporate communication, corporate social responsibility (CSR), CSR communication, citizenship, empowerment, purpose, development communication, society, stakeholders, sustainability.

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## CHAPTER 1:

# CONTEXT, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Worldwide there is an increased awareness of the significance that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has for organisations (Liao *et al.*, 2018:1328). Nevertheless, there are unresolved conceptual issues concerning CSR (Bice, 2017:18). As a result, a clear definition for CSR is lacking, thus also a clear indication of its scope in organisations (Luhmann & Theuvsen, 2017:241).

After examining most of the existing definitions, Dahlsrud (2008) identified five dimensions of CSR, namely voluntariness, stakeholders, social, environmental and economic. The interpretation of these dimensions in the definitions are based mostly on managing these dimensions to the advantage of the organisation. This means that CSR is typically defined from a business perspective. This perspective is also reflected as such in earlier theoretical models and approaches to CSR (Davis, 1960; Carroll, 1979, 1991, 1999; Frederick, 1986; Woods, 1991; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Blowfield, 2007; Frynas, 2008; Idemudia, 2011; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

These viewpoints on CSR originated mostly within the so-called developed countries, where business is concerned largely with economic issues and limited focus is placed on social matters. Questions were, however, raised about the efficiency of these CSR approaches from a business perspective and its tangible benefits for society, instead of merely benefitting the organisation (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005:507; Blowfield, 2007:686, 690; Frynas, 2008:276). This viewpoint was elaborated on by Khan and Lund-Thomson (2011:75) who specifically stated that the voices of the stakeholders from the developing world are not being heard.

In contrast to the developed countries, so-called developing countries have a much stronger focus on social and developmental issues within CSR (Jayakumar, 2013:70). It would seem that governments and other agencies in developing countries are less able to deal with the vast pressing social concerns. Therefore, business is expected to be more receptive to stakeholders' concerns and social responsibilities (Dawkins & Ngunjiri, 2008:286, 290; Idemudia, 2014:178). This perspective was however rarely incorporated in CSR thinking within the developed world.

This deficiency is reflected in CSR's current definition and practice. It occurs mostly from a business perspective with scant attention paid to the sustainable development of society.



To address societal issues from a sustainability perspective as well, Blowfield (2005:521, 524) proposes a constant reflection on ways this “business-like” mind-set affects the interpretation and practice of CSR and its contribution to society. In answer to this perspective, Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011) posited the concept of shared value. They proposed this as a means to govern an organisation’s involvement in CSR so that it benefits both the business and society. Furthermore, the fourth King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa (IoD, 2016), hereafter referred to as King IV, identified the creation of shared value as an important governing principle within the South African context that goes beyond traditional CSR. This is namely, creating shared value for both business and society. In this case, CSR is defined as an integrated approach that addresses the opportunities and challenges within the purpose of the triple context (profit, people, planet), to help create value for both business and society.

The present study supports the notion to address CSR from a business as well as societal perspective. Thus, the definition of the ISO26000 (2010) will serve as the point of departure for CSR in this study. This is also the definition used within the South African context as stipulated by the third King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa (IoD, 2009), hereafter referred to as King III, as well as the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined by ISO26000 (2010:2) as “the responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparency and ethical behaviour that:

- Contributes to sustainable development, including health and welfare of society
- Takes into account the expectation of stakeholders
- Is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour
- Is integrated throughout the organisation and practices in its relationship.”

The definition above frames CSR as a business’s willingness to include social and environmental concerns in its economic activities (referred to as the triple context by King IV, 2016) and in the relationship with its stakeholders. Based on this definition’s focus on business and society it is therefore argued that CSR has a dual purpose, namely:

- Generate a strategic advantage for the organisation (see Lantos, 2001; EU, 2001; IoD, 2002; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Jones & Bartlett, 2009; ISO, 2010).

- Contribute to society in terms of sustainable development (see EU, 2001; IoD, 2002; WBCSD, 2005; UN, 2005; Skinner & Mersham, 2008; Blowfield & Dolan, 2008; IoD, 2009; ISO, 2010; Piedereit, 2010; Ford, 2010; Valor, 2012).

The ideal relationship between CSR's strategic and sustainable-development purpose entails interdependence between business and society where equal emphasis is placed on both entities (Lantos, 2001; Davis, 2005).

This equal emphasis on the dual purpose of CSR should also be reflected in CSR communication. The role of communication in CSR is evident where the enterprise strategy, which guides the dual purpose, should be supported by the communication function (Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Grunig, 2006; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Steyn, 2003, 2007). This perspective also includes the CSR strategy, which implements the mentioned dual purpose.

The importance of communication supporting the CSR strategy is accepted widely among scholars (see Golob & Bartlet, 2007; Podnar, 2008; Benn *et al.*, 2010; Rensburg & De Beer, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Du Plessis & Grobler, 2014; Bortree, 2014; Elving *et al.*, 2015; Tao & Wilson, 2016; Heath & Waymer, 2017). As a result, CSR communication is developing into an acknowledged field of study. As was mentioned, CSR is defined from in striving towards a dual purpose. However, currently CSR communication focuses mostly on gaining a strategic advantage for the organisation. This can be seen clearly in the development of CSR communication as a field of study as well as the research that is conducted within this field.

## **1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CSR COMMUNICATION**

CSR communication developed after realising the importance of stakeholders within CSR (Manheim & Pratt, 1986). It was discerned that the organisation has a responsibility towards its stakeholders. This makes sound communication on CSR issues crucial between organisations and their stakeholders to reflect this responsibility (Podnar, 2008:75). Due to this need, CSR communication has become an acknowledged but multidisciplinary field of study, which draws on the field of corporate communication, especially public relations (PR) and marketing communication as sub-fields (Podnar, 2008:76). In the process, CSR communication has become an important part of a business's CSR initiatives, especially in its quest for transparency, accountability (Elving *et al.*, 2015:119) and business sustainability by communicating about CSR achievements and intentions (Kloppers, 2015:6,25; Koep, 2017:221). The focus is thus mainly on the achievement of business objectives through CSR communication.

There were, however, attempts to address the purely business perspective of CSR and CSR communication. Stakeholders showed concerns about early models and approaches which focused mainly on financial responsibilities. This led to interventions such as the triple bottom line and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or Social Accountability International (SAI) initiative (Dawkins & Ngunjiri, 2008:287). Although these initiatives placed the focus on the role of communication in CSR to address stakeholder concerns, again it entailed mostly practices from a business perspective. This was evident in sustainability reports, annual reports, websites and other channels. These means were used to communicate the organisation's compliance with the mentioned initiatives to portray the company in a favourable light regarding economic, ethical, and environmental issues (Van der Laan, 2005:375). Therefore, concerns were indeed raised about CSR lacking a societal focus, but CSR communication that were supposed to address those concerns, were also employed mainly to support the particular business's perspective (Mersham *et al.*, 1995:87-88, 92; Melkote, 1996; Koten, 1997:149, 155-156; Freeman & McVea, 2001).

This business perspective was also evident in further developments of CSR communication as a field of study. Part of the development of the theoretical field of CSR communication was the formulation of different definitions to capture the scope of CSR communication. These definitions were again formulated to address CSR communication as creating a strategic advantage for the organisation (see Podnar, 2008:75; Jimena, 2008:9; Ziek, 2009:138; CSRCOM Conference, 2011; Newig *et al.*, 2013:2977; Zieita, 2017:37).

Podnar (2008:75) defines CSR communication as a process where stakeholder expectations are anticipated and various communication tools employed to communicate CSR policy. In this process, information is provided about the organisation's integration of business operations with social and environmental concerns, through engaging with the relevant stakeholders. Jimena (2008:9) follows a similar vein by explaining CSR communication as an on-going process of communication with various stakeholders, which focuses on CSR issues. This continuous process of communication was viewed by Newig *et al.* (2013:2978) as significant to create a strategic advantage for the company by managing reputation and organisational issues. The communication of CSR initiatives is guided by stakeholders' expectations. The aim is thus to address central issues but also benefit the company in terms of sales promotion, identity, and reputation (Zieita, 2017:37).

When evaluating these definitions, the influence of public relations and marketing communication is evident. This is also reflected in the body of knowledge of CSR communication that is conceptualised mainly from a corporate communication perspective. In

this regard, it contributes to the business perspective that influences the body of knowledge for CSR communication.

### **1.2.1 Developing CSR communication's body of knowledge**

As stated in 1.2 above, CSR communication originated from the accepted importance of communicating CSR to address stakeholder concerns from a corporate communication perspective. Within the subfield of marketing communication, CSR communication is seen to be influencing consumer perceptions (Golob *et al.*, 2008), increasing sales, and contributing to customer loyalty (Seele & Lock, 2015). CSR accomplishes this by creating a financial value for the organisation (Groza *et al.*, 2011) and by branding the organisation as a responsible citizen (Wong & Dhanesh, 2017; Wen & Song, 2017). Criticism on this consumer-oriented approach to CSR communication resulted in a more stakeholder-oriented approach in marketing (Scandellius & Cohen, 2016).

Within the subfield of public relations, research tends to focus mostly on the different mediums and messages employed to communicate on CSR initiatives (Bortree, 2014; Seele & Lock, 2015; Koep, 2017; Go & Bortree, 2017; O'Connor *et al.*, 2017; Shim *et al.*, 2017). This is done to avoid negative press (Kim & Reber, 2008) and serve as a source of positive publicity and image building (Benn *et al.*, 2010) for the company to be seen as a good corporate citizen (Koep, 2017).

Further research addressed the role of corporate communication in CSR in general (Heath & Ryan, 1989; Clark, 2000; Frankental, 2001; Starck & Kruckeberg, 2003; Kim & Reber, 2008; Benn *et al.*, 2010; Tae, 2017). The research expanded by focusing also on the management of image and identity, legitimacy and credibility through CSR. This includes the matter of reputation management that was addressed from a communication management perspective (see Lewis, 2003; Bartlett *et al.*, 2007; Morsing *et al.*, 2008; Ziek, 2009:142; Amaladoss & Manohar, 2013; Du Plessis & Grobler, 2014; Tata & Prasad, 2015; Crane & Glozer, 2016; Lock *et al.*, 2016).

Based on the role of public relations in CSR, research also focused on the negativity of public relation's role in CSR regarding the self-promotion or "greenwashing" of organisations (Benn *et al.*, 2010:417, 418; Newig *et al.*, 2013:2984; Elving *et al.*, 2015:122). To address this negativity and counter the limited understanding of the role of PR in CSR, research suggested a re-examining of this role (Benn *et al.*, 2010:418 & 419). Such a re-assessment had to include the strategic role of communication in constructs such as corporate governance, sustainability, and social responsibility (Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2014). This highlighted the need for further research into communication on CSR, to address the limited understanding of such

communication (Podnar, 2008:75; Ziek, 2009:137). This understanding will help organisations deal with both business and societal issues through CSR communication (Bortree, 2014:3), that is also the aim of this study.

Previous re-examinations resulted in research based on the inclusion of strategic communication management within CSR. With this inclusion, CSR communication moved away from a focus purely on mediums and messages to one that engages society from a strategic perspective (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Du Plessis & Grobler, 2014; Tao & Wilson, 2016; Heath & Waymer, 2017). Although this research to a greater extent accentuated the role of business in society, communication was still defined as mainly acting in the best interest of business. Expanding on the theory of strategic communication management within CSR, this definition changed after most recent research suggested that strategic communication should function in the best interest of both business and society by creating shared value (Lock *et al.*, 2016; Hovring, 2017a, 2017b; Golob *et al.*, 2017). In the present study, this form of strategic communication is referred to as shared-value communication.

The concepts borrowed originally from the fields of public relations and marketing communication led to a one-sided focus in CSR communication on business issues, without a relation to societal issues. In the initial evaluation of research on CSR communication, it was clear that this research focused mostly on a business perspective from a developed worldview. Further research, as discussed above, expanded this business perspective with a stronger focus on society to include a developing worldview. The crux of this research involves CSR communication being viewed as continuous engagement with the relevant stakeholders in society (Amaladoss & Manohar, 2013:76) and not just those generally targeted by the developed world (Jayakumar, 2013:73). Such engagement should create a strategic advantage for the organisation and contribute to sustainable development by empowering society (Jayakumar, 2013:70). These arguments are supported by Bortree (2014:3) who proposed that the focus of CSR communication research should shift towards goals that are more sustainability oriented and relevant within the developed as well as developing contexts.

This shift is already visible in research that uses terms such as “fostering enduring and innovative partnerships” (Cooperrider & Fry, 2012); “sustainability communication”; “dialogical discourse” (Newig *et al.*, 2013); “empowerment” (Kao *et al.*, 2014); “long term and deep community engagement”; “involving communities”; “participation”; “shifting of power”; “dialogue”; “listening”; “trust” (Hall *et al.*, 2015); and “shared value” (Hovring, 2017a, 2017b). These terms are explored in current research on CSR communication. In order to address both business and societal issues, research further indicated different types of communication that should be

utilised. Newig *et al.* (2013) and Kloppers (2015) provide insight into such different types of CSR communication.

### **1.2.2 Different types of CSR communication**

Newig *et al.* (2013) differentiated between the different types of communication in the CSR context by referring to *sustainability communication*. These scholars referred to communication *about* sustainability as a process of exchange and debate focusing on sustainability to create a common understanding of the main issues, goals and intended role-players. Communication *of* sustainability explains communication as a managerial process to obtain certain objectives by disseminating information and education about CSR, for example, corporate reporting. Finally, they referred to communication *for* sustainability with the objective of facilitating societal transformation towards sustainable development (Newig *et al.*, 2013:2978-2980).

Similarly, Kloppers (2015) distinguishes between two types of CSR communication. Communication *about* CSR seeks to gain a strategic advantage for an organisation through strategic managing of communication and two-way symmetrical communication, given the context and desired outcome (i.e. communication *about* and communication *of* sustainability). Communication *within* CSR, highlights CSR activities that would lead to sustainable development. This is done through participatory communication (linked with communication *for* sustainability).

It would thus seem that current research applies communication from a dual approach by addressing business and societal issues through different means of communication. This raises the question whether there is need for another approach to CSR communication. It is argued that although current research addresses CSR communication based on the two purposes (see 1.1) this is done by focusing on one or the other aspect.

Furthermore, it is argued that because of a singular focus, a conflict of interest between these two purposes could cause the business to prioritise its own interest above that of society. Even within the creation of shared value as a mutual purpose, the perceived value created for organisations may conflict with value created for society (see 1.2.1). Therefore, the question again arises on whose perceived value will be addressed. Typically, business would be inclined to focus mostly on its own financial sustainability; however, this should not be at the expense of society. Therefore, this study does not propose another classification of CSR communication. Instead, a different perspective is recommended that focusses on integration and not merely utilising different principles of communication for different purposes.

In light of the discussion above, the present study proposed the conceptualisation of a possible CSR communication model that would incorporate the dual purpose of CSR as stipulated by the ISO26000 (2010:2) (see 1.1) in a mutually inclusive manner.

To conceptualise such a model, this study firstly examined the different theoretical fields of communication used to deal with the two purposes of CSR before incorporating them into a single model. Within the present study, those theoretical fields were identified as follows:

***CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective*** is communication that focuses on the management of stakeholder relationships to the advantage of the organisation whilst considering its impact on society and the environment.

***CSR communication from a development communication perspective*** entails communication utilised mainly to benefit society by empowering beneficiaries to become self-reliant in the sustainable development of society.

The present study proposed that it is insufficient merely to communicate differently to address business and societal goals and thus maintain the best interest of both. Tension between business and society could arise when there are conflicting viewpoints, interests, and goals (Hovring, 2017a). Thus, to balance the tension, CSR communication from a corporate and development communication perspective, should be integrated in a mutually inclusive manner.

### **1.3 THE THEORETICAL FIELDS OF CSR COMMUNICATION**

As was pointed out previously: despite the shift in research towards society and sustainability, there is still a strong business-centred focus to achieve the organisation's strategic goals (Podnar, 2008; Jimena, 2008; Ziek, 2009; Du Plessis & Grobler, 2014; Tao & Wilson, 2016; Heath & Waymer, 2017). This focus often implies that goals of sustainable development do not always receive the necessary attention in CSR (see 1.2). The same trend dominated the theoretical field of communication regarding CSR where most studies stem from a business viewpoint, thus addressing CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective.

The principles of CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective that would be utilised in this study are to a large extent a combination of the excellence theory, strategic communication management, the reflective paradigm (see Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Steyn & Everett, 2009; Holmström, 1997) and shared-value communication (Hovring, 2017a, 2017b). These theories from the developed world can be considered relevant because the organisation engages in CSR communication to its own advantage. Also relevant is stakeholder theory. It explains the management of stakeholder relationships within the CSR context based on the responsibilities of the organisation towards its stakeholders (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:190).

All these theories stem from the meta-theoretical field of cybernetics (see 6.1). In this field the considered role of communication is to maintain the equilibrium by managing stakeholders in the organisation's environment (Craig & Muller, 2007:261-262).

Principles from a development communication perspective does not necessarily receive the same exposure in CSR communication literature as principles from a corporate communication perspective. Also, within development communication, CSR communication is not an acknowledged term as it is within corporate communication. In order to conceptualise CSR communication within the context of development communication, it is necessary to evaluate the theories relevant to development communication.

These theories focus on sustainable development by empowering stakeholders to be self-reliant (see Blowfield, 2007; Burger, 2009; Idemudia, 2011; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). This perspective is informed by the critical tradition. Here the assumption is that communication's role is to question the distribution of power through a critical reflection on society that attempts to explain and transform it (Altafin, 1991:312; Strine, 1991:197). Within this perspective, communication's focus is informed further by participatory communication (see Servaes, 1995; Malan, 1998; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008) and the model of Habermas regarding communicative action (see Habermas, 1984; Jacobson & Storey, 2004; Jacobson & Pan, 2009; Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Otto & Fourie, 2017). In these approaches communication is viewed as the medium that facilitates change geared towards sustainable development whilst the strategic advantage for business is mostly overlooked.

The challenge is to integrate both perspectives on CSR communication, with its different, and even conflicting, theoretical groundings and foci. From a cybernetic perspective, the goal is to keep the system in a state of equilibrium and synergy by managing communication to maintain the power structures (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:39). In contrast, the critical tradition does the opposite by questioning the institutions of power (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:40) with the view to transform society (Altafin, 1991:312; Strine, 1991:197). There thus is a need to conceptualise a CSR communication model that assimilates both perspectives of CSR communication – the former with its theories from a developed worldview, and the latter based on theories from a developing worldview.

## **1.4 GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.4.1 General research question**

Against the background of the discussion above, the general research question emerges as follows:



*What concepts and constructs should a CSR communication model integrate that could help create a strategic advantage for business as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society in a mutually inclusive manner?*

This main research question can be broken down into specific research questions that flow logically from the main one.

## **1.4.2 Specific research questions**

The following specific research questions were deduced:

- 1.4.2.1 Which principles of corporate communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?
- 1.4.2.2 Which principles of development communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?
- 1.4.2.3 How can an integrated CSR communication model be conceptualised that incorporates principles from a corporate and development communication perspective?
- 1.4.2.4 What are the perceptions of South African and European communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model?
- 1.4.2.5 Which perceptions do senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model?

The general and specific research questions of the present study can be translated into general and specific aims.

## **1.5 GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RESEARCH AIMS**

### **1.5.1 General research aim**

The general aim of the present research was posited as follows:

*Explore the applicable concepts and constructs that a CSR model should integrate to create a strategic advantage for the business but also contribute to sustainable development in a mutually inclusive manner.*

## **1.5.2 Specific research aims**

From the general aim, the following specific research aims were drawn:

- 1.5.2.1 Identify and evaluate the principles of corporate communication that should be utilised within an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature.
- 1.5.2.2 Identify and evaluate the principles of development communication that should be utilised within an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature.
- 1.5.2.3 Conceptualise an integrated CSR communication model that that incorporates principles from a corporate and development communication perspective, based on findings drawn from literature.
- 1.5.2.4 Ascertain through semi-structured interviews the perceptions of communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model.
- 1.5.2.5 Determine through semi-structured interviews the perceptions that senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model.

## **1.6 GUIDING ARGUMENTS**

The following central arguments guided the present study:

- CSR has a dual purpose: create a strategic advantage for organisations (from a corporate communication perspective) as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society (from a development communication perspective).
- CSR communication should support this dual purpose by addressing both perspectives to CSR communication in a mutually inclusive and integrated manner.
- Currently, CSR communication is being addressed mainly from a corporate communication perspective to create a strategic advantage for business. Development communication addresses communication within the CSR context towards the sustainable development of society. Each of these (different and often conflicting) perspectives thus has a singular focus. In this study the argument is made for an integrated approach, which implies that both afore-mentioned perspectives should be critically evaluated in order to contribute to a CSR communication model with an incorporated focus.

## **1.7 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

Two different theoretical perspectives are used as point of departure to conceptualise a CSR communication model that help balance the tension between business and society and address their singular focus. This proposed model, with a mutually inclusive focus on CSR communication should equip and enable the communication function within business to understand, integrate and address the full spectrum of CSR communication. This proofs relevant because CSR initiatives are predominantly initiated within business. In this regard, the present study incorporated the governing guidelines of King IV (IoD, 2016) for business into a communication model (see 1.1).

## **1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This study followed a qualitative research approach. The focus of such a design is to interpret and construct the qualitative aspects of communication experiences (Du Plooy, 2009:29). The intent of qualitative research methods is to investigate subjective, personal, and socially constructed realities where the context of a phenomenon and the human experience are deemed central to the research (Mouton, 1996:169). The focus is thus on the participants' points of view: how they think and feel about a certain issue (Bless *et al.*, 2013:16).

The qualitative research approach is applicable because the present study aimed to explore and explain the personal and socially constructed reality of CSR communication within the business context. Thereafter, these qualitative aspects were interpreted and built into an integrated model of CSR communication. Throughout, the focus was on the participants' perceptions of what CSR communication should be, and which elements should be included in an integrated CSR communication model.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHOD**

### **1.9.1 Literature study**

Existing literature was reviewed that covers CSR communication, corporate communication, and development communication for social change. The following databases were consulted: Nexus, PR Catalogue, SA Catalogue, EBSCOHost, Emerald, JSTOR, and NWU Catalogue. This was done to establish the nature of prior research within this particular field and to ensure a sufficient body of theoretical literature is available for this study.

The literature review supported the argument that CSR communication is mostly addressed form a corporate communication perspective to create a strategic advantage for business. From a development communication perspective, CSR communication is not an acknowledge term.

Here communication is rather being addressed within the CSR context, mostly to support the sustainable development of society. No evidence could be found where these two perspectives were integrated into a mutually inclusive model for CSR communication.

In South Africa the following research was conducted within the two perspectives: Focusing on development communication, Van Dyk (2014) explores the relationship between corporate donors and non-profit organisations (NPOs) within the paradigm of participatory communication. Kloppers (2015) develops a model for CSR communication, which distinguishes communication *about* CSR, from communication *in* CSR. Other publications focus on the role of public relations in corporate social investment (CSI) (Skinner, 1995; De Souza, 1999; Rampersad, 2001; Sibeko, 2003). Further research in South Africa was conducted on the role of strategic communication management in CSR, thus contributing to the enterprise strategy (Steyn, 2007; Rensburg & De Beer, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Du Plessis & Grobler, 2014).

Internationally, research reflects enquiries into various dimensions of CSR communication. This include the following: the role of public relations in CSR (Kim & Reber, 2008; Benn *et al.*, 2010; Preciado-Hoyo, 2013); CSR reporting and communication tools (Golob & Bartlett, 2007; Morsing *et al.*, 2008; Ziek, 2009; Seele & Lock, 2015); defining CSR communication (Podnar, 2008); reviewing CSR communication from the perspective of a developing world (Amaladoss & Manohar, 2013; Jayakumar, 2013) and the contribution of CSR communication in the creation of shared value (Hovring, 2017a, 2017b).

## **1.9.2 Empirical study**

A qualitative research approach was used in the present study, as described above. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both academics and practitioners in the fields of corporate communication, CSR communication and development communication for social change.

### **1.9.2.1 Semi-structured interviews**

The schedule for a semi-structured interview contains standardised questions or a list of topics. Follow-up or probing questions can be posed that help the interviewer gain a better understanding of the phenomenon while interacting with the participant (Du Plooy, 2009:177).

#### *Semi-structured interviews with academics*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted involving three South African and three European communication academics. The focus was only on those academics who are renowned researchers in the fields of corporate communication, CSR communication, or development

communication for social change. Purposive sampling was used to select participating academics (Du Plooy, 2009:114-115). The aim was to evaluate the perceptions of these communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model in order to validate the concepts and constructs of this model. The interview schedule was compiled in accordance with the theoretical constructs identified in literature.

#### *Semi-structured interviews with practitioners*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication of various South African organisations. This study focused on senior communication practitioners due to their position in business to influence the CSR strategy. The focus on communication practitioners in business was due to the fact that CSR initiatives are mostly initiated by business. The guiding purpose was evaluating the practical relevance of the proposed CSR communication model within business. Purposive and snowball sampling (Du Plooy, 2009:114-115) were used to identify 10 companies. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached.

In all cases, the semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed deductively according to the theoretical concepts and constructs identified in literature. Furthermore, the interviews were analysed inductively to identify themes that were not captured in the literature study, but which the interviewees deemed important. These combined themes were included in the proposed CSR communication model.

### **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The different communication academics were contacted in advance to seek their cooperation for the study and acquire their permission for interviews. The practitioners were also contacted to acquire their permission for interviews. The researcher assured them that the aim of the study is not to compare organisations or focus on specific organisational strategies, but rather determine best practices of CSR communication within the business context. This study was also approved by the NWU's ethical committee (ethical number: NWU-00393-16-A7, see appendix A).

### **1.11 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

In chapter 1 the context, problem statement, and research questions were posed and discussed. Chapter 2 and 3 focus on the theoretical foundation and the identification and evaluation of the principles of CSR communication that contribute to the dual purpose of CSR. Based on these principles a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective was formulated in chapter 2 that focusses on the creation of a strategic advantage

for business. Another CSR communication approach was formulated in chapter 3 that contributes to the sustainable development of society. Based on these approaches, a theoretical model is conceptualised in Chapter 4, which incorporates the principles of these two approaches in a mutually inclusive manner. Chapter 5 discusses the empirical research methods used in the present study to evaluate this proposed model. The discussions on the findings of the empirical research are divided between Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 6 the findings are discussed of the academics' perceptions as well as possible alterations to the proposed conceptual model, based on the feedback. In chapter 7 the perceptions of the practitioners are examined and the changes to the proposed model discussed based on their feedback. Chapter 8 proposes a renewed CSR communication model, which are based on the over-all findings of the research.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

It was argued that CSR presently is a crucial concept in business. CSR should have a dual purpose, namely to create a strategic advantage for business and contribute to the sustainable development of society. It was argued further that CSR communication should support this dual purpose. Currently, however, CSR communication is typically defined and practiced from a corporate communication perspective according to a so-called developed worldview, which focuses mainly on creating a strategic advantage for the organisation. The focus of communication within the CSR context based on sustainable development as stipulated from a development communication perspective from a developing worldview, is mostly overlooked.

Thus, to create a conceptual model for CSR communication that integrates both perspectives in a mutually inclusive manner, the present study explored the different principles of these perspectives.

In the following chapter (chapter 2), the principles of CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective will be identified and evaluated. This will be done according to the theories and approaches that underline this perspective. Thereby the researcher can identify the most important concepts and constructs that could be employed in the proposed theoretical model.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **CSR COMMUNICATION: A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 1 it was found that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is perceived to have a dual purpose, namely achieving a strategic advantage for the organisation as well as contributing to sustainable development. It was argued that CSR communication should support the realisation of both goals. However, it seems as if organisations employ this means mainly to help create a strategic advantage for the company, while overlooking sustainable development. There is, however, a shift in research towards a stronger focus on societal issues in CSR communication, but still mostly from a business perspective (see 1.2. & 1.2.1).

It was pointed out that CSR communication should be evaluated from both a corporate and development communication perspective in order to address both goals. However, tension between these perspectives' worldviews, values and goals makes it extremely difficult to act in the best interest of both. It was therefore suggested that CSR communication should be integrated from both perspectives in a mutually inclusively manner to serve an incorporated dual purpose (see 1.2.2).

The first step towards such an integrated model is to evaluate CSR communication from a corporate and development communication perspective as different and often conflicting fields of study. This evaluation will firstly establish similarities to form the basis of an integrated model. Secondly, it will also help identify opposing viewpoints to be addressed as the source of tension between the two perspectives. Thirdly, such a model will indicate ways in which these two perspectives could supplement each other and contribute to the dual purpose.

To achieve the above-mentioned integration, this chapter explores the principles to be utilised within a CSR communication approach according to its origin in CSR as well as its theoretical grounding in the field of corporate communication with public relations and marketing communication as sub-fields. The focus is on stakeholder theory, strategic communication management, shared-value communication and the excellence theory. These fields of study will be discussed from a cybernetic perspective highlighting their contribution to the creation of a strategic advantage for business through CSR communication. This will answer the first research question (1.4.2.1), namely:

*Which principles of corporate communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?*

## **2.2 ASSUMPTIONS OF CSR FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE**

The starting point for identifying and evaluating these principles, is exploring CSR since its assumptions influence this perspective. Defining CSR, however, proves to be challenging (see 1.1) due to the multiple perspectives and ideologies about such a responsibility (Grafstrom & Windell, 2011:221). This causes a fragmented understanding CSR (Vohra & Sheel, 2012:74).

Early assumptions about CSR focused generally on economic issues. These issues were viewed to the benefit of the organisation (Davis, 1960; Carroll, 1979), whilst keeping the expectations of society in mind (Carroll, 1979). Later the focus shifted from society's expectations specially to create a better society (Frederick, 1986; Carroll, 1991, 1999; Woods, 1991). These assumptions of CSR indeed address the issue of an organisation's responsibilities towards society beyond profit making. However, the focus of this responsibility was based purely on legal and ethical considerations (Dahlsrud, 2008:6). These definitions also could not help identify the relevant 'society' and 'societal issues'. In other words, it failed to point out the stakeholders to whom the organisation is responsible (Waddock *et al.*, 2002; Jamali, 2008:216-217).

CSR assumptions in the early part of the 21st century (Henderson, 2001; Waddock *et al.*, 2002; Van Marrewijk, 2003; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003; Hopkins, 2007) used Freeman's stakeholder perspective to answer the question about whom companies should be responsible to, but failed to provide clear answers (Woods, 1991:696). According to Dahlsrud (2008:6), this deficiency may be because the answer to these questions would differ due to diverse contexts for different organisations. Context can thus be considered as a variable that influences the understanding and practicing of CSR in different organisations based on the intended objective. Identifying CSR issues and engaging with stakeholders would thus be context specific for each organisation, based on the planned outcomes.

Stakeholder theory proved meaningful in explaining the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:190; Zambon & Del Bello, 2005). This was, however, done mainly from a business perspective, by identifying specific stakeholders, their issues and expectations, and how to manage them. The aim was to align the organisation with the demands of society (Maon *et al.*, 2008:72) and to manage the impact of these stakeholders and their issues on the organisation (Jamali, 2008:219, 229). Several issues included the environment, which urged organisations to support environmental concerns through their CSR initiatives. As a result, organisations began incorporating sustainable business practices that



limit harm to the environment, to continue making a profit (Lo & Kwan, 2017). Although the stakeholder approach did not focus solely on profit, it did emphasise managing stakeholder relationships and issues primarily to the advantage of the organisation. Thus, the mentioned approach tended to define stakeholder relationships mostly from a business perspective.

Another view that supports the business perspective of CSR by managing stakeholder relationships, is the Northern or business approach to CSR (see Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Blowfield, 2007; Frynas, 2008; Idemudia, 2011; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). This approach to CSR postulates that stakeholder relationships should be managed to achieve an organisation's objectives and enhance business performance (Frynas, 2008:277; Jamali, 2008:227). Stakeholders in the CSR context are thus viewed as entities to be managed, akin to a product or a brand, to achieve the organisation's objectives (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005:511; Jamali, 2008:228; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011:75).

The above-mentioned assumptions aimed to set frameworks that reflect the operational and behavioural aspects of CSR, thus defining the boundaries. The frameworks attempted to capture the exact nature of CSR and to highlight the organisations' core responsibilities regarding CSR (Geva, 2008:1-3). The focus thus remains how CSR can help achieve strategic and economic gains for the organisation.

As argued in chapter 1 (see 1.1), these previous CSR assumptions were being questioned. This resulted in research focusing on the creation of shared value through CSR that would serve the best interest of both business and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011). This theory was also criticised and portrayed as the "sweet spot between business and society". This criticism stems from the issue that, in reality, CSR is still practiced from a business perspective that focuses on how societal needs can be addressed to give the business a competitive advantage in the market (Dembek *et al.*, 2016; Hovring, 2017a). Such a perspective supports the argument (see 1.2.2) that in instances of conflicting perceived values, the business would most likely act in its own interest.

CSR from a business perspective is thus mostly viewed in terms of economic, legal and ethical indicators. These are embedded in stakeholder theory, which focuses on fostering and maintaining positive stakeholder relationships to create a strategic advantage for the organisation.

The strong focus on managing stakeholder relationships stresses the important role CSR communication plays (see 1.2). CSR communication aims to identify these stakeholders and their issues, to incorporate them into the organisation's CSR strategy and to define the company's chosen engagement with the various stakeholders. This is also evident in the

general assumptions about CSR communication as reflected in the different fields and theories that were used to conceptualise the theoretical field.

## **2.3 FIELDS AND THEORIES INFORMING CSR COMMUNICATION FROM A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

As argued previously (see 1.2.2), CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective entails communication that focuses on managing stakeholder relationships to the advantage of the organisation, whilst considering their impact on society. This is achieved by gathering input and providing output to stakeholders about the organisation's CSR strategy. The reasoning behind such a strategy may be to limit negative impacts such as boycotts of brands, or negative media exposure; and build on aspects of positive impact such as increased consumer loyalty and overall improved relationships enhancing the organisation's credibility and reputation (Blowfield, 2007:688, 690, 692). The management of an organisation's relationships within its environment through input and output is grounded in the meta-theoretical tradition of cybernetics, which is discussed subsequently.

### **2.3.1 Cybernetic meta-theoretical tradition**

The main assumption of the cybernetic meta-theoretical tradition is that the various subsystems and systems indicate a clear interrelation. In these relationships, the subsystems strive for equilibrium, stability, openness, and adaptability, through communication (Drack & Pouvreau, 2015:526-531). Communication within these subsystems is viewed as the variable that manages the overall system to achieve balance and control (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:39-40). For such outcomes, the systems and subsystems must function interrelatedly and have mutually beneficial relationships (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:39). This is achieved through feedback where information is used to control the system that will lead to stability and equilibrium, which will ensure the continuation of the organisation (Craig & Muller, 2007:261-262).

Based on control, cybernetics focuses on feedback and equilibrium. In the process of CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, these are achieved by engaging pro-actively in two-way symmetrical communication with stakeholders. The aim is building relationships with a specific objective in mind, namely to assist organisational survival by keeping the organisation in equilibrium within an ever-changing environment. Through this process, input is thus gathered from the stakeholders, but is not allowed to influence the outcome of the communication process as established by the organisation (Burger, 2009:104). It is rather managed to the advantage of the organisation. The input is gathered to identify stakeholders' perceptions on current CSR initiatives, stakeholder's expectations regarding CSR

and what it should mean if the organisation were to be seen as socially responsible by addressing the needs of society.

The output is where the organisation establishes itself in the minds of the stakeholders as a good corporate citizen by communicating about its CSR. Based on the input, new CSR initiatives are launched, or current ones altered, to reflect the needs of society to the advantage of the organisation. This advantage can entail the following: an increased reputation, improved relationships with stakeholders and broader society, a competitive advantage, and a license to operate (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Tata & Prasad, 2015; Crane & Glozer, 2016; Lock *et al.*, 2016).

As was mentioned previously, cybernetics is viewed as the meta-theoretical tradition that guides the overall management of CSR within the organisation's environment seeking equilibrium for the organisation. In this regard, the *purpose of CSR* as the reason why business engage in CSR, can be identified as *profit*, which guides the *CSR strategy to manage societal relationships successfully through CSR communication for the survival of the organisation*.

Cybernetics can thus be considered as a meta-theoretical tradition informing CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, by incorporating theories that explain CSR communication as functional in distributing information (see 2.3.2.1 & 2.3.2.2). It is, however, also viewed as a strategic process (see 2.3.3.2) impacting the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders (see 2.3.3.1). These relationships are fostered and maintained through two-way symmetrical communication (see 2.3.3.5). The aim is that the organisation's CSR reflects societal issues (see 2.3.3.3), while ensuring shared value for both business and society (see 2.4.3.4).

## **2.3.2 The theoretical fields of CSR communication**

Corporate communication with public relations and marketing communication as sub-fields, were identified (see 1.2 & 2.1) as informing CSR communication, which both are expounded below.

### **2.3.2.1 Marketing communication**

CSR communication is used in marketing communication mainly to enhance the brand strategy. Through this strategy, CSR communication establish awareness, preference and loyalty to a particular brand. In this way, communication helps strengthen the brand and enhances the reputation of the organisation (Hildebrand *et al.*, 2011; Scandeliu & Cohen, 2016; Villagra *et al.*, 2015; Wen & Song, 2017).

Previously, consumers were the main focus of CSR communication in marketing with a view to create a financial benefit for the organisation (Golob *et al.*, 2008:91; Seele & Lock, 2015; Groza *et al.*, 2011). This consumer-oriented, one-way communication drew critique and raised scepticism that the CSR initiatives were exploited for marketing and propaganda and to gain a competitive advantage (Scandeliu & Cohen, 2016; Wong & Dhanesh, 2017; Yang & Hsu, 2017). Due to this scepticism, CSR communication within a marketing context started to be practiced from a broader perspective that included all stakeholders and not just consumers (Scandeliu & Cohen, 2016). This approach led to the inclusion of stakeholder theory (see 2.3.3.1) in CSR communication together with shared-value communication (see 2.3.3.4) and two-way symmetrical communication (see 2.3.3.5).

### **2.3.2.2 Public relations**

The inclusion of public relations in CSR communication as a theoretical field, basically followed the same course as marketing did from one-way communication geared for financial gain, to two-way symmetrical communication focusing on mutual understanding.

CSR communication was conceptualised previously according to the market-oriented approach of corporate communication/public relations (Burger, 2009), which corresponds with the business-case and Northern approach to CSR (see 2.2). The purpose of the market-oriented approach is mainly to serve the financial interest of the organisation and maintain the status quo (Burger, 2009:102), which correlates with CSR communication based on the meta-theoretical tradition of cybernetics (see 2.3.1). The status quo is maintained when the organisation assumes a position of power in which it uses influence-oriented communication to convey pro-business messages to the public. There is little or no consideration for aspects such as culture, participation, and change. Although stakeholders may give input, they are not allowed to influence the outcome of the communication process, which occurs according to the organisation's terms (Burger, 2009:104). Thus, CSR is considered as a tool in public relations used for image building to avoid negative press and stimulate positive publicity through one-way communication (see 1.2.1).

The market-oriented approach correlates with the two-way asymmetrical model of the excellence theory (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The latter uses feedback from stakeholders to influence perceptions through persuasion, rather than change an organisation's behaviour. Within the CSR context this implies that even when local communities are consulted, the aim is to achieve the goals as laid out by the organisation. This is done by distributing the relevant information that would persuade stakeholders to "buy into" the organisation's pre-set CSR strategy. This managerial process is criticised since external changes or CSR's impact on society are considered as less important to the organisation than the long-term advantage it

creates for the company (Blowfield, 2007:687, 689). The influence of the excellence theory and particularly, two-way symmetrical communication, on CSR communication is explored further in 2.3.3.5.

As was indicated previously, public relations was used in CSR based on the market approach through one-way communication or two-way asymmetrical communication. As a result, CSR was assessed as merely a communication tool to self-promote the organisation, which led to scepticism about an organisation's CSR as well as the role of public relations in CSR (Falconi, 2004:93; Benn *et al.*, 2010:417; Newig *et al.*, 2013:2894; Elving *et al.*, 2015:122). To address this scepticism, it was proposed that public relations has a much broader role to fulfil in CSR. This meant a change from managing communication, to a wider responsibility in management by the public relations function (Newig *et al.*, 2013:2984). This function should thus be able to offer strategic advice on CSR based on the role of public relations of representing stakeholders' expectations to management before they decide on strategies and objectives (Preciado-Hoyo, 2013:2). Therefore, it was argued further that the traditional role of public relations in CSR must be re-examined (Benn *et al.*, 2010:418-419), particularly the strategic role (Steyn & Niemann, 2008:2).

This re-examination had implications for the field of strategic communication management, the reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, and two-way symmetrical communication. These fields have become part of the body of knowledge of CSR communication.

### **2.3.3 Theories relevant to CSR communication**

Within the fields of marketing and corporate communication/public relations, various theories are relevant to CSR communication. These theories are presented and discussed below.

#### **2.3.3.1 Stakeholder theory**

Stakeholders are those in society to whom the organisation has a perceived responsibility (Spence *et al.*, 2001). Within stakeholder theory, this responsibility extends not only towards those who own stocks in the organisation, but also include other groups and individuals on whom the survival of the organisation depends (Freeman, 1984:46). They are specified further as those who are being influenced by, or are influencing the organisation (Steyn & Puth, 2000:210).

Through communication, relationships should be established between the organisation and its different stakeholders, focusing on mutual understanding (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:190). This understanding concerns common issues and how the business fulfils its responsibility by addressing those issues. Such communication relationships are characterised by collaboration,

openness, and listening (Heath, 2001:3; Jahansoozi, 2006:942). This relationship should also be managed strategically through two-way symmetrical communication to the advantage of the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11; Freeman *et al.*, 2010:6; Steyn & Puth, 2000:210).

Stakeholder theory, as part of the meta-theoretical tradition of cybernetics, is mainly capitalistic in nature (Freeman, 2000:174; Freeman & Phillips, 2002:334). From the discussion above, it is further evident that the emphasis is on managing stakeholder relations in particular to profit the organisation.

Since the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders is emphasised, it is argued that CSR finds its conceptual roots in stakeholder theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:190; Zambon & Del Bello, 2005:130-131). The theory's perspective on CSR as fleshing out specific stakeholder issues and measuring their impact on the organisation, can serve as a useful guideline for CSR strategy (Jamali, 2008:219 & 229). Werther and Chandler (2010:7) support this argument by pointing out that through CSR organisations manage relationships with its stakeholders. This is done by addressing the obligations stakeholders perceive the organisation to have towards society and establishing mutually beneficial relationships with society to meet those obligations.

This capitalist focus in the stakeholder theory, however, determines the identification and managing of stakeholders and their issues as well as the scope of the organisation's responsibility towards these parties. This theory does not propose that all stakeholders should be managed similarly. Instead, stakeholders must be prioritised or clustered according to their importance and impact on organisations (Madariaga & Cremades, 2010:9). By identifying stakeholders and their issues, organisations can determine whether a stakeholder group is important for the organisation's economic growth, or a threat to the company's objectives (Van Dyk, 2014:89). This prioritisation or classification usually means assessing the stakeholder groups' attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency, to ascertain whether a particular group has a valid claim to the organisation (Jamali, 2008:219; Freeman *et al.*, 2010:5). In this way, the group is identified as *primary* stakeholder. Groups without the necessary legitimacy, urgency, or power such as the community, are thus often ignored or not prioritised as primary stakeholders. As a consequence, limited attention is being paid towards sustainable development beyond the profit margins of the organisation.

Following the discussion on stakeholder theory, the principle emerges of *identifying stakeholders* that would determine to whom the organisation has a responsibility and thus, with whom it should communicate. From a corporate communication perspective, the identification focuses on *primary stakeholders, namely those on whom the survival of the organisation depend based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency.*

It is necessary to establish the scope of communication necessary to manage relationships from a business perspective. Strategic communication management, the reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, and the excellence theory, inform communication with stakeholders who strive to build positive relationships to benefit the organisation.

### **2.3.3.2 *Strategic communication management***

According to the stakeholder theory, relationships are established between organisations and their stakeholders through interactive communication. The aim is to establish mutual understanding that in the long run will lead to a strategic advantage for the organisation (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:190). To achieve such an advantage, it is important to link the communication function to an organisation's objectives (Grunig & Grunig, 2000:304), especially its enterprise strategy, which is handled through strategic communication management (Steyn, 2000, 2003, 2007; Steyn & Niemann, 2010, 2014). This is done by establishing relationships with stakeholders to identify their expectations, interests, and needs that should be incorporated into the business strategy.

Regarding strategic communication management, the strategic focus of communication in CSR will thus be embedded within the enterprise strategy of an organisation (also see 1.1). According to this connection, the functions of strategic communication within the CSR strategy would be as follows:

- Facilitate change in an organisation's thinking about CSR through the triple-bottom-line approach (profit, people, and planet) (Steyn & De Beer, 2012:38).
- Provide input and create a sensitivity towards CSR, sustainability, and good governance (Steyn & Niemann, 2008:30).
- Help the organisation adjust its strategic intent and align the society's and stakeholders' expectations, values, and norms by providing social and environmental intelligence (Steyn & Niemann, 2008:30).
- Identify reputational and other strategic risks by monitoring the environment; helping top management identify strategic goals and strategies that are stakeholder/societal responsive (Steyn & Niemann, 2008:30).
- Build relationships with stakeholders by developing an inclusive communication strategy through which the organisation can obtain legitimacy; also foster social cohesion between business and society (Steyn & Niemann, 2008:30).

- Maintain the organisation's equilibrium with its environment (following cybernetics) by applying the reflective *mirror* function of the strategic role to provide an outside-in view of the organisation. This is done by reflecting on the possible environmental impact on the organisation. Maintaining equilibrium is also achieved by an inside-out view through the *window* function of the facilitating role. Here communication is utilised to deliver outputs that is in line with the input gathered from the environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

By assessing these functions, it can be argued that strategic communication management is a key function that can contribute to the integration of the corporate and development communication perspectives on CSR communication. This is the case even though strategic communication management is grounded in capitalistic-oriented cybernetics and stakeholder theory. Strategic communication management functions within the enterprise strategy by influencing the organisation's CSR vision of a sustainable future for both business and society. Thus, strategic communication management functions as the ideal driver of the CSR strategy. In this regard, strategic communication management should guide the CSR vision of the organisation in the enterprise strategy by reflecting on business and societal issues (Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Oksuz & Gorpe, 2013 - also see 4.3.2).

### **2.3.3.3 Reflective paradigm**

This re-assessment of communication within CSR from both a corporate and development communication perspective, continued by incorporating the reflective paradigm into strategic communication management. This paradigm elaborates on the relationship between an organisation and society. The reflective paradigm views organisations as part of a larger society that should be respected, instead of having mere relationships with society that are managed to the organisation's advantage (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011:212). The organisation is thus viewed as part of society and has an interdependent relationship with its surrounding social environment. This implies that the organisation depends on society for its survival.

A further implication is that the organisation must reflect on its role in society and decide how to operate socially responsible (Holmström, 1997:25, 76). Reflection means that an organisation relates to itself, its perspectives, and worldview (Holmström, 2005:499), but within the context of a broader society. According to the reflective paradigm, CSR is considered as a *primary* communication function, by mitigating the conflict between the organisation's practices and society's perceptions of these activities (Vercic *et al.*, 2001:382; Burger, 2009). In this way, the communication function is shown to be responsible for the CSR strategy (also see 2.3.3.2 & 2.4.2).



The communication function informed by the reflective paradigm would thus guide the organisation to reflect on societal expectations, values, and norms. This helps the organisation incorporate non-financial aspects into the enterprise strategy. Based on this reflection, a CSR strategy should be formulated that guides the organisation to build relationships based on trust, respect, cooperation, and harmony between the business and society. Such relationships should be characterised by dialogue, partnerships, open negotiation, shared responsibilities, symmetrical power relationships, and an understanding of culture and other sociological aspects of the society in which the organisation functions (Holmström 2005; Burger, 2009; Rensburg & De Beer, 2011). These forms of interaction are in accordance with the two-way symmetrical communication model (see 2.4.3.5). Through this type of relationship, the organisation is thus seen as operating responsibly towards society, therefore, earning legitimacy and a license to operate (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2005; Holmström, 2005; Steyn & Niemann, 2008).

#### **2.3.3.4 Shared-value communication**

Continuing to review the role of business in society, the most current research is conducted on ways that communication, through continuous processes of two-way symmetrical interaction, can help create shared value (Lock *et al.*, 2016; Hovring, 2017a, 2017b; Golob *et al.*, 2017). This is argued to be a complex process due to the tension between values of the organisation and society, as well as the different perceptions on shared value (Hovring, 2017a). Communication is perceived as the ideal function to manage this tension constructively. The role of communication is viewed as guiding organisations and stakeholders to respect and be sensitive towards the other's culture, values, and worldviews. The aim is thus mutual understanding leading to the creation of shared value (Hovring, 2017a:240).

The broader focus on stakeholders led to the inclusion of the principle of shared value within CSR communication. This perspective specifically aligns the organisation's values with those of the surrounding society. To achieve such alignment, it is proposed that value should be co-created with these stakeholders. In the process, tension should be expected between the values of the organisation and those of the stakeholders, based on world views and culture (also see 1.2.1 & 1.2.2). It is proposed that the organisation manages this tension through a coherent communication strategy that creates collaboration instead of eliciting conflict (Corus & Ozanne, 2012). Furthermore, the organisation should assess and redefine its own values and identify stakeholders who share these values. Thereafter, management can engage in dialogue with these primary stakeholders (Wen & Song, 2017).

This would require active participation in open, transparent, deliberative and continuous discourse aimed at lasting relationships with the relevant stakeholders (Scandellius & Cohen,

2016; Hovring, 2017a; Villagra *et al.*, 2015). Such discourse is based on Habermas's approach of communicative action (see 3.4.3). This leaves room to involve multiple voices as participants in the communication process, which includes those without power as well as with conflicting viewpoints. Shared-value communication implies that the inclusion of these different viewpoints is considered to produce tension and conflict that would result in a mutual understanding of different world views, cultures, and values and thereby create shared value (Hovring, 2017a).

The aim would be to design strategies targeted at specific stakeholders, depending on the degrees they influence the organisation, by using various platforms. These platforms can stimulate dialogue by tailoring CSR messages and raising topics according to stakeholders' preferences and cultural relevance. In this way the organisation influences different people to participate in conversations and collaborate in the co-creation of brand value (Scandeliuss & Cohen, 2016; Villagra *et al.*, 2015; Wen & Song, 2017). Stakeholders without the perceived shared value are thereby excluded from the communication processes. This supports the argument that shared value is not an appropriate purpose for both business and societal perspectives (see 1.2.2).

For the organisation to regard the different voices, it is proposed that the power dynamics between these participants should be considered constantly, ensuring that no party dominates the process to its own advantage. This could be achieved if the organisation also engages as participant within the process together with the other stakeholders, instead of merely managing the process (Hovring, 2017a:243). In this regard, the participants thus become co-creators of shared value. The question whether this outcome is realistic, becomes evident in the critique on the assumptions of shared value. It is assumed that, in reality, if there is conflict, it would most likely be resolved to the benefit of business (see 1.2.2), which again supports the business perspective of CSR.

The stronger societal perspective also shifted the focus more towards applying the two-way symmetrical communication model of the excellence theory in CSR communication (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

### **2.3.3.5 Excellence theory: two-way symmetrical communication**

The excellence theory views two-way symmetrical communication as the most ethical and socially responsible approach to communication management (Dozier, 1989:5; Grunig & Grunig, 1992:10, 307-308; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:312, 323, 377-378). Ideally, two-way symmetrical communication should not only focus on achieving an organisation's goals. This approach should also foster a culture of participation that results in mutually beneficial relationships

(communication as process) that change both the organisation and stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:164, 169).

CSR communication is not used any more for economic gains through a strategy of one-way information or two-way asymmetrical response. Currently, companies are employing an involvement strategy where two-way symmetrical communication foster involvement and mutual understanding, instead of mere propaganda and persuasion (Trapp, 2014). The goal with the involvement strategy is to engage stakeholders in conversations to “develop and promote positive support” for the organisation but also to understand stakeholders’ concerns. The intended outcome is establishing relationships based on mutual understanding (Wen & Song, 2017), which is also identified as an aim of the stakeholder theory (see 2.4.3.1).

These relationships are formed and cultivated in order to achieve a strategic advantage for the organisation but also to the benefit of the stakeholders since both participate in dialogical communication. This implies that, through dialogue, change takes place and power is expanded, which provide the opportunity for mutual influence between the organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig, 2006:165, 168). The organisation should thus be willing to expand its power to the stakeholders, thereby empowering them. In such a case, two-way symmetrical communication can be used to identify objectives that may benefit the organisation as well as the stakeholders; the responsibilities can be shared to reach those objectives (Grunig, 2006).

In practice, however, organisations strive for just enough participation and change to uphold the social order and maintain their own power (Grunig, 2006:168). Organisations would rather practise the mixed-motive model of negotiation and persuasion. This approach helps them find solutions to problems, thereby reaching the organisation’s goals and improving its performance, which also is seen to be the case in CSR (Moncur, 2006:97-98). In the mixed-motives model, an organisation’s focus is on its own interest but not to the disadvantage of the different stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:320). In the process, the organisation also grasps the importance of promoting the stakeholders’ interests (Grunig & White, 1992:46).

From a corporate communication perspective, two-way symmetrical communication seems to be the best way to practice CSR communication. This is because of a balanced focus on objectives for both the organisation and its surrounding society. Such an approach is explained by principles such as participation, dialogue, empowerment, and change, which guide the communication processes (see Grunig & Grunig, 2000:303; Grunig 2006:170).

Different roles can be assigned to the communication function based on the assumptions discussed above. These roles also indicate the different responsibilities for CSR communication within the CSR strategy.

#### 2.3.4 Communication roles within CSR communication

The first role of communication to be identified as relevant to CSR communication is that of the technician who performs the technical communication functions (Steyn, 2000). This role usually engages in one-way communication or two-way asymmetrical communication (see 2.3.2.1 & 2.3.2.2). Within the context of CSR, this role entails communication actions being implemented through various mediums to communicate about the CSR initiatives. The aim is to influence stakeholders' perception of the organisation acting as a responsible citizen, thus, providing a financial gain for the organisation. Within CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, this role will be referred to as the *implementer*.

Secondly, the intervention of strategic communication management (see 2.3.3.2) defines the role of the *strategist* (Steyn, 2000) as relevant for business as well as its surrounding society. This role contributes to the enterprise strategy through environmental scanning and boundary spanning. This is done by following the outside-in approach to strategic management by performing the mirror function (see 2.3.3.2) that reflects on the impact of the environment on the organisation (Steyn, 2009:522).

The reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3) introduces a role for communication (Vercic *et al.*, 2001) that reflects on stakeholder relationships from a broader societal view. In other words, the focus is not only on the advantages for the organisation, but also the gains for society (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2005). The function of this reflective role for communication (Vercic *et al.*, 2001) corresponds with the mentioned strategist's role of strategic communication management (Steyn, 2000, 2009; Steyn & Niemann, 2010:115; Steyn & Niemann, 2014). Based on these similarities, Steyn (2009) conceptualises the *reflective strategist* who focuses on strategic reflection. The aim is to provide management with a societal perspective by reflecting on the organisation's position within broader society. In this way, the organisation's goals are balanced with the welfare of society to gain a favourable reputation and a licence to operate (Steyn & Niemann, 2014:176).

Apart from the roles of implementer and strategist, thirdly, the role of *facilitator* is identified by strategic communication management (see 2.3.3.2) and shared-value communication (see 2.3.3.4). This role facilitates the negotiation process between the organisation and society (Hovering, 2017b:376). The facilitator is seen as the boundary spanner who acts as go-between for stakeholders and management (Steyn & Puth, 2000). The aim is to identify and address issues (Dozier & Broom, 1995) and create environments for meaningful dialogue (Van Ruler, 2004:136), which establishes mutual understanding.

The three above-mentioned roles within CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, highlight the importance of the communication function in CSR. This supports the argument that the communication function should drive the CSR strategy (see 2.3.3.2 & 2.4.2). The strategy should be executed from an integrated perspective based on management's knowledge of the larger society in which the organisation operates and its ability to link its role in society with business objectives and those of sustainable development.

### **2.3.5 Summary of the literature review**

In chapter 1 (see 1.2.2) CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, was defined as follows:

***CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective is communication that focuses on the management of stakeholder relationships to the advantage of the organisation whilst considering its impact on society and the environment.***

This definition was elaborated on through the literature review of the theoretical fields of CSR communication as well as the different models and theories within these fields. These diverse theories were discussed because no single theory or model includes all the principles of CSR communication as defined in this study and which is necessary to conceptualise this integrated communication model.

As was explained previously, one-way communication or two-way asymmetrical communication were used in the fields of marketing and corporate communication/public relations. These constructs informed communication on an operational level when implementing CSR initiatives. However, little reference was made to formulating a strategy or creating mutual understanding on CSR issues between the organisation and its stakeholders. This situation changed with the incorporation of shared value, but only to include mostly stakeholders with similar perceived values.

The function of strategic communication management (see 2.3.3.2) and the reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3) presented constructs to formulate strategy based on communication's decisive role in CSR. These constructs are the result of reflection on the organisation's role in society. In this regard, shared-value communication (see 2.3.3.4) accentuates the importance of incorporating business and societal issues into an integrated approach aimed at creating shared value. However, strategic communication management and the reflective paradigm gave limited guidance about actual ways to create mutual understanding and implement effective communication strategies. Shared-value communication does shed light on the negotiation

process to help create shared value, but with little reference to the communication function's strategic and implementation role.

The excellence theory (see 2.3.3.5) offered different principles of communication, explaining the nature of the interaction that should occur in CSR communication. However, this theory is silent on principles explaining how the strategy must be formulated and implemented. Therefore, the different theories and models were evaluated to identify supplementary principles of CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective effectively.

## **2.4 A CSR COMMUNICATION APPROACH FROM A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

Based on the literature study, certain principles were identified that could help form a basis for a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective, with a view to create a strategic advantage for the business.

### **2.4.1 Purpose**

Because of the importance of CSR communication as a strategic function, it is argued that this communication function should firstly be linked to the purpose of the organisation that guides the CSR vision. King IV (see 1.1) stipulates that the triple context should guide an organisation's purpose and thus its reason for existence. In CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, the purpose of the organisation can indeed be described as mostly profit-and-planet oriented. It is mentioned that organisations should have a responsibility beyond profit making (see 2.2). Nevertheless, the argument that carries this perspective on CSR communication is that the responsibility must still be to the advantage of the organisation, thus implying a *profit* purpose. On the other hand, this perspective does consider the *planet* since without this consideration, organisations would be unable to make profit. Therefore, in this regard, sustainable business practices are emphasised (see 2.2). However, it can be pointed out that, in the main, business's responsibility is viewed as profiting the organisation (see 2.3.3.1).

### **2.4.2 CSR strategy**

The *CSR strategy* implemented in CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, can be described according to the cybernetic tradition (see 2.3.1), as *managing relationships to the advantage of the organisation*. Assumptions from the constructs, strategic communication management, shared-value communication, and the reflective paradigm, did broaden the scope of the CSR strategy to include society as well. Therefore, the *CSR strategy*

is formulated as *managing societal relationships to the advantage of the organisation*. This strategy is based on organisations' opinions, ideas, ideals, values, attitudes, and beliefs about their role and responsibility toward the society in which they exist. Strategic communication management also guides CSR, as it is embedded in the enterprise strategy, to support the company's CSR vision. Based on the management of relationships according to the CSR vision, it is argued that the CSR strategy should be managed by the communication function (see 2.3.3.2).

### **2.4.3 Identifying stakeholders**

Originally, stakeholders' identification took place according to the stakeholder theory (see 2.3.3.1) that specifies stakeholders as *those on whom the survival of the organisation depend based on their power, legitimacy and urgency*. This theory, however, also proved insufficient to identify stakeholders from a corporate communication perspective for CSR communication. Therefore, theories with a stronger societal focus were used to expand on the identification of stakeholders, as reflected in strategic communication management, shared-value communication, and the reflective paradigm. This definition from within a broader societal view includes *primary stakeholders* as those on whom the survival or the organisation depend.

### **2.4.4 Communication processes**

Communication processes are a series of actions to achieve certain communicative outcomes within the organisation and between the organisation and its stakeholders. Firstly, the *strategic process* entails formulating the strategy for CSR and the communication on CSR, which forms part of the broader enterprise strategy (strategic communication management – see 2.3.3.2) and the reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3). Another series of communicative actions takes place during the *implementation process* where communication is employed to help implement the strategies. This process is informed by the excellence theory (see 2.3.3.5). The creation of mutual understanding is referred to as a *negotiation process* that facilitates the negotiations and dialogue between the organisation and its multiple stakeholders (focusing on shared-value communication – see 2.3.3.4).

### **2.4.5 Communication roles**

Communication roles were identified as assigned to different people responsible for CSR communication in the various processes. The *reflective strategist* (see 2.3.3.2 & 2.3.3.3) was identified as the role responsible for the strategic process. This role deals with the strategic CSR issues of the organisation but also developmental matters in a broader perspective. This entails the organisation's role in society contributing to sustainable development (see 1.1).

The following role identified was the *facilitator* (see 2.3.3.2 & 2.3.3.4). This holds the responsibility to create an environment in which communication can take place in order to reach mutual understanding.

Furthermore, from the perspective of shared-value communication (see 2.3.3.4), the role of the *participant* became clear. According to this role, the organisation and stakeholders participate in the negotiation process as co-creators of mutual understanding seeking negotiated outcomes.

The final role was identified as the *implementer* (see 2.3.4). This entails the technical role responsible for various communication actions. These actions are derived from the fields of marketing and corporate communication/public relations.

#### **2.4.6 Outcome of communication**

When the above-mentioned theories are applied to CSR communication, it is evident that such communication aims to achieve certain outcomes. Therefore, the *outcome of communication* is strived for as a result, consequence, or effect of engaging in communication. According to CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective, most of the outcomes were identified to benefit the organisation while certain outcomes reflect the needs and expectations of society as well. These outcomes include:

- building the organisation's reputation and image (strategic communication management – 2.3.3.2);
- managing issues (stakeholder theory – 2.3.3.1, strategic communication management – 2.3.3.2, communication roles – 2.3.4);
- gaining legitimacy and a licence to operate (strategic communication management – 2.3.3.2, the reflective paradigm – 2.3.3.3, shared-value communication – 2.3.3.4); and
- mutual understanding by building beneficial relationships that seek shared responsibilities (reflective paradigm – 2.3.3.3, two-way symmetrical communication – 2.3.3.5, shared-value communication – 2.3.3.4).

It was pointed out that from this perspective, CSR communication is practiced mostly to benefit the business, even with its aim of creating mutual understanding. Therefore, this communication is defined to create an understanding of mutual issues. The focus is also on how the business would address those issues in its CSR strategy to achieve the business objectives (see 2.3.3.1).



## 2.4.7 Nature of communication

During the communication processes, interaction takes place in different ways to accomplish certain goals. This implies *the nature of communication* as a principle highlighted by the reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3), the excellence theory (see 2.3.3.5), and shared-value communication (see 2.3.3.4). The following were identified as constructs for the nature of communication:

- *Information dissemination* (public information model, two-way asymmetrical communication model): Sharing of knowledge, information, or facts, given the context in which this is required or perceived as a requirement. This may follow a two-way process where feedback is sought and given; or a one-way process where feedback is seemingly unnecessary.
- *Persuasion* (public-information model, two-way asymmetrical communication model): A deliberate act of influencing someone's thoughts or actions. This is based on the sharing of knowledge, information, facts, and perceptions through arguments and reasoning.
- *Negotiation* (reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, public- information model, two-way asymmetrical communication model): Each party in the communication process enjoys equal capacity of power and opportunity to change or effect the other party's actions, behaviour, perceptions, attitude, and opinions through dialogue.
- *Dialogue* (reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, two-way symmetrical communication): A deliberate, open and transparent process of equal participation through honest and fair negotiation, which considers potential power dynamics aimed at mutual understanding. The dialogue is guided by preconceived messages or topics and takes place on the organisation's terms.
- *Participation* (shared-value communication, two-way symmetrical communication): Various stakeholders engaged in dialogue with the organisation on the latter's terms seeking consensus and encouraging collaboration.
- *Empowerment* (reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, two-way symmetrical communication): Expanding power between the organisation and its stakeholders through a process of dialogue on the organisation's terms.
- *Cultural sensitivity* (reflective paradigm, shared-value communication, two-way symmetrical communication): Understanding culture in order to respect the stakeholder's customs and its associated worldviews and values in the pursuit of mutual understanding.

Table 2.1 illustrates the different principles used to inform the concepts and constructs of a CSR communication approach according to a corporate communication perspective.

**Table 2.1 CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective**

CONCEPTS	CONSTRUCTS
<b>Purpose</b>	Profit
<b>CSR strategy</b>	Managing societal relationships to the advantage of the organisation Embedded in the enterprise strategy Managed by the communication function
<b>Identification of stakeholders</b>	Primary stakeholder within a broader societal view
<b>Communication process</b>	Strategic process Negotiation process Implementation process
<b>Communication roles</b>	Reflective strategist Facilitator Participant Implementer
<b>Outcome of communication</b>	Reputation Image Legitimacy License to operate Issues management Mutual understanding Shared responsibilities Mutual beneficial relationships Creating shared value
<b>Nature of communication</b>	Persuasion Negotiation Information Dialogue Empowerment Participation

From the above, CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective can be redefined as follows:

***CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective is communication employed largely to benefit business by creating a strategic advantage for the organisation***

*through CSR communication. Such communication should promote the organisation's reputation to create legitimacy and a licence to operate. It should also reduce risk by managing positive long-term relationships whilst considering their impact on society and the environment, which will help empower the business to seek sustainability.*

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to identify and evaluate principles of CSR communication according to the literature from a corporate communication perspective. These principles originated from a strong business perspective in the fields of public relations and marketing communication. This perspective is informed by the cybernetic tradition, stakeholder theory, the public-information model as well as the two-way asymmetrical model. Scepticism about CSR due to ineffective application of these theories lead to the re-examination of the role that CSR communication plays in promoting a stronger societal focus. This broadened view should incorporate strategic communication management, shared-value communication, two-way symmetrical communication, and the reflective paradigm as part of CSR communication.

The principles of the different theories and models guided the identification of concepts and constructs that should be included in the formulation of a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective. There was a notable shift in corporate communication theory towards a stronger societal approach (strategic communication management, reflective paradigm, and shared-value communication). This included the application of development communication theories such as that of Habermas to define dialogue; embrace conflict instead of shunning it; and seeking participation instead of management (shared-value communication). Although development communication constructs such as dialogue, participation, culture, and power were used, it was defined from a limited perspective. This failed to consider the full theoretical scope and practical application of these constructs that could empower society to become self-reliant.

Due to the mentioned deficiency, in the following chapter (chapter 3) the principles of CSR communication will be identified and evaluated to formulate a CSR communication approach from a development communication perspective based on the *critical tradition*. This tradition will form the basis for incorporating both the participatory approach and Habermas's design – all which also focus on dialogue, participation, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. Contrary to corporate communication, these constructs are defined mainly to benefit *society* by applying them to guide CSR initiatives. The intended outcome is empowering beneficiaries to be self-reliant in seeking a sustainable development within society.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

# **CSR COMMUNICATION: A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

It was argued that CSR communication should be integrated from both a corporate and development communication perspective in a mutually inclusive manner to address an incorporated dual purpose of CSR (see 1.2.2).

The first step towards such an integrated model was the evaluation of the different internal assumptions, which would help identify principles relevant to a CSR communication approach that would create a strategic advantage for the organisation from a corporate communication perspective. It was concluded that although CSR communication from this perspective currently has a stronger emphasis on society it was still inadequate for the conceptualisation of an integrated model, which should include a focus on sustainable development within society.

The present study worked towards such an integrated CSR communication model to further the dual purpose of CSR. Therefore, it is important to understand CSR communication from a development communication perspective, which makes it possible to identify and evaluate the principles that could help empower society to seek and attain sustainable development. Therefore, this chapter focuses on Research question 2 (1.4.2.2): *Which principles of development communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?* This question is answered by examining the different assumptions of CSR from a societal perspective as well as the various applications of meta-theory and theories informing communication within the CSR context in order to formulate a CSR communication approach from a development communication perspective.

### **3.2 ASSUMPTIONS OF CSR FROM A SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE**

Defining CSR from a societal perspective, is challenging since most definitions are embedded in the business perspective. The majority of CSR definitions from the 21st century, however, include a “social” dimension (see Khoury *et al.*, 1999; Foran, 2001; Hopkins, 2003; Van Marrewijk, 2003; Dembek *et al.*, 2016; Hovring, 2017a). These definitions suggest, amongst other matters, that business meet the expectations of society, contribute to a better society, invest in community outreach and respect communities. Organisations should also aim to improve the quality of life, within communities and society at large, consider their impact on society as well as the environment, and promote social well-being.

Therefore, it is realised that organisations do have a responsibility towards society as well as the environment which the business and society shares. However, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, the outcome is viewed mostly from a business perspective. Issues that were not addressed adequately within these assumptions were: whom the organisations identify as “society”, what they consider as their responsibilities towards this entity, and how these initiatives would help empower such society (O’Riordan & Fairbrass, 2008:747). The introduction of the concept of shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011; Dembek *et al.*, 2016; Hovring, 2017a) attempted to answer some of these questions. The concept of shared value, however, was unable to provide guidance to identify specific individuals or groups in society as stakeholders. This concept failed to mitigate the tension between business and societal goals (see 1.2.2).

The question of empowerment also received attention by focusing on the equal allocation of power when shared value is created (see 2.3.3.4). However, in this case, empowerment is considered as a means to an end and not an end as such. The concept of shared value thus proved insufficient to help empower society in becoming self-reliant. Seeing that sustainable development is viewed as a focus of CSR (see 1.1), it is argued that an organisation’s responsibility should be contributing to sustainable development by empowering the surrounding society to reach a stage where inhabitants can fend for themselves.

CSR assumptions that include sustainable development tend to be initiated by particular institutions such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) (2005), the ISO26000 (2010) and the EU (2011). These assumptions from a societal perspective, can be viewed as contrary to CSR from a business perspective. From a societal perspective, these initiatives should benefit society by dove-tailing with its goals, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The problem is, however, that such societal assumptions mostly overlook the strategic advantage of CSR, which underscores the argument for singular focus within business and societal perspectives of CSR (see 1.2.2).

An example of such an assumption is the so-called Southern approach to CSR (Idemudia, 2011) as an alternative to the Northern and business-case approaches (as discussed in 2.2). The Southern approach highlights the contribution of CSR to sustainable development as keeping CSR agendas relevant to the context that reflects local priorities and responds to cultural differences. This approach pursues a CSR agenda where the local stakeholders and their community values are taken into account; thus dealing with the real-life political, economic, and social problems of people in developing countries.

Contrary to the Northern one, the Southern approach has a bottom-up communication orientation. In this case, the community participates in the process where priorities and

expectations are identified and relationships are formed based on mutual understanding (Idemudia, 2011). The commitment-based approach presents similar assumptions (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). This approach also works through mutual understanding by identifying issues in a bottom-up fashion and addressing them through continual communication and joint problem-solving to bring about meaningful change (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011:87). This is clearly contrary to creating mutual understanding within CSR communication to the advantage of the business (see 2.3.3.1).

The two mentioned approaches provide insights such as viewing communities as part of an organisation's primary stakeholders, being culturally sensitive, and building mutual relationships based on mutual benefit and trust. The focus is on participation and communication as a process, which will be expounded further in the evaluation of the different theories that inform development communication.

As in the case with the CSR assumptions from a societal perspective, these two approaches also tend to focus exclusively on sustainable development, without considering the strategic advantages that CSR may hold for an organisation as such. This proved to be the case with the theories that inform CSR communication from a development communication perspective as well, which is examined subsequently.

### **3.3 THEORIES THAT INFORM CSR COMMUNICATION FROM A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

As was evident from chapter 2, numerous definitions and theories contribute to the identification of principles relevant to CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective. Further evaluation of literature, however, indicated that CSR communication is not an acknowledged term within development communication. Within this perspective, communication is addressed within the CSR context through different theories and approaches that focuses on empowering beneficiaries to become self-reliant in sustainable development (see 1.2.2).

According to Burger (2009), the reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3) and the participatory approach (see 3.3.2) can be used as an alternative to the market-orientated framework for CSR (see 2.2). Other authors (see Seele & Lock, 2015; Elving *et al.*, 2015; Hovring, 2017a) utilised Habermas's view of communicative action (see 3.3.3) in their research on CSR communication to incorporate a stronger societal perspective within CSR communication. This chapter examines the participatory approach as well as that from Habermas as relevant theories from a development communication perspective. This will provide the basis to formulate a CSR communication approach, which focuses on communication in CSR that empowers

beneficiaries in the process of sustainable development, a theme that is part of the critical tradition.

### **3.3.1 Critical tradition**

In order to empower beneficiaries to become self-reliant, power must be shared among the different role-players, which thus constantly questions the power relationships within CSR initiatives. Critical tradition as a meta-theory for CSR communication from a development communication perspective is explored due to its critical reflection on society and especially, by exposing the power relationships underlying society.

Theories in the critical tradition questions the importance of privilege and power in society, thus attempts to understand, through reflection (Habermas, 1984:98), the reason for social differences and how to work towards changing it (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:45; Brookfield, 2014:418; Moore, 2016:2). This tradition furthermore strives to uncover and reveal distortion and inaccuracy. This is done by exposing social injustice, discovering the perceived truth within conflicting situations, and restoring equality by “asking questions that provoke critical reflection” (Craig, 1999:146-147).

According to critical theory, communication is viewed as a reflective process that reaches beyond the “sharing of meaning”. The aim is rather, through a process of exchange, the co-creation of meaning that strives for a so called “perfect state” of communication. This is viewed as a normative state where the focus is not primarily on communication as a means to an end (as defined in corporate communication – see 2.3.3.1). The critical theory rather accentuates the process of communication as an end in itself striving to reach a certain state of communication (Craig, 1999:147). Communication according to the critical theory is regarded as a process that develops over time and should be characterised by a continuous open and reflective discourse. This should entail true dialogue about differences that may lead to genuine mutual understanding and social change beyond strategic management (Habermas, 1984; Craig, 1999:148).

Three important factors are relevant to CSR and CSR communication that underpin the processes of the critical theory, which enables it to facilitate social change. These factors are expounded below.

Firstly, the critical theory seeks to understand the imbalance and inequality in society by questioning the current systems, power structures, and the convictions of those in power, specifically who benefit from these imbalances. In the context of CSR, critical reflection should

take place when following the enterprise strategy (see 2.3.3.2). The critique should focus on the following issues:

- Which aspects comprise the current CSR system?
- Who has the power in the CSR systems? What are the convictions on CSR of those in power?
- Who benefit from these CSR systems?
- How do these systems help cause imbalance and inequality in society?

Secondly, critical theory attempts to uncover the use of communication from the dominant ideology. Typically, the adherents of this ideology attempts to retain specific social conditions and power arrangements to benefit them, thus strategically manipulating the communication process to the advantage of the organisation (Craig, 1999; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Brookfield, 2014; Moore, 2016). These processes distort messages through inaccurate and inadequate communication, which may lead to social injustice and inequality. This situation is created by controlling the social conditions through power based on knowledge (Moore, 2016:6). In this regard, organisations should thus reflect on their usage of CSR communication to maintain the power and maintain equilibrium (see 2.3.1). Such initiatives may benefit the organisation, but contribute to social injustice and inequality in the long run. Ideally, the reflective process should make organisations aware of this imbalance in power and attempt to address it in their CSR initiatives. Such an ideal balance of power is, however, difficult to achieve, seeing that business is always aware of the consequences of the imbalance in power.

Thirdly, the critical theory exposes possible interests that are at variance, and indicates how the conflict can be resolved through communication, in favour of a specific group, based on power. This clearly questions the existence and rights of marginalised groups in society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:46; Brookfield, 2014:418). Based on CSR initiatives, organisations must reflect on the inclusion of marginalised groups as part of their primary stakeholders. Therefore, the organisations must strategize how conflicting interest between die organisation and these groups could be resolved through communication. Such a communication process should therefore benefit not only the organisation but lead to mutual understanding on business and societal issues and how to address these mutually. When formulating a CSR strategy, conflicting interests between business and society, the distribution of power, and how communication may address these conflicting interests should be addressed.

CSR communication may reconcile these conflicting interests in support of the enterprise strategy viewed from a cybernetics perspective. However, as was pointed out, this approach is



based on capitalism (2.3.3.1), which tends to favour the organisation and keep the latter in power. The critical theory thus views capitalism as the reason for alienation between people and the root cause of inequality (Brookfield, 2014:419). Therefore, the challenge is to rectify the inequality of current CSR practices by also focusing on the interests of society and the willingness to share power with these stakeholders by incorporating development communication principles in the strategy. Such an approach, however, raises questions about the reach of an organisation's responsibility in society: who must be identified as primary stakeholders in society, and what should the outcome be for both business and society?

Informed by critical theory, the approach of participatory communication describes a process that should take place between the organisation and society. This is necessary to consider the interests of society as well as the organisation's responsibility. The aim is to reach mutual understanding that enhances the empowerment of society. It makes sense to incorporate the critical theory, which views communication as an end in itself and not merely a means to an end. This would help provide a more holistic view on CSR communication in an attempt to deal with the above-mentioned challenges.

The cybernetic tradition guided corporate communication in establishing profit as the main purpose, viewed from a business perspective (see 2.3.1). Conversely, the critical tradition, which focuses from within the CSR strategy on the *transformation of society*, supports the *purpose of people* (see 1.1). The critical tradition also provides guidance within CSR communication to help identify stakeholders as *marginalised groups* within society.

The participatory approach and that of Habermas provide further guidance on the following aspects: identifying stakeholders and the applicable communication processes, the nature and outcome of such communication, as well as the different communication roles relevant to CSR communication from a development communication perspective. These approaches are discussed in the following subsection.

### **3.3.2 The participatory approach**

The participatory approach emerged in the 1970s in the so-called developing world such as Asia, Africa and South America as criticism on the dominant paradigm for development communication (Malan, 1998:49; Waisbord, 2001:2, 17). In the CSR context, the participatory approach primarily does not promote the management of people, pretends to formulate a simple solution to complex problems (see Blowfield & Frynas, 2005:511), or apply a "one-size-fits-all" model as the case may be with current CSR approaches (Idemudia, 2011:3). The participatory approach rather strives to understand the underlying rationale of complex situations (Blowfield,

2007:687), building of relationships (Frynas, 2008:277), and empowerment to achieve social change by transforming society (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008).

Such transformation is achieved through dialogical communication that begins with the sharing of different worldviews, values, cultures, and realities (Otto & Fourie, 2017). This should be followed by an equal distribution of information to empower individuals at grassroots level through learning. They must be enabled to participate in development projects: from identifying problems or needs, decision-making on how to address those issues, to implementing mutually-agreed strategies (Freire, 1996; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). This process entails further that cultural identity and indigenous knowledge such as those of opinion or traditional leaders, must be taken into consideration and local recourses utilised to maximise the development of the community (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:199; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:163, 169). Such communication is thus not merely a means to an end. It rather entails an on-going process of seeking mutual understanding, on individual as well as community level, that may lead to empowerment and self-reliance (Servaes, 1995, 1999), thus, ultimately ensuring social sustainability (Huesca, 2008).

The participatory approach, although challenging to apply in practice, is accepted widely as a normative and current paradigm to development communication (Nair & White, 1993:54; Huesca, 2002:511-512; McAnany, 2012:87). Different authors identified constructs such as participation, cultural diversity, empowerment, and dialogue as part of the mentioned approach (Servaes, 1995:46-47; Melkote, 1996:262-270; Servaes & Malikhao, 2002:94-95). These constructs will be examined further, in order to understand how CSR communication should take place to reach empowerment building towards self-reliance. These four constructs will thus form the basis of the participatory approach as investigated in the present study and will be utilised accordingly to formulate a CSR communication approach.

### **3.3.2.1 Dialogue**

Dialogical interaction is the decisive factor in the participatory communication process on which the success rests of participation, cultural diversity, and empowerment striving for sustainable development (Servaes, 1996b:17; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:93; Polk & Servaes, 2015:165; Otto & Fourie, 2017:28). Dialogue within the participatory approach is often defined according to Freire's view. This implies that dialogue empowers people to become critical thinkers about their own realities, which they should learn to address as well as to understand other's realities (Freire, 1983: 64-65).

The goal of communication, according to Freire, is ensuring cultural diversity, trust and respect through participation by focusing on true dialogue (Waisbord, 2001:19). Freire (1970:85) points

out that true dialogue is only possible if the parties engage in critical thinking about issues, trying to understand it, identify possible solutions, and act on these insights, to bring about change, which he terms *praxis* (Freire, 1996:35, 109). This entails that dialogue is not a mere platform to dispose of knowledge, nor a process to gain only knowledge or exchange ideas. Dialogue is a process of critical reflection on reality aimed at transforming the status quo through further action and reflection that would ultimately lead to “emancipatory social change” (Freire, 1970; Servaes & Lie, 2013:11).

Furthermore, this critical reflection on issues also implies that dialogue is not merely a means to an end – a manipulating, self-serving tool that accomplishes a predetermined objective. It is rather a means in itself – similar to participation and empowerment, which are also reflected in critical theory (see 3.3.1). As a means in itself dialogue would mean that consensus or agreement will not be reached continually. Therefore, in contrast, people should be empowered by participating in dialogue, even to understand why consensus or agreement cannot be reached. This is contrary to the way dialogue is employed within corporate communication, mostly to reach consensus or agreement, in other words, a means to achieve the organisation’s pre-established objectives (see 2.3.3.4 & 2.3.3.5).

Dialogue within development communication thus entails an ongoing process that focuses on equal communication relationships of mutual trust, respect and empathy (Paquette *et al.*, 2015). Such commonalities strive for mutual understanding through horizontal communication as appose to top-down communication (Freire, 1969:40; Rahim, 1994:136). Through dialogue, both parties should change (by the equal distribution of power). They should be attentive to modify possible foreknowledge and prejudice in pursuing mutual understanding (Grunig, 2006:165, 168). According to Freire (1970), this form of dialogue ensures marginalised groups are being heard, by affording them opportunities to raise their concerns, articulate their own solutions, and procure action plans that will lead to their own empowerment.

Freire concentrated on the process of dialogue towards transformation. However, earlier, Buber (1958) emphasised the human relational aspect within dialogue. Such dialogue is characterised by Buber (1958) as based on person-centred relationships (I-Thou vs I-it). In such interaction, mutual respect guides the dialogue process by recognising each individual’s opinions, perceptions, and knowledge. This is done through listening and speaking with the aim to create mutual understanding and build towards social change (Buber, 1958:7).

Thus, viewed from a CSR perspective, the parties should establish relationships based on mutual trust. This is attained through open, critical and reflective dialogue, which entails participation and power sharing for joint decision-making aimed at social change (Nair & White, 1993:54; Rahim, 1994:122-131; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:13, 48). Rahim (1994:135) notes,

however, that dialogue cannot be evaluated without considering the context in which it takes place. The reason is that the context impacts the social interaction, which in turn influences the creation of meaning as well as parties' willingness to participate. Thus, although mutual understanding can be achieved, the context can determine whether the relationship is pursued or disregarded.

### **3.3.2.2 Cultural diversity**

According to Servaes (1995:45), the integration of cultural diversity into the development process could lead to increased participation and ultimately, to more successful development. Cultural diversity focuses on the diverse world views, values, indigenous knowledge, traditions, customs, beliefs and symbols of each culture within a specific community (Malan, 1998:50). Such variables would make development strategies more relative to that specific community (Servaes *et al.*, 2012:117-118). Applicable strategies would emphasise the uniqueness of each community in terms of its circumstances, needs, required support (Burger, 2009:112) shared interests, perceptions, and behaviour (Peoples & Bailey, 2011:24). CSR initiatives should be relevant to the local context and thus reflect local priorities, expectations, values, and cultures.

It should be part of the participatory process to understand, respect, and incorporate the cultural identity of the beneficiaries (Servaes, 1995:45; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:169; Servaes & Verschooten, 2008:46; Servaes & Lie, 2013:11). This means being culturally sensitive during the communication process, which could incorporate indigenous knowledge (White, 2003:830; Tufte & Mefalopoulos, 2009:2) into the CSR initiatives as well as acknowledge the right to cultural freedom. In other words, the strategy would accept or reject initiatives based on how the people choose to live their lives (De Cuellar, 1995:15). A bottom-up approach should thus be followed where priorities are identified by engaging with the community and listening to their expectations. This would include understanding and building local cultural, ethical, and social customs into the design and implementation of CSR initiatives. Ultimately, this would facilitate participation of the community to reach self-reliance (Idemudia, 2011:4 - 6).

The inclusion of cultural diversity in development does not necessarily exclude external knowledge and resources. Ideally, both local and external knowledge and resources should be utilised by firstly reflecting on, thus prioritising what the community members have at their disposal (Waisboard, 2001:18). Thereafter, further reflection could lead to the use of external knowledge and resources. Throughout the process, the emphasis should be on a sensitivity towards cultural diversity. The inclusion of such diversity in the development process would ensure effective participation by and empowerment of the community (O'Sullivan, 1994:49; Peoples & Bailey, 2011:24).

The above-mentioned assumptions about cultural diversity from a development communication perspective, highlight the limited definition of culture as viewed from within corporate communication. The latter perspective focuses on merely understanding different cultures and being sensitive to cultural differences, but not necessarily applying cultural diversity in planning the initiatives (see 2.3.3.4 & 2.3.3.5).

### **3.3.2.3 Participation**

The participatory approach emphasises the importance of active community participation at the various levels of the development process (research, planning, implementation, and evaluation). This process aims to create mutual understanding through dialogue to help empower the beneficiaries (Servaes & Malikhao, 2002:122-123). Participation in CSR communication does not imply merely involvement of beneficiaries in CSR projects or taking part in conversations about issues as decided by corporates from a business perspective. Rather, participation refers to active mobilisation and engagement (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006:28), through the allocation of “goods, rights and responsibilities” (Chasi, 2011:138) empowering the beneficiaries to participate at the various levels of the CSR projects. Yoon (1996:40) specifies these levels of participation as follows: 1) decision-making where people are included in the initiation, research, and conceptualisation of initiatives; 2) implementation where people take part based on responsibilities given to them to actualise the projects; 3) evaluation where inhabitants help determine the success or failure of the project, and; 4) benefits where the recipients experience the outcome of the projects.

Not all forms of participation do, however, lead to empowerment as defined within the participatory approach. Mefalopoulos (2004:55) identifies four levels of participation in development communication to illustrate how beneficiaries can participate in development projects:

- Passive participation: stakeholders are merely informed on developmental issues and how these issues will be addressed;
- Participation by consultation: stakeholders are consulted on issues and thus may take part in conversations about these matters, but do not form part of the decision-making;
- Functional participation: stakeholders are allowed to give input and participate in decision-making as seen necessary by those in power;
- Empowered participation: stakeholders take part throughout the process and enjoy equal power, implying mutual influence on the process.

It is clear that the first three levels of participation mentioned above would not lead to empowerment as specified by the participatory approach. These are also the levels of participation mostly employed within corporate communication.

From the perspective of corporate communication (see 2.3.3.4 & 2.3.3.5), it is obvious that this entails passive participation, by sharing information or through consultation where stakeholders are merely informed on issues but not part of decision making. It may also entail functional participation where input is allowed, but on the organisation's terms.

The corrective would be that the corporates should view participation of the community on the various levels as an outcome in itself, namely part of the empowerment of the CSR initiatives (see Cohen, 1996:231; Melkote, 2002:428; Huesca, 2008:185-188). Participation is thus not merely a means to an end, but an end in itself, as postulated by the critical theory (see 3.3.1) as well as in the participatory approach (see 3.3.2). According to Servaes (1996a:82), this implies that development would take place *through* the beneficiaries and not *for* the beneficiaries. Instead of only being consulted about issues regarding the development process, beneficiaries are empowered through CSR communication, to make decisions on their own development and thereby take ownership of the development process (Servaes 1996a:98-99; White, 1999:33, 43; Servaes, 2008:215).

However, sometimes it is considered unfeasible for beneficiaries to take part from the beginning of the process, due to a lack of knowledge or experience about a specific issue. In this regard, the focus should be on developing and maintaining social capital, thus equal distribution of information enabling people at grassroots level to participate fully. This applies to development projects utilising local knowledge and resources, but also considering input from other role players. In this way, communities should be empowered through participation to contribute to their own development (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:11).

#### **3.3.2.4 Empowerment**

Various authors concur that empowerment is a process through which people gain the ability to develop themselves and their environment, which should help them become self-reliant (Nair & White, 1993:51; Servaes, 1995:45-46; Yoon, 1996:40; Mefalopulos & Grenna, 2004:26). This process of empowerment is, however, viewed differently by authors. From a development perspective, Freire (1983:48) explains empowerment as the transformation of communities through participation and the utilisation of local knowledge to address developmental issues (see 3.3.2.1). Others (see Servaes & Arnst, 1999:115; Nyamnjoh, 2005:1) argue that people are empowered by having access to information through education and training. In this sense, external knowledge (see 3.3.2.2) should empower them to participate by applying this new

knowledge and information to their own circumstances. Lastly, empowerment is viewed as the distribution of power between the different parties by participating (see 3.3.2.1) in the communication process as equal partners (Thomas, 1994:54; Otto & Fourie, 2017).

From the discussion above, it is clear that certain authors view empowerment as part of the development process, thus a means to an end, while others consider it as a means in itself. There is, however, agreement that the ideal outcome of development initiatives should be empowering the community, ultimately with the aim to achieve self-reliance (Zimmerman, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

For community empowerment to occur, dialogical communication should facilitate the process where power differences are dealt with (Grunig, 2006:165, 168; Melkote, 2002:432) and beneficiaries are empowered by participating in the communication process (Kloppers, 2015:104). To facilitate empowerment through CSR, the communication should thus focus on facilitating communication as a process. During this process, beneficiaries should participate fully as equal partners to understand their own strengths, knowledge and resources. However, they should also have the ability to identify the need for external input to reach the goals which they have identified.

Throughout the mentioned facilitation process, the organisation must constantly reflect on the distribution of power, thus transferring power from the company to the beneficiaries. This would lead to a more balanced distribution of power, which will help beneficiaries move towards self-reliance. As argued previously (see 3.3.2), it is important to note that this is an ideal situation to strive for, but not as easily achieved.

Different parties in the CSR process would thus, through the participatory approach, reflect on the following aspects: conflicting interests, power relationships, social and cultural differences, and the organisation's responsibility in society. Furthermore, organisations should consider their overall CSR strategy that would empower beneficiaries to attain sustainable development.

### **3.3.3 Habermas's approach**

The approach of Habermas can be utilised to aid the formulation of a CSR communication approach by applying the "communicative action" theory, which considers dialogue as a means to effect social change (see Jacobson & Storey, 2004; Jacobson & Pan, 2009; Otto & Fourie, 2017). Dialogue according to the participatory approach, was conceptualised as crucial to development (3.3.2 & 3.3.2.1) to enable participation and empowerment (Otto & Fourie, 2017:30). This understanding highlights the importance of further conceptualisation of dialogue to address the purpose of sustainable development within CSR communication.

According to Habermas, dialogue is conceptualised as a structural process in which mutual understanding is established to help reach consensus and collaboration between the parties. Due to this focus, Habermas's approach was included in several research studies within corporate communication (see 2.3.3.4). Particularly Habermas's view of communicative action was used to re-examine the role of communication in creating mutual understanding between business and society. This is done by applying the validity claims namely truth, sincerity, understand-ability and appropriateness, that should be present in the "ideal speech situation" (Habermas, 1984). The situation can be defined as: equal opportunities for participants to take part in the communication process. This participation implies that parties can raise and address any issue freely. Each raised issue will receive equal consideration but parties may also contest issues and express a different perception (Chang & Jacobson, 2010).

As was found previously, in the participatory approach dialogue focused on the critical reflection of conflicting issues (see 3.3.2.1). In this regard, the process of communicative action is aimed at resolving conflicting issues to reach mutual understanding, consensus and collaboration, as referred to in corporate communication (see 2.3.3.4 & 2.4.7). By applying the validity claims, Habermas thus provides structural guidance on reaching mutual understanding and moving towards consensus. This implies that those parties participating in the dialogical process can raise their perspectives, expectations, needs and goals, leaving it open for discussion and consideration, before deciding which action to take (Otto & Fourie, 2017:35).

Thus, communicative action focuses on reaching mutual understanding as well as seeking consensus and collaboration. Conversely, strategic action is defined by Habermas (1984:266) as instrumental action seeking success through communication to control, influence, or persuade the other person to predictable action (Edgar, 2006:144). Consensus and collaboration are established through actions that are known to elicit certain reactions (persuasion), as employed within corporate communication (see 2.5.7). This does not necessarily imply the discussion of intentions or world views (Edgar, 2006:145).

Strategic action thus aims to influence decisions and achieve the organisation's objectives, which is similar to the theoretical assumptions underlying CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective (see 2.3). Communicative action on the other hand, is explained as promoting cooperation and reaching understanding through dialogue, as described in CSR communication from a development communication perspective (see 3.3).

Habermas originally applied communicative action through participatory communication within the public sphere (see Jacobson & Storey, 2004; Jacobson & Pan, 2009). On the other hand, research also utilised this concept to guide the communication between the organisation and stakeholders (Burnside-Lawry, 2012). More specifically communicative and strategic action was



applied to the context of CSR communication (see Seele & Lock, 2015; Elving *et al.*, 2015; Hovring, 2017a).

In the context of CSR communication, Seele and Lock (2015) refer to Habermas's approach in general to explain how organisations can gain moral legitimacy by utilising open discourse, as represented by the four validity claims within CSR communication. These scholars also referred to the use of participation, transparent communication, accountability, and equalisation of power. Such aspects are highlighted by the reflective paradigm (see 2.3.3.3) as well as the participatory approach (see 3.3.2), and should to be used to the advantage of the organisation. In this case, the assumption was that communicative action should function within CSR communication but deliver an outcome that is supported by strategic action to reach the organisation's goals.

In 2015, Elving *et al.* applied Habermas's approach more extensively when they identified two different but interdependent framings of CSR, firstly purely as a business case (strategic action); secondly achieving mutual understanding (communicative action). They argue that CSR communication takes on different forms for different objectives, thus referring to different contexts (see 3.4.2.1). Possible contexts are: providing information, persuading stakeholders, communicating aspirations, or focussing on participation, thus defining the latter as both a means to an end and as an end in itself. CSR initiatives should reflect on the use of strategic or communicative action according to the context and outcome of the initiative. This means reflecting on communicative action that is process-oriented; or focusing on strategic action that is goal-oriented (see Otto & Fourie, 2017:36).

Considering the focus of current research that favours a societal perspective, Habermas's approach is used when evaluating the role of communication in creating shared value between the business and surrounding society (see 2.4.3.4). From this perspective, Hovring (2017a) made the case for the sole use of Habermas's communicative action within a communication approach that would guide organisations to reach mutual understanding and move towards creating shared value. As discussed previously (see 2.4.3.4), this notion of communicative action is applied mostly to achieve business objectives from a corporate communication perspective.

### **3.3.4 Communication roles**

As was the case with the formulation of a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective (see 2.3.4), certain communication roles were identified and linked to the different approaches to CSR communication from a development communication perspective.

The communication role within the participatory approach was identified as the *facilitator* of the communication process (Yoon, 2006; Reeves, 2015). This role creates a shared vision for the participants by reflecting on the past and present, in order to envision the future. The facilitator thus encourages people to participate by establishing mutual understanding about this shared vision. Participation takes place through listening, observing, as well as by facilitating the sharing of information and knowledge. The facilitator also aims to get people involved in implementing this vision. This is done by prompting action to identify problems but also develop solutions and assesses the outcome (Yoon, 2006:276). Corporate communication also refers to the role of the facilitator (see 2.3.4). However, this role is defined mostly as creating an environment for negotiations, seeking mutual understanding about issues but not necessarily establishing a shared vision and initiating action to help reach the shared vision.

A further communication role within the participatory and Habermas's approach is that of the *participator*. The participatory approach views the participant as a person who, through active involvement and engagement, participates in the various levels of the development process (see 3.3.2.3). Habermas points out that the participant has equal opportunity to engage actively in the dialogical process through communicative action (see 3.3.3). This is in contrast with the participants identified within corporate communication as stakeholders who participate merely in certain communication processes, as decided by the business (see 2.3.3.4 & 2.3.4).

### **3.3.5 Summary of the literature review**

In chapter 1 (see 1.2.2) CSR communication from a development communication perspective was defined as follows:

***CSR Communication from a development communication perspective entails communication utilised mainly to benefit society by empowering beneficiaries to become self-reliant in the sustainable development of society.***

This definition was explored further by examining the following sources: the critical theory (see 3.3.1), participatory approach (see 3.3.2), and Habermas's design (see 3.3.3) to identify and evaluate principles of CSR communication from a development communication perspective. Although these theories cover mostly the same principles, they define these aspects differently. Those differences were explored to formulate a CSR communication approach that would help empower society to strive for sustainable development.

Based on the critical theory, both the participatory and Habermas's approach focused on reflection within CSR communication. The participatory approach reflects on participation that leads to empowerment (see 3.3.2); Habermas's approach reflects on the use of communicative

action aimed at creating mutual understanding, which builds towards consensus; or the use of strategic action to reach specific objectives (see 3.3.3). Stakeholders are identified, according to the participatory approach, as beneficiaries who participate in the development projects (see 3.3.2.3). Habermas's approach places stakeholders of a development project more specifically within the communication process as participants (see 3.3.3).

Supporting the assumptions of CSR communication that focusses on the participation of stakeholders within all the communication processes, the communication roles are accordingly fulfilled by those stakeholders. In defining communication roles, the participatory approach identifies the participant and the facilitator, whereas Habermas's design focuses in more depth on the participant in the communication process. The role of the participant within CSR communication is viewed by the participatory approach as beneficiaries of CSR initiatives. In contrast, Habermas views them more broadly as different participants within "the ideal speech situation" (see 3.3.4).

The participatory approach views the outcome of CSR communication as empowering beneficiaries through critical reflection to become self-reliant (see 3.3.2.4). Habermas's approach, on the other hand, views the outcome of CSR communication as establishing mutual understanding through dialogue with the aim to resolve conflicting views and promote consensus and cooperation between the parties (see 3.3.3). Regarding the nature of communication, both approaches identify the same constructs, namely participation and dialogue, in which their definitions agree.

The participatory approach thus guides the formulation of a CSR communication approach by applying the different concepts and constructs in a wider sense, whereas Habermas's design examines these aspects more in-depth. Therefore, the present study evaluated different theories to identify possible supplementary CSR communication principles from a development communication perspective to be utilised within in an integrated approach to CSR communication.

The same principles relevant to CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective are used to formulate CSR communication from a development communication perspective below. Although these principles appear to be similar, they are at times defined differently based on their differing meta-theoretical traditions and theoretical roots. Therefore, separate formulation is necessary of each principle.

### **3.4 A CSR COMMUNICATION APPROACH FROM A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

Certain principles were identified in the literature study which guided the formulation of a CSR communication approach as contributing to the sustainable development of society.

#### **3.4.1 Purpose**

As proposed by King IV (see 1.1), the triple context should guide an organisation's purpose as its reason for existence. The notion of *planet* should also be identified as the purpose for CSR communication from a development communication perspective, realising that sustainable development includes both people and the environment in which they must operate (see 3.2). *People* can, however, be identified as the main purpose for CSR communication from a development communication perspective, with little regards for profit. This is based on the exclusive focus on empowering the people in society to become self-reliant as proposed in the critical theory, as well as the participatory and Habermas's approaches.

#### **3.4.2 CSR strategy**

The critical tradition identified CSR strategy within CSR communication as *the transformation of society*. This aim should be reflected in the CSR strategy, which should address the social differences, conflicting interests, imbalance in power, and inequality in society by empowering the people to partake in sustainable development.

#### **3.4.3 Identification of stakeholders**

Stakeholders are identified in the critical theory (see 3.3.1) as *marginalised groups* such as local *communities*. These groups' existence should be acknowledged and their rights and interest dealt with through the CSR strategy. This implies that they are recognised and treated as primary stakeholders. The participatory approach (see 3.3.2) and Habermas's design (see 3.3.3) identify these marginalised groups as *participants* who are afforded voluntary and equal opportunity to be part of the communication processes. The participatory approach further specify that these participants should be *beneficiaries* of development projects.

#### **3.4.4 Communication processes**

Communication taking place between different people in the context of development can be identified as a *participatory process*, based on the participatory approach (see 3.3.2). Therefore, the interaction can be defined as an on-going communication process in which the people of interest can participate. From Habermas's approach (see 3.3.3) the interaction can also be

identified as a *communicative process* of on-going dialogue that strives for mutual understanding, consensus, and collaboration; or it can be described as a *strategic process* where agents influence decisions to achieve pre-set goals.

According to Habermas's approach, strategic action includes control, influence and persuasion. These constructs are in contrast to the constructs informing CSR communication from a development communication perspective such as equalisation of power, dialogue and participation. Strategic action therefore proved to be more relevant to CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective because it is defined in a similar way (see 2.3.3.4). Therefore, the strategic action will not be used in formulating CSR communication from a development communication perspective.

### **3.4.5 Communication roles**

The different *communication roles* that apply to CSR communication from a development communication perspective are identified as those of the parties participating in the communication processes. The *facilitator* within the participatory approach (see 3.3.2) is identified as the party that guides other participants in the communication process to reach the mutual understanding of a shared vision (see 3.3.4). The *participant* as identified in Habermas's, approach (3.3.3 & 3.3.4), refers to any individual or party that participate voluntarily in the various levels of the communication processes.

### **3.4.6 Outcome of communication**

As was pointed out, from a development communication perspective, CSR communication's rationale should be to avoid pre-set objectives. Nevertheless, there are *outcomes of communication* to which the parties strive, as the result, consequence, or effect of engaging in communication. Both the participatory (see 3.3.2) and Habermas's approach (see 3.3.3) refer to the *creation of mutual understanding*. This can be viewed as an *on-going dialogical process that strives to establish shared meaning about different realities, thereby dealing with a common interest through the co-creation of meaning*.

Achieving mutual understanding may help resolve conflict, reach consensus, and promote cooperation. Mutual understanding may accept that conflict will not be resolved, consensus cannot be reached and that there will be no cooperation, thus the relationship is considered to be terminated.

A further construct that was identified as an outcome of communication is *empowerment* (3.3.2.4). This implies that as a result of participating in the communication process, having

access to information, the utilisation of local knowledge and resources and the equal distribution of power, the beneficiaries would be empowered towards self-reliance.

### **3.4.7 Nature of communication**

The way interaction between parties occurs within an environment of trust and respect (see 3.3.1) can be viewed as the *nature of communication*. The participatory approach (see 3.3.2) and Habermas's design (see 3.3.3) proved to have similar constructs that depict the nature of communication. These include dissemination of information, participation, dialogue, cultural diversity, and empowerment. Empowerment in CSR communication is viewed as a construct of the nature of communication but also regarding the outcome of the communicative process. These aspects can be explicated as follows:

- *Dissemination of information:* Equal distribution of information to help empower people at grassroots level through learning, enabling them to participate in development projects.
- *Participation:* Active and voluntary engagement and mobilisation of the relevant stakeholders throughout the communication processes, affording them equal power, thus equal influence on the process.
- *Dialogue:* Continuous, open and reflective horizontal discourse that empower participants to reflect critically on their own realities, understand those of others, and find solutions to deal with those realities through mutual understanding.
- *Cultural diversity:* Parties must be sensitive for the world views, values, indigenous knowledge, traditions, customs, beliefs and symbols of each culture within a specific community. These aspects should be considered and employed in development initiatives, thereby emphasising the uniqueness of each community and its right to cultural freedom.
- *Empowerment:* People participate through dialogical processes where they have access to information and where power differences are dealt with, enabling beneficiaries to influence their own circumstances.

Table 3.1 illustrates the different principles used to inform the concepts and constructs of a CSR communication approach according to a development communication perspective.

**Table 3.1: CSR communication from a development communication perspective**

CONCEPTS	CONSTRUCTS
Purpose	People
CSR strategy	Transformation of society
Identification of stakeholders	Marginalised groups Communities Participant Beneficiaries
Communication process	Participation Communicative action
Communication roles	Facilitator Participant
Outcome of communication	Mutual understanding Empowerment
Nature of communication	Dissemination of information Participation Dialogue Cultural diversity Empowerment

From the above, an extended definition may be presented as follows:

*CSR communication from a development communication perspective entails continual communication employed to benefit mainly the surrounding society by empowering beneficiaries, through participation in dialogical discourse, to become self-reliant. This is done by formulating a CSR strategy which should contribute to sustainable development relevant to local contexts. This means considering the local community’s world views, values, culture, and realities, in order to form long-term and trust-based relationships geared towards the transformation of society.*

**3.5 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to identify and evaluate principles relevant to CSR communication from a development communication perspective by firstly examining the CSR assumptions from a societal perspective. Seeing that this perspective focuses on empowerment to reach sustainable development, theories from development communication were explored that support this perspective. These included the critical theory as well as the participatory approach and Habermas’s design as theories grounded in the critical tradition. These approaches highlight the essence of communication within the CSR context as a process that

strives to empower communities through participation and dialogue within a culturally sensitive environment oriented towards sustainable development.

Based on the identified principles, a CSR communication approach was formulated from a development communication perspective that is characterised by open negotiation, symmetrical power relationships, understanding of culture, mutual understanding, community participation, transparency, accountability, and dialogue. A bottom-up participative approach is proposed where priorities are identified by listening to the community's expectations. This also requires knowledge of perceptions on local needs as well as understanding ethical and social customs. These aspects form a guideline for the design and implementation of CSR initiatives that would empower the people to work towards sustainable development (Idemudia, 2011:4-6).

Secondly, CSR communication was formulated within this perspective as mainly supporting sustainable development without a strategic perspective, where the latter was the main focus of CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective. This supports the argument that these two perspectives have a singular focus (see 1.2.2). This confirms the need for an integrated model to CSR communication that would direct organisations in their striving for sustainability. This could be accomplished by incorporating the strategic focus of an organisation's perspective with the need for sustainable development of society and thus empowering beneficiaries to become self-reliant. The present study thereby proposes a move towards a stronger participative model in CSR communication that continuously engages and interact with stakeholders through dialogue at the multiple levels (Amaladoss & Manohar, 2013:76). In this model economic as well as societal obligations can be met by considering development realities (Jayakumar, 2013:73), while still striving for business success and profit.

In the following chapter (chapter 4), such an integrated model to CSR communication will be conceptualised. This will be based on the principles of the two CSR communication approaches that was formulated according to a corporate communication perspective in chapter 2 and a development communication perspective in chapter 3. These approaches will be applied in a mutually inclusive manner.



## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **AN INTEGRATED MODEL TO CSR COMMUNICATION**

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapters, principles of CSR communication were identified and evaluated according to the different, and often conflicting, theoretical perspectives. It became clear that despite the vast differences, both perspectives are equally important to understand CSR communication and contribute to the dual purpose of CSR. Stated briefly, the CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective focuses on maintaining equilibrium to benefit the organisation by keeping it in power to reach its objectives. On the other hand, the CSR communication from a development communication perspective focuses on transformation by questioning power structures with the aim to transform society.

CSR communication may thus be perceived as a straightforward concept. However, when examined from the two above-mentioned perspectives, it is evident that these applications of CSR communication could be considered as conflicting constructs with opposing focal points and objectives.

This chapter deals with the differences in assumptions and singular focus in the practice of the two mentioned perspectives, by re-examining the dual purpose of CSR to establish a mutual purpose. The principles of CSR communication from the different perspectives, are then utilised to identify similar as well as conflicting concepts and constructs that could supplement each other in an integrated manner. These concepts and constructs would then be used in the conceptualisation of the presently named Integrated CSR communication model that focuses on CSR communication and its contribution to a mutual purpose.

The objective of this chapter is thus to conceptualise such a model by answering Research question 3 (1.4.2.3): *How can an integrated CSR communication model be conceptualised that incorporates principles from a corporate and developmental communication perspective?*

#### **4.2 RE-EXAMINING THE DUAL PURPOSE**

It was argued in chapter 1 that although CSR entails a dual purpose, it is practiced mostly towards a singular focus. This is also reflected in the CSR communication theory and practice.

The present study instead focuses on establishing a mutual purpose that could guide the CSR processes. This study thus argues that sustainability should be the mutual purpose that guides CSR strategy. Such a strategy should focus on both the sustainability of business and society

as depicted in the CSR vision. This strategy is based on the fact that business cannot function sustainably in an unsustainable society. It is recommended further that CSR communication should embody the purpose of sustainability by guiding engagement with different stakeholders in business and society on CSR issues. This should contribute to the purpose of sustainability in an integrated manner.

This argument is in line with the guidelines of King IV (IoD, 2016), which suggests the integration of sustainability in all business processes. Organisations focusing on sustainability as their reason for existence, thus their purpose, also feature in business research. According to Cooperrider and Fry (2012:47), the argument that business should focus on sustainability is no longer debatable because of widespread evidence regarding the benefits for both business and society.

Currently, sustainability is viewed as a central management objective (Kemp *et al.*, 2016:21) with recent research indicating an even stronger global societal shift in business towards sustainability. The 19th Annual Global CEO survey by PWC (PWC, 2016) indicated that CEOs understand that in future, companies will be evaluated by customers, potential employees, and investors. The criteria will be how companies contribute to society at large, cater for the needs of a wider range of stakeholders, take action on sustainability issues and needs, and make a wider impact on society.

Therefore, currently CEOs consider sustainability objectives as important to help reach strategic objectives and contribute to the overall long-term health of the organisation. This approach by CEOs supports the CSR vision of being a sustainable business within a sustainable society that strives towards a sustainable future for all. Further research on this topic was conducted in 2016 by the Network for Business Sustainability on CEOs decision-making for sustainability (CSRWire, 2016). This research emphasised that for sustainability to be part of the enterprise strategy, the organisation requires sufficient information on environmental and social issues, which must be linked to business strategy. This finding highlights the need for CSR strategy to be embedded into the enterprise strategy, driven by the communication function (see 2.3.3.2, 2.3.4, 2.4.2).

In South Africa, this demand on business to seek sustainability is reflected in the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and the King Reports on Corporate Governance for South Africa (King III & King IV). In these reports, guidelines for business focus strongly on sustainable development. In King IV (2016) this notion is expanded by referring to organisations as corporate citizens that form an integral part of society. Therefore, companies should utilise integrated thinking within the various business processes, striving towards sustainability based on the triple context (see 1.1).

These guidelines should have a significant impact on the way organisations in South Africa view and practice their CSR strategies. Apart from being guided by policy documents, companies understand the strategic impact of a CSR vision that aspires to a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates. This is evident in, for example, how South African Breweries (SAB) describe its relationship with the communities:

“SAB believes that its success as a business is linked to that of the communities in which it operates and is therefore acutely aware of its impact on them. Monwabisi Fandeso, SAB director Corporate Affairs and Transformation” (MyPressportal, 2014).

An organisation’s corporate citizenship and licence to operate are considered as part of CSR communication (see 2.3.3.2 & 2.4.6). These aspects are linked to sustainability, arguing that an organisation will not be viewed as a good corporate citizen, nor will it receive a licence to operate, if this company fails to focus on sustainability (Beckmann & Pies, 2008; Cooperrider & Fry, 2012; Idemudia, 2014; Hall *et al.*, 2015; IoD, 2016). The purpose of businesses should thus transcend profit making and focus on sustainability to guide their CSR strategy. The role of communication in sustainability is considered essential to foster collaboration between business and society (Scandeliuss & Cohen, 2016). Again, this highlights the need for an integrated CSR communication model that focuses on the purpose of sustainability.

As is the case with CSR, sustainability also does not have a definition that is mutually agreed on. The most common definition relates to sustainable development: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987).

This present study argues that the mutual purpose of CSR should be sustainability for business, society, and its environment. For this study, sustainability is thus defined according to the mentioned triple context. This entails a continual long-term process focusing on the maintenance, endurance, and existence of business (profit), society (people), and the environment (planet). The aim is a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates. Sustainability is thus viewed as the underlying concept necessary to integrate business and societal goals into a CSR strategy, which forms an integral part of the organisation’s enterprise strategy.

With the mutual purpose of sustainability guiding CSR, an integrated CSR communication model can be conceptualised in terms of its contribution to sustainability.

### 4.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE INTEGRATED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL

The conceptualisation of the Integrated CSR communication model is guided by the following definition: **CSR communication** is an integrated process of communication that should reflect the mutual purpose of sustainability.

The conceptualisation of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model is done according to Table 4.1 below. This integration is based on the identification and evaluation of CSR communication principles that informed the concepts and constructs from a corporate communication perspective in chapter 2 and a development communication perspective in chapter 3.

**Table 4.1: CSR communication from the different perspectives**

CONCEPTS	CSR COMMUNICATION Corporate communication	SIMILAR CONSTRUCTS	CSR COMMUNICATION Development communication
<b>Purpose</b>	Profit	Planet	People
<b>CSR strategy</b>	Managing societal relationships to the advantage of the organisation		Transformation of society
<b>Identification of stakeholders</b>	Primary stakeholder within a broader societal view		Marginalised groups Communities Participants Beneficiaries
<b>Communication processes</b>	Strategic process Negotiation process Implementation process		Participation process Communicative action process
<b>Communication roles</b>	Reflective strategist Implementer	Facilitator Participant	

CONCEPTS	CSR COMMUNICATION Corporate communication	SIMILAR CONSTRUCTS	CSR COMMUNICATION Development communication
<b>Outcome of communication</b>	Reputation Image Legitimacy License to operate Issues management Shared responsibilities Mutually beneficial relationships Creation of shared value	Mutual understanding	Empowerment
<b>Nature of communication</b>	Persuasion Negotiation	Information Participation Dialogue Empowerment Cultural diversity	

From Table 4.1 above, it can be inferred that the main differences between the two theoretical approaches lies in the concept of *purpose*, *CSR strategy*, *identification of stakeholders*, *communication processes* and the *outcome of communication*. The most obvious similarities are found in the *communication roles* and *nature of communication*. These similarities and differences are discussed below to ascertain how they can supplement each other to conceptualise the Integrated CSR communication model.

#### 4.3.1 Purpose

Purpose is included in the proposed Integrated CSR communication model because the reason for an organisation's existence should also guide its CSR strategy in support of the overall enterprise strategy. The purpose should reflect the triple context as stipulated in King IV (IoD, 2016); however, this was not always the case.

Purpose within CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective was identified as profit and planet (see 2.3.1) with CSR communication's purpose from a development communication perspective centring mainly on people and planet (3.3.1). This differentiation in purpose is maintained to accentuate the different assumptions and singular focus in the practice

of CSR communication. In 4.2 it was argued that sustainability should be the mutual purpose of CSR. In this sense, business must contribute to sustainability in terms of the triple context in an integrated manner as proposed in King IV (IoD, 2016). The purpose of sustainability should also guide society to understand the importance of business's sustainability, which allows it to contribute to society's sustainability. Therefore, sustainability as the mutual purpose can be defined as follows:

***Sustainability*** is the continual long-term process involving the maintenance, endurance, and existence of business, society, and the environment (i.e. triple context) to seek a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates.

#### **4.3.2 CSR strategy**

CSR strategy is included in the proposed Integrated CSR communication model since a CSR strategy must be formulated on a strategic level, embedded within the enterprise strategy to guide the organisation in its implementation of CSR within the various business processes. Such a CSR strategy should focus on the triple context for sustainability (see 1.1) and should be an integral part of the organisation's enterprise strategy (see 2.3.3.2).

From a corporate communication perspective, the CSR strategy is formulated on a strategic level but its focus is mostly to manage societal relationships with stakeholders to the advantage of the organisation by following a *profit* purpose (see 2.3.1 & 2.3.2). Within a development communication context, a CSR strategy is not necessarily formulated in accordance with the business strategy. The approach is also mostly directed to transform society without reflection on strategic business issues. Development communication rather reflects on the impact of social differences, conflicting interests, and the need for equal distribution of power. The aim is striving for sustainable development with limited focus on the strategic advantages for the organisation. Such an approach is thus mainly in support of the *people* purpose (see 3.3.1 & 3.3.2).

Within the Integrated CSR communication model, sustainability as the mutual purpose, guides the CSR strategy and is embedded within the enterprise strategy. Thus, businesses would practice their role as good corporate citizens by contributing to the sustainability of both business, society and the environment through the CSR strategy.

The communication function was identified as the one that should drive the CSR strategy. The reason is that this function reflects on the organisation's role and responsibility towards society as well as its focus on managing relationships by engaging with stakeholders (see 2.3.3.2 & 2.4.2). Instead of managing relationships as specified within corporate communication, such

relationships, according to the Integrated CSR communication model, would be built through CSR communication to contribute to sustainability. This would be done by continually reflecting on the role of business in society. Organisations should also become involved where issues relevant to the sustainability of business and society are identified and addressed within the CSR strategy. In light of the discussion above, CSR strategy can be defined as follows:

*CSR strategy is guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded in the enterprise strategy. The CSR strategy is driven by the communication function, focusing on building relationships between business and society. Through continual engagement with society, issues that are relevant to the sustainability of both business and society are identified and addressed in the CSR strategy.*

### **4.3.3 CSR vision**

The present study argues that the purpose of sustainability guiding the CSR strategy should outline the organisation's CSR vision, in other words, the business's aspirations for engaging in CSR. In this regard, sustainability directs business on what it intends to achieve through its CSR strategy in the future. This aim is based on the business's basic beliefs about its role as a responsible citizen in contributing to sustainability within the triple context (also see 4.2). The CSR vision can thus be described as providing direction towards a sustainable future for business and society. Therefore, CSR vision can be defined in terms of concepts in which the purpose and CSR strategy are rooted.

#### **Theoretical statement 1a: CSR vision**

The CSR vision is the aspiration of an organisation to attain a sustainable future for the company as well as the society in which it operates. This vision should reflect the purpose of sustainability that guides the CSR strategy for a mutually inclusive and equal commitment to the triple context as embodied in CSR communication.

It is argued that the CSR vision should reflect a sustainable future for both business and society. Therefore, it is important to identify those in society to whom the organisation has a responsibility. Such an identification will form the basis of the CSR strategy. This is also the reason for including the identification of stakeholders in the Integrated CSR communication model.

#### 4.3.4 Identification of stakeholders

The identification of stakeholders is a process where the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility (see 2.3.3.1). From a corporate communication perspective, stakeholders are identified according to a broader societal perspective that focuses on the organisation's primary relations as those with legitimacy, urgency, and power who might impact on the existence of the organisation (see 2.4.3). On the other hand, the main emphasis of development communication is on marginalised groups in society such as local communities and beneficiaries who must participate in CSR initiatives, contributing to their own transformation (see 3.4.3). Thus, despite a shift towards a broader societal view from a corporate communication perspective, this perspective is still guided by the purpose of profit and creating a strategic advantage for the organisation. On the other hand, it is not possible for business to involve all marginalised groups in its CSR initiatives. In this regard, they will support communities in which the organisation operates through CSR initiatives, in order to gain a strategic advantage.

When management follows an integrated approach and reflects on the purpose of sustainability, it follows a broader societal view and identifies its stakeholders to include marginalised groups. These groups hold no profit advantage for business but are part of the society in which the business operates. Because they are part of that society, their sustainability thus influences business's sustainability as well. Therefore, the argument that marginalised groups should be viewed as equally important as the traditional primary stakeholders such as customers, employees, or suppliers. In this sense, primary stakeholders can be redefined as follows:

***Primary stakeholders** are those who directly and indirectly influence the organisation's sustainability, or are affected by the organisation's pursuit for sustainability. They include marginalised groups in society to whom the organisations perceive a responsibility beyond profit-making and striving for societal sustainability.*

Based on this identification of stakeholders, the theoretical statement can be made as below:

##### **Theoretical statement 2a: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society.



After identifying the stakeholders, the following step would be to specify the different communication processes through which the organisation could engage with these stakeholders.

#### **4.3.5 Communication processes**

Communication processes within CSR were identified as a series of communicative actions aimed at achieving certain outcomes (see 2.4.4). In the context of corporate communication, three such processes were identified, namely: strategic, negotiation, and implementation (see 2.4.4). These processes would guide the communication function to help the organisation achieve certain objectives. Development communication accentuates a participative process and a communicative action process to guide society towards transformation (see 3.4.4). The questions however remain on how feasible full participation of all stakeholders are?

In the proposed integrated model, *communication processes* are viewed as continuous interventions that should support the purpose of sustainability. This implies that communication does not primarily occur as an action to attain a predetermined objective nor undirected participation. Instead, it is seen as an on-going process seeking mutual understanding by building long-term, symmetrical power relationships that will contribute to sustainability.

Different CSR communication processes were identified within corporate and development communication. Corporate communication firstly specified a strategic process in which a CSR strategy is formulated that would contribute to the organisation's enterprise strategy (also see 2.3.3.2).

The importance was explained of formulating a CSR strategy at a strategic level based on the continuous reflection on, and engagement with society (see 4.3.1 & 4.3.2). Therefore, the strategic process will form part of the communication processes within the proposed integrated CSR communication model, as explicated below.

- **The strategic process**

*The strategic process takes place on a strategic level to formulate CSR strategy, guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded within the enterprise strategy. This strategy is based on reflection about the organisation's role in and responsibility towards society as well as the identification of stakeholders with whom the engagement will take place through CSR communication.*

Both corporate and development communication refer to the implementation of CSR strategies, based on mutual understanding about the necessary actions to reach a mutual purpose. From a

corporate communication perspective, it refers to the implementation of the strategy according to objectives determined by the organisation and on which they obtained the community's "buy-in" through negotiation (see 2.4.4). From a development communication perspective, it is about the continued participation of beneficiaries within the participation process, from decision-making to evaluation through communicative action (see 3.4.4). Negotiation, participation, and communicative action are viewed in the proposed Integrated CSR communication model as communication processes where engagement takes place. This process does not focus on obtaining "buy-in" or mere participation for the sake of participating but strives towards the mutual purpose of sustainability. It is also argued that this engagement should continue, also when implementing the strategy. Engagement is thus identified in terms of the Integrated CSR communication model as the second communication process.

- **The engagement process**

*The engagement process specifies the participation of all parties in creating mutual understanding about societal and business issues and establishing a mutual intent in resolving these issues. It also entails the participation of the relevant parties in formulating strategy and objectives to address the mutual intent as well as help implement and evaluate the strategy.*

For the different communication processes identified, mutual understanding was established as a goal of CSR communication. Such understanding is, however, defined differently from a corporate communication perspective as opposed to one from a development communication perspective. From a corporate communication perspective, mutual understanding is defined as the creation of an understanding about mutual issues and how those issues would be addressed within the CSR strategy to achieve the business objectives (see 2.4.6). Mutual understanding from a development communication perspective, means providing insight into the issues facing society and how it should be dealt with by society's participation in the various levels of the development process (see 3.3.2.1 & 3.4.6).

Mutual understanding within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model is considered an important aspect of engagement in the pursuit of sustainability, thus moving away from the singular focus. **Mutual understanding** can be defined as *creating an understanding about societal as well as business issues and about the expectations of both business and society in addressing those issues towards sustainability.*

The strategic and engagement aspects are considered as on-going processes with mutual influence. This takes place through continuous critical reflection on the information needed and gained from one process. The information is utilised in the other processes and the existing one, contributing to the purpose of sustainability.

Based on the discussion of the communication process, the following theoretical statement can be made:

**Theoretical statement 3a: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic and engagement level with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society.

These two communication processes require different roles to take responsibility. Their task would be to oversee these processes, ensuring they function as required and can supply the information necessary to operate the other processes. Therefore, different communication roles were identified to oversee the communication processes, as is discussed below.

#### **4.3.6 Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to agents who fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within the varying CSR communication processes. Within corporate communication, the reflective strategist is identified as the role necessary for the strategic process (see 2.3.4 & 2.4.5). The reflective strategist would drive this strategic process to influence the CSR strategy. The purpose would be twofold: gaining a strategic advantage for the organisation but also reflecting on the impact it has on society. The implementer was identified as the role responsible for the implementation of the strategy as determined by the organisation.

The roles of the facilitator and participant were identified in both corporate and development communication. Regarding corporate communication, the role of the facilitator is to drive the negotiation process between the organisation and society. This takes place by identifying and addressing issues that would support the business strategy (see 2.3.4 & 2.4.5). The facilitator within development communication strives for a mutual vision of empowerment and social change and encourages participation from all stakeholders to reach this vision (see 3.3.4 & 3.4.5). Such a vision does however not necessarily include the sustainability of business. This role is defined mostly within corporate communication as creating an environment for negotiations that could lead to a mutual understanding about issues. However, this does not necessarily mean establishing a shared vision of sustainability and enabling action to achieve this vision, as the case is for development communication (see 3.3.4 & 3.4.5).

Corporate communication considers the participant role as those of different stakeholder groups that take part in the negotiation process, whereas the implementer is the person responsible to implement the actions that were decided on during the negotiation process (see 2.3.4). The participants in development communication are viewed as those agents who share a vision of empowerment leading to social change. They also participate actively on the various levels of the development process geared to reach the mentioned vision (see 3.3.4). This role contrasts that of the participant identified within corporate communication as stakeholders who participate merely in certain CSR communication processes which the business determined (see 2.3.3.4, 2.3.4). As stated previously, it is also not always viable for business to include everyone in the participation process (see 4.3.5).

The proposed integrated CSR communication model incorporates the roles of reflective strategist, facilitator, and participant as follows:

- **Reflective strategist**

When conceptualising the communication roles for an integrated model, the *reflective strategist* (as conceptualised in CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective – see 2.3.4 & 2.4.5) is included as a role within the strategic process. Although this role is not mentioned by adherents of development communication, it is viewed as important to the integrated model when formulating a strategy to maintain sustainability of both business and society on a strategic level. The responsibility of this role would be to reflect on the organisation's function in and responsibility toward society. This role entails identifying stakeholders that relate not only to the well-being of the business but overall to society at large. This will help influence the enterprise strategy by ensuring sustainability for both business and society. The reflective strategist can thus be defined as follows:

*The **reflective strategist** is the most senior communication person in business responsible for CSR and CSR communication. This role reflects on and addresses the strategic business as well as societal issues within the purpose of sustainability.*

- **Reflective facilitator**

The *reflective facilitator* is the role in the proposed integrated model that functions within the engagement process. According to the Integrated CSR communication model, this role is responsible for the process of communication – effective engagement that seeks mutual understanding – but not for the outcome of this process. Therefore, this role is not utilised for a single process as is the case within corporate communication (see 2.3.4 & 2.4.5) to achieve the organisation's objectives. Based on a mutual purpose of sustainability, this role is viewed

instead according to development communication (see 3.3.4 & 3.4.5), as a process of creating a shared vision. This role may also expand over both processes to reflect on the information from one process necessary to inform the other process. Thus, this also entails a reflecting role since constant reflection is necessary for creating mutual understanding between the different parties building towards trust-based relationships.

By facilitating communication in terms of different processes, both business and society are empowered with knowledge and a mutual understanding regarding different world views, values, realities, and issues. Based on a better understanding of the “other”, the reflective facilitator could also drive the communication to establish intent. This means facilitating the process to help each party understand the other’s expectations of the relationship and the outcome of the process. The aim would be to reach an understanding of mutual intent for the relationship. When such mutual understanding cannot be achieved, both parties may decide to terminate the relationship. In the light of the discussion above, the reflective facilitator can be defined as follows:

*The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability.*

- **Reflective participant**

According to corporate communication, the participant role was identified as that of stakeholders participating merely in certain CSR communication processes as determined by business (see 2.3.3.4, 2.3.4, 2.4.5). Development communication viewed the participant in terms of different parties that take an active part in the various communication processes (see 3.3.4 & 3.4.5). The *reflective participant* within the integrated model would entail the role of participating in the engagement process. This is also a reflecting role that would reflect continually on the participation of the relevant parties throughout the engagement process. This comprises the setting of strategy and objectives, implementation of the strategy as well as monitoring and evaluation. Such a role would also reflect on the equalisation of power between business and society and the need to be sensitive about cultural diversity (see 3.3.2.2 & 3.3.2.4), to attain sustainability. The reflective participant can thus be defined as follows:

*The **reflective participant** is the role within the engagement process who constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the process, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent.*

Based on the discussion above regarding the communication roles, the following theoretical statement can be made:

**Theoretical statement 4a: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process and the reflective facilitator and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the engagement process.

The different roles that drive the communication processes must focus on the ultimate aim: contributing to sustainability for both the organisation and the surrounding society. Therefore, it is important to establish the outcome of communication, which is discussed subsequently.

#### **4.3.7 Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication is seen as an ultimate aim that is strived for as a result, consequence, or effect of engaging in communication. Mutual understanding was the only construct identified by corporate and development communication as an outcome of CSR communication, although these strategies defined it differently. The differences between corporate and development communication in defining mutual understanding was discussed as part of the communication processes (see 4.2.4). Thus, even with the emphasis on mutual understanding, the singular focus of corporate and development communication on CSR communication is still evident in the different ways mutual understanding is defined.

These differences are accentuated by the other constructs when referring to the outcome of CSR communication. From a corporate communication perspective, this outcome is viewed as mainly in favour of the organisation through matters such as reputation management, issues management, gaining legitimacy, and a social licence to operate (see 2.4.6). Corporate communication also includes constructs that considers society. These entail the following: shared responsibilities, mutual understanding, mutual beneficial relationships, and creating shared value. These aspects are included due to the advantage it will have for the organisation (see 2.3.3.2, 2.3.3.4, 2.4.6).

On the other hand, the outcome of CSR communication from a development communication perspective is mainly viewed as that of empowering society to become self-reliant (see 3.4.6).

Mutual understanding as an outcome entails insight into the developmental issue and not necessarily of the organisation's position, thus showing little regard for the outcome for business.

These different constructs depicting the outcome of communication from the different theoretical perspectives can be included in the Integrated CSR communication model since they supplement each other in the pursuit of sustainability. It is, however, necessary to include them in such a way that it does not lead to mutual exclusivity where the focus is on the one at the cost of the other. Therefore, the present study also proposes a mutual outcome, namely *empowerment*.

The Integrated CSR communication model argues that an organisation's CSR strategy should be based on the purpose of sustainability for both business and society. If this is the case, the outcome of this integrated model should lead to empowerment for both business and society.

Development communication focuses on empowering society by maintaining that organisations have the power which should be transferred to society to enhance their self-reliance (see 3.3.2.4). Seeing that empowerment is associated mostly with society, it was necessary to consult literature again, to obtain information that would motivate the empowering of business.

Business empowerment can be defined as the formulation and implementation of internal and external business processes. These processes are based on knowledge and information, which help the organisation achieve its goals effectively (Schulz *et al.*, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). A further distinction is an empowering organisation, as one that guides and strengthens individuals' confidence and competencies through knowledge that will help effect corporate change necessary for survival in a continuously changing environment. An empowered organisation also influences society at large by collaborating in societal change (Zimmerman, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

For the purpose of this study, the term *organisational empowerment* is used. This refers to both the empowering as well as the empowered organisation, thus being empowered themselves but also empowering society.

Thus, society is not viewed as a passive recipient of CSR initiatives where power differences are handled on the organisations' terms – such as within corporate communication (see 2.3.3.2, 2.3.3.4, 2.3.3.5). Instead, organisations should strive to empower individuals, society and themselves through their CSR initiatives by using an integrated model to CSR communication. According to the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, equalisation of power is

suggested through the process of participation, sensitivity towards cultural identity, and a constant critical reflection on the distribution of power within this process.

However, the threatening of existing power hierarchies is considered as one of the major obstacles to overcome. This is also the main reason why the participatory approach is not widely used (Servaes & Lie, 2013:11). Such a gap highlights the challenge to integrate the different perspectives of CSR communication into a single model. This challenge would be addressed by the Integrated CSR communication model if there is a constant questioning of and reflecting on the identification of stakeholders (see 4.3.4). This assessment is based on stakeholder's attribute of power, the power relationships within CSR initiatives as well as the expansion of power to stakeholders.

The proposed Integrated CSR communication model differentiates between the empowering of society and that of business.

- **Empowering society**

*Empowering society* is considered as guiding and strengthening society with knowledge and understanding to strive for societal sustainability and ultimately, achieve self-reliance. In this way, society will be empowered to identify and rely on its own abilities, power and resources to deal with its realities and issues and meet its needs for social change. Society also become empowered to identify issues, limitations, or challenges which the stakeholders are unable to address. This is accompanied by understanding business as a partner in dealing with the issues, limitations or challenges. In this regard, empowerment of society can be defined as:

***Empowering society** is seen as guiding and strengthening society through information, knowledge and an understanding to strive for societal sustainability and attain self-reliance, all which are conducive for social change.*

- **Empowering business**

*Empowering business* implies that the organisation gains information, knowledge and an understanding of society, by engagement with primary stakeholders. This empowerment must be incorporated into the company's enterprise strategy to create a strategic advantage for the organisation. This advantage may entail the following: a favourable reputation and image, a license to operate, being considered a good corporate citizen, effective issues management, creating shared value, building mutual beneficial relationships, and enjoying shared responsibilities (see 2.4.6). Such information, knowledge and understanding will also help business focus on corporate change that is conducive to survival in the contemporary changing environment. Business, through its own empowerment, would also help empower society by



sharing knowledge, expertise, and understanding with stakeholders, thus contributing to social change. Therefore, empowerment of business can be defined as follows:

***Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change.*

Based on the discussion above, the following theoretical statement can be made:

**Theoretical statement 5a: Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication is empowerment where both business and society are guided and strengthened through information, knowledge and an understanding of themselves and the other. This will help create a strategic advantage for the organisation and contribute to self-reliance for society.

In the two mentioned communication processes different forms of interaction would take place within specific contexts to achieve empowerment as the outcome of communication. The way in which communication can take place must be explored. This will help ascertain how the nature of communication contributes to the empowering of business and society both to attain sustainability – as explicated below.

#### **4.3.8 Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which such interaction can take place in an environment of trust and respect between business and its stakeholders within specific contexts (3.4.7). These contexts refer to the different settings in which communication can take place, for example, within business itself, between business and its stakeholders, or among the stakeholders through the different communication processes.

Based on the evaluation of Table 4.1 above, it can be assumed that the nature of communication portrays the most similarities between the different perspectives of CSR communication. Constructs such as information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity seem similar, but are defined differently from a corporate communication perspective (see 2.4.7) than from a development communication one (see 3.4.7), which again reflects the differences in their assumptions and the singular focus in their practice. The

distinction between corporate and development communication in their usage of these constructs are most prominent where they define it. Corporate communication defines it as an action to mainly achieve organisational objectives with little regards for the empowerment of society. Within development communication it is defined as an on-going process of empowering society towards sustainability with little regard for the sustainability of business. Although these constructs are defined differently, they will be incorporated into the integrated model but will be redefined to consider the mutual purpose of sustainability as well as the outcome of empowerment for both business and society.

- **Informing**

Informing is defined from a corporate communication perspective as the dissemination of perceived information necessary to enlighten the selected stakeholders, thereby creating a strategic advantage for the organisation (see 2.4.7). From a development communication perspective, the informing role is viewed as the equal distribution and sharing of information and knowledge to all participants by which they are empowered to participate equally in development (see 3.4.7).

From the explication above it is clear: corporate communication views informing mostly as a one-way CSR communication action to the advantage of the organisation, whereas development communication understands it as an on-going learning process seeking empowerment. Incorporated into integrated CSR communication, informing is viewed as a two-way process with constant opportunity for feedback, even if the goal is only to enlighten stakeholders to achieve empowerment. It is also acknowledged that informing could be used in persuasion and negotiation to influence participants' thoughts or actions and effect change (see 2.4.6).

Within the integrated model, informing can be redefined as follows:

***Informing** entails horizontal, two-way communication with the sharing of information and knowledge in order to advise, educate, or enlighten participants and other stakeholders, thereby empowering both business and society.*

- **Participation**

From a corporate communication perspective, participation has a limited application that focuses only on stakeholders who engage in dialogue with the organisation, on the latter's terms (see 2.4.7). Participation from a development communication perspective, is defined more broadly, namely the active engagement of the relevant participants in the various

communication processes with equal power to influence the processes and its outcomes, thereby empowering them to become self-reliant (see 3.4.7).

Participation according to corporate communication, is thus interaction within a certain communication process as predetermined by the organisation to achieve its specific objectives. Within development communication, participation entails an on-going process of participation involving the various communication processes and seeking the empowerment of the participants. Incorporated in the Integrated CSR communication model, participation is viewed mostly according to the development communication perspective since the way such participation contributes to empowerment.

Within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, the notion of participation is thus redefined as follows:

***Participation*** is defined as an on-going process where the parties involved have voluntary but equal opportunity to participate fully and influence the communication processes seeking to empower both business and society.

- **Dialogue**

Both corporate and development communication define dialogue as an open and transparent process of equal participation that strives for mutual understanding. Corporate communication, however, considers dialogue as a deliberate action of negotiation between the organisation and its stakeholders, guided by predetermined messages and topics according to the organisation's objectives (see 2.4.7). In contrast, development communication view dialogue as a continuous and reflective process through which participants are empowered by critically reflecting on their own realities and issues, and finding solutions for those issues (see 3.4.7).

Therefore, although corporate communication views dialogue as open, this only entails open discussions on topics that are tabled by the organisation on its terms. Development communication however, views openness as the opportunity to address any topic raised by any participant at any time. Corporate communication thus considers dialogue as a means to an end, whereas development communication views it as an end as such. Within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, dialogue is understood according to the development communication's perception. The reason is that dialogue as a continuous and reflective process will be utilised within the communication processes (4.3.5), which is defined as on-going by the different reflective roles (4.3.6). It is also acknowledged that during the process of dialogue, the open discourse could also include negotiations and persuasion (as employed within corporate communication – see 2.4.7) to empower business and society alike.

Within the integrated model, dialogue can thus be redefined as follows:

***Dialogue** is a continuous process of voluntary yet equal opportunity to participate fully in open discourse on any topic without predetermined objectives, rather as equal interlocutors within an environment of trust and respect.*

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment is the term used specifically within development communication when referring to the empowerment of communities to become self-reliant, as the outcome of communication (see 4.3.7). For development communication, empowerment is also used to explain the nature of communication. This means power differences are dealt with consciously and continuously within the various communication processes. The aim is helping the participant to attain self-reliance (see 3.4.7). Corporate communication does not specifically consider the term empowerment but refers to the expansion of power between the organisation and its stakeholders during the negotiation process, which again makes empowerment merely a means to an end (see 2.4.7).

In light of the discussion above, empowerment is viewed within corporate communication as an action taking place within a given communication process, which is predetermined by the organisation to achieve its objectives. In contrast, empowerment from a development communication perspective, describes an on-going reflection on power differences to reach self-reliance. Within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, empowerment can be defined in accordance to development communication's definition. The argument again refers to the continuous processes of communication (see 4.3.5) in which empowerment will be utilised and the reflective participant continuously reflects on power differences (see 4.3.6).

Within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, empowerment is redefined as follows:

***Empowerment** within the nature of communication is defined as a conscious and continuous process of addressing power differences between the different participants within the communication processes.*

- **Cultural diversity**

Corporate communication understands cultural diversity as being sensitive to other cultures and its associated world views and values while seeking mutual understanding within the negotiation process (see 2.4.7). Development communication also covers the world views and values of different cultures. However, this approach expands the construct to include as well as utilise

indigenous knowledge, traditions, customs, beliefs, and symbols of each culture within a specific community to be considered throughout the communication processes (see 3.4.7). Within corporate communication, cultural diversity is again only considered part of a certain process as predetermined by the organisation, whereas development communication views it as a more inclusive construct that forms part of the communication processes. Therefore, the proposed Integrated CSR communication model underlines development communication's definition of cultural diversity as a construct to be considered and applied within the various communication processes.

Within the integrated model, cultural diversity can be redefined as follows:

***Cultural diversity*** is a sensitivity and understanding for the different cultures in society as well as for the business culture by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths of the different cultures within the communication processes.

Within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, context (see 2.2, 2.2.3.2, 3.2, 3.4.7) is viewed as an important aspect to consider within the nature of the communication. For example, in the strategic process, the reflective strategist should take part in the formulation of the enterprise strategy. Then the organisation, through internal dialogue, is able to reflect critically on its core business and how it relates to their role and responsibility in society. Thereafter, an enterprise strategy can be formulated to empower both business and society to achieve sustainability. When formulating the enterprise strategy, the reflective strategist may need to use persuasion to make business conscious of its role and responsibility in society, which transcends profit making and includes society.

In the engagement process, business and society should function as equal participants in dialogue. During this dialogue the participants share their own world views but also develop insight into those of the other party, seeking mutual understanding. Such an approach could create a sensitivity and respect towards cultural diversity as well as diversity in social and business realities and perceptions of realities. This would help empower both business and society and result in a better understanding of the other participants. In this context, there is participation through dialogue but also negotiation and persuasion within this dialogue. The negotiation and persuasion is based on shared knowledge and information about the realities facing both business and society, to set realistic expectations for both parties.

The parties should also participate in the setting of strategy and objectives. During this process, negotiations and persuasion may also take place. The aim would be to establish strategies and objectives that are acceptable to all parties concerned and reflect a sensitivity towards diversity. Such participation in determining strategy and objectives should lead to shared responsibilities.

This would imply empowerment by taking ownership to reach these objectives. Participation in the process of implementation would be according to determined, shared responsibilities. These would include the available resources identified in society such as indigenous knowledge, other forms of know-how, and skills sourced from business and based on its expertise. Furthermore, all parties concerned should participate fully in the process of monitoring and evaluation. This could be accomplished by sharing information and through dialogue about the outcome. Such interaction will empower the participants to re-evaluate and alter the communication processes if necessary.

The CSR initiatives flowing from these processes could be communicated to business's other stakeholders such as employees and customers through various internal and external communication channels. These channels could be used only to share information that enlighten the stakeholders, or to stimulate dialogue and gain feedback that may be re-applied for other initiatives. Such an approach could help the organisation reach specific business objectives such as portraying the enterprise as a responsible citizen, thereby gaining a license to operate and building its reputation.

Based on the discussion above, the following theoretical statement can be made:

**Theoretical statement 6a: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on the context.

#### **4.3.9 Continuous reflection**

It is important to note that the proposed Integrated CSR communication model entails a continuous development of the strategic and engagement processes where each have the possibility to influence the other. Therefore, it means that organisations reflect continually: on their role in society, whom they identify as stakeholders, their CSR strategy, and how their CSR vision relates to the purpose of sustainability. The information gathered from each process, guides business in this reflection. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the different communication roles to relay this information back to business to be incorporated in the enterprise strategy. This reflection should bring about change in business's overall thinking about its purpose, role, and responsibility within society.

Each process should also guide business and society to form a better mutual understanding, thus enhancing their relationship. Each process may, however, also cause conflict between business and society due to differences in expectations, objectives, and the distribution of power in the relationship. Throughout this process, the focus should remain on the relationship between business and society, building towards a mutual goal of sustainability. In such a case, the differences and conflict should be dealt with through dialogue based on participation, transparency, accountability, and equalisation of power. The nature of CSR communication in this model should thus be characterised by openness, trust, and respect. These aspects are achieved by normative symmetrical communication through participation and dialogue, where the parties concerned are empowered to influence each other as well as the outcome of the communication process.

#### **4.4 THE PROCESS OF THE PROPOSED INTEGRATED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

Based on the conceptualisation of the Integrated CSR communication model, the following diagram was developed. Figure 4.1 below summarise the concepts and constructs and illustrates the process of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model.

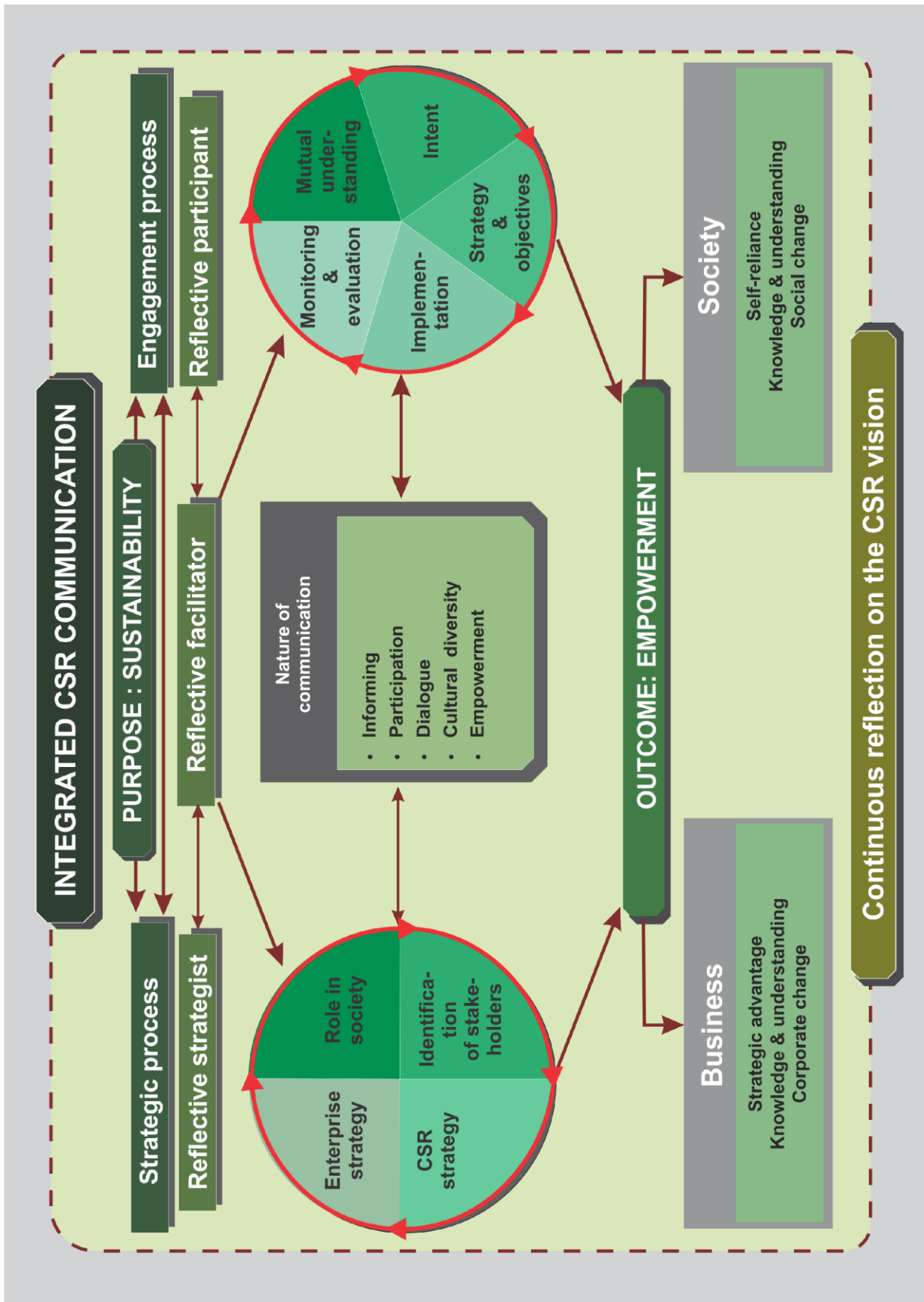


Figure 4.1: The proposed Integrated CSR communication model



#### **4.4.1 Purpose: Sustainability**

Integrated CSR communication starts with the mutually inclusive purpose of sustainability as the organisation's reason for existence that guides the organisation's CSR strategy. This purpose is mirrored in the CSR vision about a sustainable future for business, the environment, and society (the triple context). Throughout the various communication processes there should be continuous reflection on this CSR vision. Supporting the purpose of sustainability, the strategic and engagement processes should be implemented to address sustainability within the CSR strategy.

#### **4.4.2 Communication processes**

Firstly, the focus is on the strategic process. In this process, the CSR strategy is formulated as a result on reflection of the organisation's role in and responsibility toward society. Thereafter, the stakeholders are identified to whom the organisation believe it has a responsibility, based on this reflection. This is based on the organisation's positioning as part of society and guided by the purpose of sustainability for both business and society.

This identification thus does not begin with those who have a strategic stake in the organisation. The reflection instead focuses on the issues and challenges of the larger society. Questions should be posed on how society at large influences business and societal sustainability and on the role that business should play to help address those issues. This reflection should also guide the organisation to formulate a CSR strategy, which will not only support the enterprise strategy but also be an integral part of this strategy to integrate CSR in the various business processes. Such reflection is a constant process in which the different actions take place continuously allowing the organisation to pursue sustainability by adapting to the changing environment.

Secondly, the engagement process occurs where the organisation engages with the identified stakeholders to build relationships around CSR issues that would contribute to the sustainability of both business and society. This process could start by creating mutual understanding about each party on the issues and realities facing each, in an attempt to establish a mutual intent for the relationship. In this regard, the stakeholders can participate freely in the communication process where their world view, perceptions, expectations, and issues receive equal consideration as those of the organisation.

In this way, both parties gain a better mutual understanding. This process would thus empower both the stakeholders and business. The organisation would be empowered by gaining knowledge about their stakeholders to use anew in their strategic process. As a result, the

organisation would develop a deeper insight into its purpose, stakeholders, and responsibilities. The stakeholders, in turn, would be empowered by participating in this process, understanding their own reality and issues better, as well as the reality and issues the organisation faces. Based on a better understanding of the “other”, mutual intent could be established between the parties to determine the expectations and outcomes for each party in the relationship.

If mutual understanding and intent could not be reached, both parties could decide to terminate the relationship. If a mutual intent could be established, the relationship will continue by determining strategy and objectives to help realise the mutual intent. Because all the parties will be participating within the setting of strategy and objectives, mutual responsibilities will be allocated to implement the strategy that should lead to mutual accountability and ownership by all parties.

The above-mentioned mutual responsibilities and accountability should be emphasised further if all parties concerned participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and objectives to assess successes and failures. Part of such evaluation would also be re-evaluating the relationship, allowing the parties to participate in decision-making about the future of the relationship. This may be a mutual agreement to terminate or maintain the relationship and set a new intent, strategies and objectives. The engagement is also a continuous process where conflict or failure of one action may require of the participant to revisit previous actions.

These two on-going processes also influence each other. This implies that information gained from the engagement process may be applied in the strategic process. This may be done for various reasons: to alter the CSR or enterprise strategy, reflect anew on the role and responsibility of the organisation in society, or redefine the identification of stakeholders. These actions accentuate the importance of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model as a continuous process to build relationships through mutual understanding and not merely as different communication actions based on predetermined objectives of the organisation.

The strategic process may also impact the engagement process. In this regard, relationships may be pursued or terminated, a mutual intent be reached or not, responsibilities and accountability accepted or not. Such a process should be based on the enterprise and CSR strategy of the organisation, which entail three distinct communication roles as discussed below.

#### **4.4.3 Communication roles**

Three communication roles were identified that would imply certain responsibilities within the two communication processes. The reflective strategist will have the responsibility to reflect on the organisation’s role and responsibility in society, identify stakeholders according to this

reflection, and influence the CSR and enterprise strategy to give effect to the purpose of sustainability.

The reflective facilitator would have the responsibility to create an environment suitable for the creation of mutual understanding and mutual intent. This facilitation may take place within the strategic process to help top management reach mutual understanding on the CSR strategy and how it should be incorporated into the enterprise strategy. Facilitation would also be part of the engagement between the organisation and the stakeholders striving for mutual understanding and establishing mutual intent. The role of facilitator would also supply information needed and gained from one communication process to the other. As mentioned, the aim is reaching mutual understanding and working towards the sustainability of both business and society.

The reflective participant is the role that partakes in the engagement process together with the other parties involved. Therefore, this role is not solely responsible to drive this process. Nevertheless, the reflective participant must constantly reflect on the participation of all parties involved in the process as well as on the distribution of power between the different parties. It is important to reflect on active participation in order to empower all the parties concerned through this process. Furthermore, reflection on the distribution of power is important, seeing that the organisation has the best knowledge and majority of resources, which means more power. Therefore, the organisation should be reminded of its role to empower the stakeholders and not exploit its power to manage the implementation purely to gain a strategic advantage for the enterprise as such.

#### **4.4.4 The nature of communication**

The nature of communication in this model should be characterised by openness, trust, and respect. This should be achieved by participating in dialogue where all the parties concerned are empowered to influence each other as well as the outcome of the communication processes.

Dialogical communication should be used to encourage participation from parties as equal partners. This will help them understand broader society and the business environment as well as the different issues, realities, and worldviews. During such an open discourse, there should develop a sensitivity and respect for the cultural diversity of both the stakeholders and the organisation. Parties should understand how this diversity contributes to their realities and world views. This implies insight into the social context and how it could be applied within the other processes.

Based on the discussion above, the following aspects emerged: dialogical communication, mutual intent of the different parties, assessing the situation, establishing the strategy and objectives, as well as implementing and evaluating the processes. These features can be discussed under the banner of two-way horizontal communication where all parties concerned are involved in the decision-making process through the equalisation of power. The result would be true openness between the organisation and its stakeholders on mutual expectations, issues and perceptions. This can entail collaboration through open negotiation, which addresses the mentioned issues. Throughout the various processes, the organisation and stakeholders are considered as partners in the search for sustainability.

#### **4.4.5 Outcome of communication**

The outcome of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model is viewed as empowerment. On the one hand, this implies guiding and strengthening society to become self-reliant due to participation in the various processes. Through this participation, beneficiaries would be able to take ownership of their own development by accepting mutual responsibilities and mutual accountability in the quest for social change. On the other hand, empowering business would imply that the organisation applies the knowledge, information and understanding gained from participating in the different communication processes to create a strategic advantage for the organisation as it strives for corporate change. Through this, business is also empowered to contribute to the empowerment of society towards social change.

### **4.5 DEFINING CSR COMMUNICATION**

After conceptualising the model as depicted in Figure 4.1, CSR communication from an integrated perspective can be redefined as follows:

***CSR communication*** is an integrated and on-going process of communication that is embedded in the enterprise strategy, initiated on a strategic level, and evolves where all parties concerned participate continually in the various communication processes, which should help empower both business and society to attain sustainability.

This definition will be used to evaluate the participants' overall perceptions on the proposed Integrated CSR communication model in the following chapters (chapters 6 & 7).

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The corporate and development communication perspective to CSR communication are vastly different in several aspects. Therefore, these are mostly practiced within a singular focus. However, based on the similarities of and differences between these perspectives, an integrated model for CSR communication was proposed, namely the Integrated CSR communication model. This model was conceptualised by critically evaluating the different constructs of CSR communication from a corporate and development communication perspective. The aim was to identify constructs that can be incorporated into the integrated approach and redefined to help empower both business and society in their search for sustainability. This proposed model was evaluated by academics and practitioners to establish its theoretical soundness and relevance to the practice of CSR communication. The following chapter (chapter 5) will discuss the methodology according to which this integrated CSR communication model was evaluated.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN**

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#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapters, principles that could inform a CSR communication model were identified from a corporate and development communication perspective. Based on these principles, an integrated CSR communication model was proposed with the aim to refine this model, after empirical evaluation.

In this chapter, the qualitative research approach is discussed to motivate the use of this design in the present study. Semi-structured interviews were used as methods to answer the research questions. The participants selected for this research were communication academics as well as CSR communication practitioners. This chapter also highlights the process that was followed to redefine the conceptual theoretical CSR communication model, based on feedback from the participants.

The procedures are explained which were followed to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. Finally, challenges experienced in the present study are pointed out and discussed by highlighting the problems and restrictions the researcher encountered in the process.

#### **5.2 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

A research approach can have a quantitative or qualitative orientation. For a quantitative approach, the goal is to explain, predict, and control the phenomena under investigation by generalising findings based on quantitative methods of evaluation (Du Plooy, 2009:29). In contrast, the qualitative approach describes a subjective reality based on the meaning people attach to individual experiences. In this approach, the goal is therefore to explore, interpret, and understand information within a given context (Du Plooy, 2009:30).

The qualitative approach was used to explore the field of study, namely CSR communication, to understand and explain this phenomenon (see Fouché & Delport, 2005:75; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:48; Du Plooy, 2009:34). The focus was thus on the research participants' perceptions of CSR communication and what such a model should comprise. The individuals taking part in this study was considered as active participants in the research process by sharing their perceptions and experiences on CSR communication as a subjective reality (see Struwig & Stead, 2001:16; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Du Plooy, 2009:31, 36; Jensen, 2012:266). The results of qualitative research are therefore not presented as objective data but

rather as an interpretation of the participants' perception of reality (Struwig & Stead, 2001:17; Patton, 2002:40).

The participants' subjective reality could not be understood without grasping the context in which they operate (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:49; Babbie, 2011:24). Through a qualitative research design, the reality and context of a small number of communication executives, communication managers, and communication academics were explored in depth. This enabled the researcher to describe, explore, and interpret their experiences and perceptions of CSR communication and the proposed model through dialogical communication with the participants (see Flick *et al.*, 2004:7). The subjective realities were interpreted comprehensively to understand CSR communication holistically. Such a holistic focus for the study supports the aim of a qualitative research design (David & Sutton, 2004:37; Fouché & Delport, 2005:75).

The qualitative research approach, therefore, proved appropriate for this study. Such a design with its holistic focus, allowed the researcher to explore CSR communication by reflecting on different participants' perceptions and experiences through dialogical communication within their specific context. In this way, the proposed CSR communication model was refined to be theoretically sound and practically relevant.

### **5.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DESIGN**

The research questions and the methods selected to answer these questions will be discussed. It also entails the interview schedules based on the concepts and constructs of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model (see Table 4.3 in the previous chapter).

#### **5.3.1 Research questions**

The following general research question was formulated for the present study (see 1.4.1):

*What concepts and constructs should a CSR communication model integrate that could help create a strategic advantage for business as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society in a mutually inclusive manner?*

To answer the general research question, specific research questions (see 1.4.2) were formulated. These research questions as well as the chosen research methods to answer these questions are indicated in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1 Research questions and research methods**

RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH METHOD
Which principles of corporate communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?	Literature review
Which principles of development communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?	Literature review
How can an integrated CSR communication model be conceptualised that incorporates principles from a corporate and development communication perspective?	Literature review
What are the perceptions of South African and European communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model?	Semi-structured interviews with communication academics from various South African and European tertiary institutions.
Which perceptions do senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model?	Semi-structured interviews with senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations.

### 5.3.2 Research methods

The research method employed in this study to answer the research questions is semi-structured interviews (see Table 5.1 above). A qualitative content analysis was done to process the transcribed responses from the semi-structured interviews.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are typically used to gain insight into the perceptions of people on a specific topic within a certain context by means of a conversation between the researcher and the participant (Pole & Lampard, 2002:126). The interview is structured to guide the researcher on the specific themes to be addressed according to literature. This structure also allows the flexibility to introduce new themes which the researcher did not identified originally (see 5.4.1.2).

The interview schedule for a semi-structured interview contains standardised open questions or a list of topics to direct the interview (Du Plooy, 2009:177; Treadwell, 2011:165). Follow-up or



probing questions can be posed that help the interviewer gain a better understanding or explore themes not originally identified while interacting with the participant (Du Plooy, 2009:177; Babbie, 2011:340).

For the purpose of the present study, semi-structured interviews were thus considered as the best method for data collection. The interview schedule allowed the researcher firstly to pose open-ended questions, without guidance from the researcher, about CSR communication in general. This was followed by questions covering the different constructs and concepts of the conceptualised CSR communication model in particular, before presenting the proposed model to the participants. The reason was to avoid influencing the participant's perceptions by first presenting the conceptualised model. Thus, the researcher was able to collect information, without preconceived perceptions, on the same topics from each participant while allowing sufficient opportunity for participants to introduce topics that were not anticipated beforehand. After the open-ended questions were posed, the model was presented to the participants for their input and feedback.

- **Semi-structured interviews with academics**

Purposive sampling was used to select the participating academics (see Du Plooy, 2009:114-115). The criteria to include academics in the purposive sample were as follows: they had to be well-established and globally recognised researchers and academics in one or more field/s of corporate communication, CSR communication or development communication for social change. The institutions where they are employed should offer one or more of the mentioned fields in their curriculum.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were held with six academics in the fields of strategic communication management (3), CSR communication (2), and development communication for social change (1). Three participants were academics from Europe. They were Prof. Dejan Vercic from Slovenia who specialises in corporate communication, Prof. Wim Elving from The Netherlands who specialises in CSR communication, and another academic in the field of CSR communication who preferred to remain anonymous. Although this is a South African study, the researcher chose these European academics because they are globally recognised as experts in their fields. The interviews with two of the European academics were held at their institution while the third interview occurred at a conference in Bled, Slovenia. These interviews took place between 27 and 29 June 2017.

Three South African academics were chosen as internationally recognised specialists in their fields. They were Prof. Ronel Rensburg and Dr. Estelle de Beer who both specialise in corporate communication, and Prof. Mariekie Burger whose field of expertise is development

communication for social change. The interviews with South African academics were all conducted at their different institutions and took place on 1 June and 3 August 2017.

The aim was to ascertain the academics' perceptions of the current scope of CSR communication as well as their view of the proposed CSR communication model. The aim was to receive input on the theoretical soundness of the model. An interview schedule was compiled in accordance with the theoretical constructs identified in the literature (see Table 4.3 in the previous chapter). The schedule containing the interview questions is presented in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2 Interview schedule: Academics**

NO.	QUESTIONS: ACADEMICS	CONSTRUCTS
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your understanding of CSR?</li> <li>• What do you see as the advantages of CSR?</li> </ul>	CSR vision: Purpose Sustainability
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who would you identify as those in society that organisations should have a responsibility towards?</li> <li>• How do you think organisations should go about identifying those that they view as having a responsibility towards?</li> </ul>	Identification of stakeholders: Primary stakeholders
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your view on organisational purpose?</li> <li>• How would you describe an organisation's role and responsibility in society, based on its purpose?</li> </ul>	CSR vision: Purpose Sustainability CSR strategy CSR communication
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you define CSR communication?</li> <li>• How would you describe the nature of CSR communication?</li> <li>• How do you see the different communication roles contributing to CSR communication?</li> </ul>	Communication processes: Strategic process Engagement process Communication roles: Reflective strategist Reflective facilitator Reflective participant Nature of communication: Informing Participation Dialogue Cultural diversity Empowerment

NO.	QUESTIONS: ACADEMICS	CONSTRUCTS
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your opinion, what should a company want to achieve with its CSR communication?</li> </ul>	Outcome of communication: Empowering business Empowering society
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you say that the goal of CSR communication should be ... what in your opinion should be the outcomes of CSR communication?</li> <li>What should the outcome be for the organisation?</li> <li>What should the outcome be for society?</li> </ul>	Outcome of communication: Empowering business Empowering society
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your opinion, how does current communication education empower students to understand and practice CSR communication on strategic and operational level?</li> </ul>	CSR communication
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think communication curriculums should entail in order to empower communication students to contribute to an organisation's CSR on strategic and operational level?</li> </ul>	CSR communication
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Here is a graphic representation of my proposed Integrated CSR communication model.</li> <li>(Explain the model.)</li> <li>Would you please give me your opinion on this model?</li> </ul>	Concepts and constructs as visual presentation of the model (Fig 4.1)

After the interviews with the academics, the proposed CSR communication model was refined based on their input and feedback. This refinement included the alteration of definitions and theoretical statements to clarify certain constructs or to add other constructs that were perceived as being relevant to improve the theoretical soundness of the proposed CSR communication model. Thereafter, the refined model was assessed by semi-structured interviews with practitioners.

- Semi-structured interviews with communication practitioners**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with communication executives and communication managers responsible for CSR and CSR communication from various South African companies and government institutions. This study focused on senior communication practitioners since it is argued that they should manage the CSR strategy as well as the CSR communication as an on-going process holistically. The focus was also on practitioners within the business context because it was argued that most CSR initiatives are initiated by business. This places these

participants in the best position to evaluate the practical relevance of the mentioned CSR communication model within their organisations.

Through the methods of purposive and snowball sampling (Du Plooy, 2009:114-115), ten companies were identified. Five of these companies were identified through references from communication consultants who work with these organisations on CSR initiatives. The researcher sent e-mails to the possible participants in which she explained the scope of the study and asked whether they would participate in the study. Follow-up emails were sent to those indicating their willingness to participate. Thereby a date and time were set for the interviews to be conducted at their convenience. The other five companies were identified by the researcher through the social network LinkedIn. These participants were selected based on the following criteria: they are functioning as senior communication practitioner and are responsible for CSR communication. The researcher identified possible participants who met these criteria. These candidates were contacted through LinkedIn by briefly explaining the scope of the study. Interviews were arranged with those who indicated their willingness to participate in the study. These interviews were conducted at a time and place that were convenient to the respondents.

The companies were chosen to represent diverse business industries. These industries included banking, manufacturing, food and beverages, groceries and general merchandise, alcoholic beverages, agricultural, mining, insurance and government. The individual participants from these companies were identified as senior communication practitioners who are responsible for CSR communication or have the CSR communication function reporting to them. Five of the participants were from listed multi-national companies, three from listed national companies, and two were from South African government institutions. Three of the participants were communications executives with the portfolio of CSR reporting to them directly. The other seven participants were communication managers, six of them being responsible for the portfolio of CSR and CSR communication, and one responsible only for the CSR communication. Eight were face-to-face interviews. Seven took place at the participant's organisation. The eighth interview was held at a conference in Bled, Slovenia. Two interviews were conducted telephonically due to the distance between the researcher and participants. Interviews were conducted until a point of saturation was reached. All the interviews were conducted from 29 June 2017 to 20 September 2017.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews with practitioners was to capture general perceptions on CSR communication in practice, but mostly to determine their view specifically on the proposed CSR communication model, for input about the practical relevance. The interview schedule comprising the posed questions is presented in Table 5.3 below.

**Table 5.3 Interview schedule: Practitioners**

NO.	QUESTIONS: PRACTITIONERS	CONCEPTS AND CONSTRUCTS
	<p>In this interview I am going to ask questions relating to CSR in general and then specifically, CSR communication which is the communication that takes place within the CSR context.</p>	
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the purpose of your organisation?</li> <li>• How would you describe your organisation’s role and responsibility in society, based on your purpose?</li> </ul>	CSR vision: Purpose Sustainability CSR strategy CSR communication
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your company define CSR?</li> <li>• What is your view on sustainability and CSR?</li> <li>• What is your view on empowerment and CSR?</li> </ul>	CSR vision: Sustainability Outcome of communication: Empowering business Empowering society
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a company, how would you go about identifying those in society that you view as having a responsibility towards?</li> <li>• Who do you see as stakeholders of your organisation?</li> <li>• How do you go about identifying these stakeholders?</li> <li>• How do you choose your CSR projects?</li> </ul>	Identification of stakeholders: Primary stakeholders
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you see the role of communication in CSR?</li> <li>• How does the CSR communication take place on a:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic level?</li> <li>○ Facilitation level?</li> <li>○ Implementation level?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What is your view on the relevance of the following theoretical concepts in practice:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dialogue?</li> <li>○ Participation?</li> <li>○ Empowerment?</li> <li>○ Cultural sensitivity?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Communication processes: Strategic process Rapport process Action process, Communication roles: Reflective strategist Reflective facilitator Reflective participant Nature of communication: Informing Participation Dialogue Cultural diversity

NO.	QUESTIONS: PRACTITIONERS	CONCEPTS AND CONSTRUCTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the people in your organisation responsible for CSR and CSR communication?</li> <li>• What do their different responsibilities entail?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most senior communication person?</li> <li>○ Communication manager?</li> <li>○ Facilitator?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Empowerment
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does your company want to achieve with its CSR communication? (Communication regarding CSR?)</li> <li>• What do you see as the outcome of CSR communication for your organisation?</li> <li>• What do you see as the outcome of your CSR communication for society?</li> </ul>	Outcome of communication: Empowering society Empowering business
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What skills and knowledge did you gain over the years that assist you in understanding and practicing CSR and CSR communication?</li> </ul>	CSR communication
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think curriculums should entail in order to assist students to better understand and apply CSR and CSR communication?</li> <li>• Here is a graphic representation of my proposed Integrated CSR communication model.</li> <li>• (Explain the model.)</li> <li>• Would you please give me your opinion on this model?</li> </ul>	CSR communication  Concepts and constructs as visual presentation of the model (see Fig 6.1)

Based on the input and feedback from the practitioners, the proposed CSR communication model was once again refined to improve its relevance in practice. This redefined model will be presented in chapter 8 as a model evaluated by academics as well as practitioners.

### 5.3.2.2 Qualitative content analysis

In both cases, the semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed through qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Du Plooy (2009:214) as “methodology applied to explore, describe and infer characteristics of messages”. Qualitative content analysis is not conducted or reported in numerical terms; instead it is guided by

describing attributes such as characteristics, values, levels of meaning, opinions (Du Plooy, 2009:221), or in the case of this study, concepts. Such an analysis attempts to make sense of information by categorisation, analysis, and interpretation according to the identified concepts and themes (David & Sutton, 2004). This process also helps capture concepts and themes that were not identified by the researcher but proved relevant to the study (Mayring, 2004:268-269).

The transcriptions were analysed and deductions drawn according to the theoretical concepts and constructs identified in chapter 4. In addition, the interviews were analysed inductively to identify themes which the participants deemed important but were not identified in the literature study. Therefore, the researcher chose to analyse the transcripts manually to identify various topics and themes that were not part of the original theoretical constructs. The manual analysis was done by reading through the different interviews, highlighting the corresponding information on identified theoretical constructs with different colours, grouping the information together, and re-analysing the grouped information to identify aspects relevant to answering the specific research questions. The same procedure was followed with its identification of the mentioned new themes and topics. These combined themes formed the bases for redefining the CSR communication model.

## **5.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

For a qualitative research design, it is difficult to define reliability and validity seeing that the research is subjective and applies to a specific context (Pole & Lampard, 2002:207-208). However, the above-mentioned two concepts are essential and had to be included since they support the findings of the research as being credible and a true reflection of the researched topic. Thus, it was important to ensure the reliability and validity of this study as defined from a qualitative research perspective.

### **5.4.1 Reliability**

In qualitative research, reliability depends on the process that was followed as well as the interpretation of the results (Pole & Lampard, 2002:207, 208; Du Plooy, 2009:121). For another researcher to duplicate this research and obtain the same results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:58; Babbie, 2010:150; Treadwell, 2011:79) there must be a detailed exposition of the research process. This includes the conceptualisation of the research (literature review), the collection (semi-structured interviews) and analysis (content analysis) of information as well as interpretation of the results, based on literature.

Regarding the present study, chapters 2 and 3 presented the literature review, which formed the basis for the conceptualisation of the CSR communication model in chapter 4. This model was

assessed through semi-structured interviews with academics and practitioners. These interviews were processed by content analysis. Different topics and themes were grouped for further analysis to refine the CSR communication model.

#### **5.4.2 Validity**

Validity describes the extent to which the research measures that which it was supposed to (Du Plooy, 2009:124; Babbie, 2010:153), in this case, the constructs of CSR communication. The following methods were utilised to ensure validity of this study.

The concepts and constructs as defined by the present study, should be a true reflection of the researched phenomenon (Du Plooy, 2009:124; Babbie, 2010:153-154). The construct's reliability is established by indicating how the definitions link with the overarching theoretical model (Du Plooy, 2009:126; Babbie, 2010:154-155; Treadwell, 2011:82). This was done in the present study by a comprehensive literature review. Such a review provided the theoretical model for CSR communication from a corporate and development communication perspective, from which the concepts and constructs were drawn to conceptualise the CSR communication model. The mentioned components of the CSR communication model were derived from the theoretical basis, thus reflecting the definitions captured from literature (see Du Plooy, 2009:124).

The defined concepts and constructs were evaluated by specialists in their field (see Du Plooy, 2009:126; Treadwell, 2011:81), namely the promoter and co-promoter. The theoretical approach was also assessed through conducting semi-structured interviews involving academics who are experts in the fields of corporate and development communication, a factor that enhanced the validity of the present study.

### **5.5 CHALLENGES**

The researcher encountered limited challenges with the semi-structured interviews. Most were conducted face-to-face, which also allowed the interviewer to observe the participants' body language for further clarification in case of uncertainty. Furthermore, during one telephonic interview there was a poor connection and no recording could be made. However, the interviewer took notes and transcribed the interview based on these notes. This was done directly after the interview while the information could still be recalled accurately. Regarding the other telephonic interview, the participant could not open the e-mail attachment of the model which meant that he did not have the diagram of the model in front of him. The researcher explained the model telephonically, which gave him opportunity for feedback. After the



telephone interview, the model was resent to the participant through e-mail and he gave further written feedback on this design.

All the above-mentioned challenges experienced in this study could, however, be overcome and did not influence the results of the research.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the research approach was discussed as well as the research design employed in the present study. This chapter also provided a breakdown of the planning and execution of the empirical research for this study.

The study used semi-structured interviews as qualitative research method to assess the perceptions of academics and practitioners on CSR communication and the CSR communication model and to receive input on the proposed model. Chapter 6 will discuss the results and findings of the interviews with the academics and accordingly, the refinement of this model. Chapter 7 will provide the results and findings of the interviews with the practitioners. In chapter 8 the final model will be presented, based on the overall feedback from academics and practitioners.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

# **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM ACADEMICS ON THE PROPOSED INTEGRATED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

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### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapters 2 and 3, CSR communication principles were identified and evaluated according to a corporate and development communication perspective. In chapter 4, based on these principles, similar as well as the conflicting concepts and constructs were identified, critically evaluated, and redefined to conceptualise a unified CSR communication model. This was termed the Integrated CSR communication model since it incorporated a number of the different concepts and constructs into a single model.

This chapter discusses the findings of the semi-structured interviews that assessed communication academics' perceptions of the Integrated CSR communication model. The reason for assessing the proposed model with academics was firstly to verify its theoretical soundness, based on the participants' fields of expertise that informed the model. The interviews also verified their perception regarding the feasibility of this model in practice, based on their relationships and experience in the industry. The participants' input on the proposed Integrated CSR communication model was gathered and used to refine the model.

In this chapter the following specific research question 1.4.2.4 is answered:

*What are the perceptions of South African and European communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model?*

### **6.2 THE PROPOSED INTEGRATED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

The findings are discussed according to the theoretical statements and the defined constructs, as depicted in Figure 4.1 (chapter 4). Based on the feedback from the academics, the theoretical statements and definitions were redefined.

#### **6.2.1 CSR vision**

The CSR vision was understood as giving direction to the CSR strategy, based on the purpose of sustainability. The focus was on sustainability as the mutual purpose of this process. The CSR vision is defined in the following theoretical statement:

### **Theoretical statement 1a: CSR vision**

The CSR vision is the aspiration of an organisation to attain a sustainable future for the company as well as the society in which it operates. This vision should reflect the purpose of sustainability that guides the CSR strategy for a mutually inclusive and equal commitment to the triple context as embodied in CSR communication (see 4.3.3).

In this chapter, the CSR strategy reflecting this purpose is discussed accordingly.

#### **6.2.1.1 Purpose: Sustainability**

Among the academics all the participants identified purpose as a key component of CSR. An academic from Europe, Elving (2017), linked purpose to an organisation's long-term focus of "why you are here and what are you doing". Vercic (2017) explained that purpose should reflect how an organisation forms part of society and what it is doing for society, thus "your CSR vision". He explained: "If organisations are really concerned about their role in society, it becomes a strategic question of nurturing the purpose of your organisation."

It was found that the academics from Europe are unfamiliar with the guidelines of King IV, seeing that it is a South African initiative. Although they did not refer to the triple context directly, it was assumed in their broader reference to CSR in terms of the advantages it should hold for business, society and the environment. The South African participants referred to King IV when discussing purpose as well as sustainability. It can thus be assumed that these interviewee's perceptions support the notion of purpose that should reflect sustainability in terms of the triple context, as proposed in King IV (see 4.3.1). Sustainability was evaluated based on the following definition:

***Sustainability** is the continual long-term process involving the maintenance, endurance, and existence of business, society, and the environment (i.e. triple context) to seek a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates (see 4.3.1).*

All the participants concurred that sustainability should be the focus of the purpose. Vercic (2017) explained: "It is good if sustainability becomes part of the normal DNA of organisation." However, perceptions differed on the nature of sustainability. Some of the European academics argued that the purpose of sustainability should not foremost be linked to profit, but rather to practices beyond profit, based on societal expectations. In other words, their focus is solely on societal sustainability. In contrast, Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) argued that the focus must be primarily on the financial sustainability of the organisation. The

reasoning behind this view is that the organisation needs to sustain itself to play a significant role in society at large by addressing societal expectations. They refer to King IV that recommend considering the best interest of the organisation for long-term sustainability, thereby improving its contribution to the triple context.

From these responses it can be inferred that the European academics and South African academics' perceptions are to some extent in line with this study's definition of sustainability. Although the latter participants argue primarily for the sustainability of business, the argument of this study remains that business should contribute to the sustainability of society as well.

### **6.2.1.2 CSR strategy**

CSR strategy can be evaluated by revisiting the definition in chapter 4:

*CSR strategy is guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded in the enterprise strategy. The CSR strategy is driven by the communication function, focusing on building relationships between business and society. Through continual engagement with society, issues that are relevant to the sustainability of both business and society are identified and addressed in the CSR strategy (see 4.3.2).*

The discussion on CSR strategy began with the academics circumscribing the term "CSR". All the academics concurred that CSR is a broad term and not well defined (also see 1.1). One European participant explained the extensive scope of CSR due to the different contexts in which it is applied. For example, the issues facing business enterprises in Europe will differ from those issues in South Africa. The South African academics were most critical about CSR due to the confusing multitude of terms used for this practice in South Africa. They agreed that the nature of CSR is changing and therefore argued for different terminology. Two academics suggested new formulations such as "corporate social community that puts more power in the hands of the community" (Rensburg, 2017), or "corporate citizenship which is the terms used in King IV ... it's moving away from an altruistic approach and is a better fit for the business context" (De Beer, 2017).

Regarding CSR strategy, Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) suggested that it should focus on relationships that create value for both the organisation and society. They emphasised that CSR should entail a mutually beneficial relationship that must be managed between an organisation and its stakeholders through the communication function. This should be done with the joint responsibility to create value. De Beer (2017) pointed to the King IV report that stresses the role of the stakeholder in this responsibility. Rensburg (2017) concurred by highlighting the importance of mutual accountability beyond responsibility, implying that both business and

society should meet specific objectives. Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) argued further that the CSR strategy should be an integral part of an organisation's enterprise strategy. According to De Beer (2017), as a result, the CSR strategy will become more than merely providing resources to a community.

When referring to CSR strategy, the academics thus stressed the importance of it being guided by the mutual purpose (sustainability) and embedded in the various business processes. The academics also perceived the essence of CSR as the relationship between business and society, and the way that business being part of society, contribute to and help society develop. These perceptions support the definition of CSR strategy in the present study where it is argued that this practice should be guided by purpose, embedded in the business processes, and focused on relationships.

After presenting the model, the academics' overall perception was that the CSR strategy, guided by the purpose of sustainability, should be driven by the communication function. Vercic (2017) confirmed: "Communication should be the generalization of the purpose of the organisation", while another participant referred to communication as "the engine that propels CSR programmes". There also was general consensus that communication should be a strategic function that focuses on building relationships with stakeholders (see 6.2.1.3).

It can be accepted that all the academics pointed out the focus on both business and society, as well as a purpose linked to the sustainability of both entities and which reflects the CSR vision. They also agreed that the CSR strategy should reflect the sustainability of both business and society and be driven by the communication function. The academics did, however, raise their concerns about the term "CSR". It is therefore argued in the present study that "CSR" should be evaluated further. Based on these findings, it can be assumed that the academics concurred on theoretical statement 1a. Thus, this statement will be retained as such.

## **6.2.2 Identification of stakeholders**

After an organisation has established its CSR vision based on its purpose, it must identify those in society to whom it has a responsibility. This will help the organisation compile a CSR strategy relevant for the sustainability of both business and society. This process was explicated in the following statement:

### **Theoretical statement 2a: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society (see 4.3.4).

The construct for the identification of such beneficiaries were pointed out as that of primary stakeholders.

*Primary stakeholders are those who directly and indirectly influence the organisation's sustainability, or are affected by the organisation's pursuit for sustainability. They include marginalised groups in society to whom the organisations perceive a responsibility beyond profit-making and striving for societal sustainability (see 4.3.4).*

All the participants agreed that the identification of stakeholders is a highly difficult yet topical issue for the CSR strategy and a major challenge for the communication function.

The academics from Europe identified stakeholders mostly as traditional primary ones that support business's sustainability. They viewed primary stakeholders as clustered into different groups each with their own interests and issues centred on the sustainability of the business. In this regard, the European academics stressed the importance of employees and customers that form clusters, especially around environmental issues. They mentioned that during times with a stronger socialist focus, the emphasis was placed on the communities in which the business operates. However, currently the focus reaches beyond communities towards issues and interests of stakeholders in the different clusters that affect the organisation. From a European perspective, the focus is thus firstly, on issues applicable to the organisation and secondly, on people. This explanation is inconsistent with the present study's theoretical statement about identifying stakeholders, which mainly refers to people to whom the business has a responsibility.

Conversely, from a development perspective, the South African academics' perceptions of identifying stakeholders in CSR were expressed mostly through terms such as "larger society", "beneficiaries", "community", "segments of the community", "individuals within communities" and "employees as being part of a community". These terms include primary stakeholders as well as marginalised groups as being relevant to the South African context. De Beer (2017) pointed out the challenge of identifying specifically community as marginalised groups: "Society as a whole is well defined, it is more the issue of community and different segments in that community that can be better identified." Burger (2017) suggested stakeholders within society being identified

as the beneficiaries of the CSR initiatives, based on the CSR strategy that should reflect the mutual purpose.

As part of the challenge of identifying different segments within a community, Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) mentioned a new trend in South Africa to point out individuals as important stakeholders. They both stated that the communication practitioner must consider building and managing quality relationships with individuals in stakeholder groups. Rensburg (2017) gave the following example of such an individual:

“A leader of a community, like a traditional leader or opinion leader becomes the conscience of the community as well as the communicator for that community about their needs, interests and expectations. You won’t gain access to that community if you don’t form a relationship with that individual.”

The important role of the individual as opinion leader as well as the influence that individuals exert on communities are also highlighted in development communication theory, of which the participatory approach (see 3.4.2) forms part. Interestingly, the individual as a stakeholder was not viewed as relevant within the European context, seeing that they focus mainly on clusters within stakeholder groups.

The defining factor when identifying stakeholders, according to Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017), should be to focus on the best interest of the organisation in order to remain sustainable, as mentioned in the King IV report. As was the case with CSR vision (see 6.2.1), the perception of such identification was that if the stakeholder’s needs, interests, and expectations relate to the organisation’s core business and contribute to its reason for existence, these needs should be catered for. Therefore, the assumption can be made that the identification entails more than merely clustering stakeholders around issues. This instead entails a strategic decision on the relevance of those clusters for the organisation.

De Beer (2017) elaborates on this argument by explaining:

“You can’t accommodate all stakeholders and address all the needs, interests and expectations of communities; that is altruistic. A business judgement call should be made on the basis of what will be in the best interest of the organisation.”

She also stressed the importance of two-way communication when managing expectations by communicating with communities on reasons why certain issues can’t be dealt with. Both Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) conclude that identification of stakeholders should thus be based on the organisation’s purpose and its core business. This means that “each organisation’s society will be different”.

From the discussion above, it is clear that both the European and South African perspective identify stakeholders, who may include marginalised groups, only if they contribute to the business's sustainability.

Thus, the perceptions of identifying stakeholders mainly include those who contribute to the business's sustainability, with one academic referring to the sustainability of both business and society. Nevertheless, this study continues to support the notion that marginalised groups who do not necessarily contribute in this way, should be included to emphasise the sustainability of society to contribute to the mutual purpose. As stated previously, it proved difficult to identify these stakeholders. In this regard, the view of De Beer (2017) will be added, which links stakeholders to the organisation's core business. This will make the identification of particularly marginalised groups more relevant to specific organisations. As a result, theoretical statement 2a can be refined as follows:

**Theoretical statement 2b: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose **and core business**. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society.

### 6.2.3 Communication processes

After identifying the stakeholders with whom the organisation should engage in communication to build relationships, the communication processes must be identified through which the engagement would take place.

**Theoretical statement 3a: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic and engagement level with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society (see 4.3.5).

The constructs identified within the processes of communication are the strategic and the engagement process, which are expounded below.



### 6.2.3.1 Strategic process

Firstly, the strategic process was defined as follows:

*The **strategic process** takes place on a strategic level to formulate CSR strategy, guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded within the enterprise strategy. This strategy is based on reflection about the organisation's role in and responsibility towards society as well as the identification of stakeholders with whom the engagement will take place through CSR communication (see 4.3.5).*

The participants concurred that CSR communication should entail an on-going process of communication. They also agreed that it should start with a strategic process (also see 6.2.1). Burger (2017) referred to the strategic process as the planning phase and argued that theory tend to elaborate on the course of the CSR projects. However, little is said about this initial strategic or planning phase, which is where the problem lies. Elving (2017) supports this argument by confirming: "Companies agree that they need a strategy but they don't have it." He refers this problem back to education, arguing that the reason they "don't do strategy is because they don't learn it".

Burger (2017) stated that if CSR communication was not managed strategically, it is seen to be practiced "hap-hazardly", with the purpose of "ticking the boxes" as required by law. Vercic (2017) remarked that this form of CSR communication leads to initiatives that "are seemingly beneficial but on the ground but actually hurts people". He added: "If organisations are sincere and have a real concern about their role in society, CSR and CSR communication will be a strategic matter."

To help ensure the CSR and CSR communication benefit society, De Beer (2017) highlights the identifying and addressing of stakeholder's needs, interests, and expectations from a strategic perspective within the CSR strategy. She explains that this does not imply that all the needs, interests, and expectations must be attended to. In this regard, she suggests that the organisation must make strategic decisions about which stakeholders are related to the *core business* and will be in the best interest of the organisation, helping it maintain its operations and be financially sustainable, as mentioned in the CSR vision (see 6.2.1) as well as the identification of stakeholders (see 6.2.2).

These perceptions thus reflect the definition of the strategic process as formulated within this study.

### 6.2.3.2 Engagement process

The second process identified within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model was the engagement process. It was defined as follows:

*The engagement process specifies the participation of all parties in creating mutual understanding about societal and business issues and establishing a mutual intent in resolving these issues. It also entails the participation of the relevant parties in formulating strategy and objectives to address the mutual intent as well as help implement and evaluate the strategy (see 4.3.5).*

**Mutual understanding** is an important part of the engagement process. Based on the different definitions of the terms (see 4.3.5), this process was defined as it would be applied within the proposed Integrated CSR communication model.

*Mutual understanding is creating an understanding about societal as well as business issues and about the expectations of both business and society in addressing those issues towards sustainability (see 4.3.5).*

During the discussion on the proposed Integrated CSR communication model, the participants agreed that there should be a strategic process and an engagement process. However, they also expressed concerns about the term “engagement” to explain the process.

Burger (2017) explained that “engagement” can be viewed as a loaded term. The reason is that it derives from the trajectory of social movements, which suggests a certain negative connotation. Rensburg (2017) stated that she prefers the term “involvement,” since for her, it refers to participation as well as sharing. In contrast, she considers engagement as manipulating people to participate. De Beer (2017) concurred and added that people do not always want to engage or participate but wish to be involved, thus having the opportunity to give their input or opinion. Therefore, although its activity is defined as voluntary participation (see 6.2.6), the term “engagement” within the “engagement process” must be reconsidered based on the perceptions of these academics. It was however decided by the researcher to keep the term “engagement” within the definition of the strategic process because in this study, it embodies the nature of communication (see 6.2.6) as continuous communication that contributes to empowerment towards sustainability.

As part of the engagement process, the academics agreed on the importance of creating mutual understanding through dialogue centring on issues “that touches both communities and organisations in order to reach mutual understanding” (Rensburg, 2017). This supports the argument that mutual understanding is an important part of the engagement process. According

to Burger (2017), such engagement with stakeholders would ultimately help the organisation and the community understand what is expected of them; ideas will emerge for CSR as well as how to implement it.

Rensburg (2017) in turn links this process of understanding not only to organisations that understand what is expected of them, but argues that the stakeholders should also understand what is expected of them in return. She emphasised that this is especially important in South Africa where communities tend to have unrealistic expectations about the organisation as well as their own role in the initiative. According to Rensburg (2017), a process of mutual understanding should also include mutual accountability, which would help build the trust vital for relationships to be sustained.

Elaborating on the engagement process, Rensburg (2017) and Burger (2017) stressed how important the actual implementation of strategy is, which is also reflected in the definition of the engagement process. Rensburg (2017) pointed out that in several instances, issues are identified and defined in strategy but not always addressed in implementation. She explained: "Implementation is important; the communities need to live with the company through the programme so that it becomes a part of their reality." This insight links to the definition of the engagement process in the present study as a process in which all parties participate to resolve the issues.

Therefore, although participants agreed on the two processes, some suggested that a "middle process" should be introduced. This is due to the concerns about the term "engagement" as well as the broad scope of the engagement process. Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) suggested a middle process, to which they referred to as a *facilitating process*. They suggested that this process should begin with listening and observation. This view was echoed by Vercic (2017) who pointed out that "CSR communication should start with listening". De Beer (2017) stated that this phase should be "about creating an environment that encourages the creation of mutual understanding that would lead to the building of relationships". She remarked:

"During this process it is not about reaching objectives but the building of relationships with the emphasis on the human element. It is all about relationships and understanding."

Burger (2017) supported this argument by maintaining that the goal of CSR should be getting people to talk with one another, and this process should attempt just that. Such a process would guide both the organisation and its stakeholders to understand each other and thereby develop more realistic expectations about the relationship. Rensburg (2017) summarised this need as

follows: “each party should understand their responsibility in the relationship, the responsibility would thus not only lie with the organisation.”

The arguments above support the definition of the strategic as well as the engagement processes. Based on the concerns about the term “engagement” as well as feedback on the role of the facilitator (see 6.2.4), it was suggested that the engagement process be divided. This should be done to incorporate a facilitating process that focuses on creating relationships based on mutual understanding as well as a process where the implementation takes place. In this regard, the present study proposed the *rapport process* as the middle phase where the different parties aim to establish rapport with one another. Included in the rapport process would be the following aspects: listening and observation, creating mutual understanding, and establishing mutual intent. These are based on the CSR strategy’s focus on relationships between business and society to strive for sustainability (see 6.2.1).

This last process focuses on the actual initiatives and is therefore identified as the *action process* that comprises the following: setting strategy and objectives as well as implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the initiative. Reflecting this last process, Theoretical statement 3a would thus be altered as follows:

**Theoretical statement 3b: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic, **rapport, and action** level, with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society.

Based on the theoretical statement above, the rapport and action processes are incorporated as constructs of the communication processes, together with the strategic process. The rapport and action process are defined as follows:

*The **rapport process** is the process where the different parties participate to develop rapport with one another through listening, observation and dialogue towards the creation of trust based relationships, mutual understanding and a mutual intent, guided by the purpose of sustainability.*

*The **action process** is where the different parties participate in setting a strategy and objectives to achieve the mutual intent; this includes the actual implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these strategies.*

## 6.2.4 Communication roles

Due to the different processes, the communication roles involved in these processes must be clarified. For this aim, the following theoretical statement can be revisited:

### **Theoretical statement 4a: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process and the reflective facilitator and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the engagement process (see 4.3.6).

Regarding the communication roles, the following constructs were thus identified: reflective strategist, facilitator, and participant.

### **6.2.4.1 Reflective strategist**

To discuss this role, the following definition is revisited:

*The **reflective strategist** is the most senior communication person in business responsible for CSR and CSR communication. This role reflects on and addresses the strategic business as well as societal issues within the purpose of sustainability (see 4.3.6).*

Based on the inclusion of the strategic process (see 6.2.3.1), the participants concurred that the role of the reflective strategist is important as being responsible for CSR and CSR communication. This inclusion is based on the fact that the relationship between business and society must be the priority of the communication function, as explicated in the CSR strategy (see 6.2.1.2). A European participant elaborated: "The people in companies who are in charge of corporate communication, they are also the ones that take care of CSR."

This argument is in line with the perception of Elving (2017) that the communication function should be directly responsible for CSR because it deals with stakeholders and relationships (also see 6.2.1). He warned, however, that if CSR is not incorporated into the various business processes and thus made the responsibility of business as a whole, it turns into a mere PR exercise. The perceptions of the participants thus concur with the definition emphasising that CSR and CSR communication are the responsibility of the reflective strategist. Based on the mentioned participants' perceptions of the strategic process (see 6.2.3.1), it can be assumed

that the reflective strategist would reflect on both business and societal issues, as defined in the present study.

#### **6.2.4.2 Reflective facilitator**

To understand this role, the following definition can be revisited:

*The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability (see 4.3.6).*

Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) were extremely positive about identifying the role of the reflective facilitator. They agreed that identifying this role adds outstanding value to the present research. According to Rensburg (2017), even the King IV report suggests such a role but does not define it, which confirms the value of this study by identifying the reflective facilitator.

Rensburg (2017) and De Beer (2017) suggested that this role is neither that of a strategist, nor an implementer. Instead this practitioner is the listener, observer and interpreter of information. The aim is building relationships between business and society, based on trust, to reach a mutual understanding. Rensburg (2017) further described this role as translator (of interests, needs, expectations, responsibility, and accountability) who helps create shared value, as discussed in 6.3.1 above. According to De Beer (2017), the practitioner fulfilling this role, requires knowledge of both the business and the community if value is to be created. She stressed the need for sensitivity towards the culture and dynamics of the specific community.

Rensburg (2017) added that this sensitivity should not only concern the culture of the community but also understand the corporate culture of the business. This is especially important within the South African context where culture can become a barrier in CSR initiatives if not approached appropriately. This situation highlights the importance of the facilitation role to align the cultures of business and the community, thus creating a platform to move forward. The importance of cultural sensitivity is also discussed within the nature of communication (see 6.2.6).

The perceptions above of the academics correspond with the definition of the reflective facilitator. Since identifying the middle phase as the rapport process, this must be included as the process in which the reflective facilitator is responsible for creating the mentioned relationships based on mutual understanding (see 6.2.3).

### 6.2.4.3 Reflective participant

To explore this role further, the following definition can be revisited:

*The **reflective participant** is the role within the engagement process who constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the process, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent (see 4.3.6).*

Based on their perception of how important the actual implementation is, the participants agreed on the role of the reflective participant. It is significant that this practitioner is not solely responsible for the CSR initiative but only a participant, together with other role-players in the process. This proposal also supports the perceptions about mutual responsibility and accountability (see 6.2.3). Seeing that the rapport process was included, the last process was renamed the “action process” and should thus be indicated as the one in which the reflective participant takes part (see 6.2.3).

The responses show that the academics’ perceptions of the different roles in the proposed Integrated CSR communication model are mostly in line with Theoretical statement 4a. Nevertheless, this theoretical statement must be adapted and the reflective facilitator and the reflective participant redefined as below, based on the change in the communication processes (see 6.2.3).

#### **Theoretical statement 4b: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process, the reflective facilitator as the role within the **rapport process** and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the **action process**.

In the same vein, the roles of the reflective facilitator and participant can be redefined as follows:

*The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication within the **rapport process** by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability.*

The **reflective participant** is the role within the **action process** who constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the process, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent.

## 6.2.5 Outcome of communication

It is important that the different people involved within the communication processes are aware of the intended outcome from these processes, in order to contribute to the purpose of sustainability. This requirement is expressed in the following theoretical statement:

### **Theoretical statement 5a: Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication is empowerment where both business and society are guided and strengthened through information, knowledge and an understanding of themselves and the other. This will help create a strategic advantage for the organisation and contribute to self-reliance for society (see 4.3.7).

The outcome of communication is thus viewed in the present study as the empowering of business as well as society. This focus will be discussed subsequently.

### 6.2.5.1 Empowering business

In order to explore the empowerment of business as an outcome of communication, the following definition is revisited:

**Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change (see 4.3.7).

The majority of participants defined the outcome of communication primarily in terms of reputation and image, with the aim to empower the business. One European academic explained:

“Through your CSR communication, an image and perception is formed in the minds of your stakeholders about your company and thus your reputation is being built through the things that you do in CSR and say about CSR.”



In this regard, Elving (2017) understands reputation building as the tangible results of a company's CSR communication, and therefore, "society will like your company more". This links to De Beer's (2017) view that the reputational advantage of CSR communication also helps an organisation gain a license to operate by strengthening its position in society.

Elving (2017) mentions another advantage of CSR communication for a company's reputation, namely to "build up a reservoir of goodwill so if there is a scandal, your reputational damage will be less". Such an approach considers risk management as another outcome of communication that seeks to empower the organisation. He explains:

"Many crises come from issues that, in hindsight, you could have identified as risks. If you did your CSR communication correctly by building relationships, you could have avoided these crises."

Elving (2017) suggested further that networks should be formed around CSR issues, ideas and solutions, to address potential risks. This approach is in line with the European focus on issues and clusters that form around issues (see 6.2.2).

The South African academics emphasised that the focus should not only be on reputation and risk management. De Beer (2017) stated that it is important for communicators to show how CSR initiatives add and create value for both the organisation and society. The notion of creating shared value was viewed as an important outcome of communication from a South African perspective that strives to help empower society as well. The academics also understood corporate as well as societal change to take place when shared value is created, thereby empowering business and society alike. This is in contrast with European perspectives that did not refer to corporate or social change as the outcome of communication.

Burger (2017), however, voiced reservations about the usage of the term "empowerment" for business. She argued that empowerment originated from the ideologies of social movements and social development, which define it as transferring power to those who has no power, namely marginalised groups (also see 4.3.7). She added that within these ideologies, business is viewed as already possessing power, needing to transfer it to others. Thus, theoretically, business cannot be empowered. Burger (2017) suggested that empowerment for business should be defined in terms of becoming a "learning organisation through the information and knowledge gained in the communication processes". She explained that a learning organisation is also a changing one, thus supporting the notion that corporate change must occur.

To recap: Burger (2017) expressed reservations about using the term "empowerment" also for business enterprises. However, this can be rectified by defining business as a "learning

organisation” empowered with information, knowledge, and an understanding of society as well as the development context. In this regard, the empowering of business was redefined as follows:

**Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by **becoming a learning organisation**, gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change.

The participants perceived the outcome of communication as linked to reputation, image, a licence to operate, and risk management. Thus, it can be accepted that this process should create a strategic advantage for the organisation as pointed out in the definition of business empowerment. However, how a better understanding of society can aid business in creating a strategic advantage was only acknowledged by some. European participants did not necessarily perceive this process to be used to empower society.

#### **6.2.5.2 Empowering society**

The empowerment of society will be evaluated by revisiting the following definition:

**Empowering society** is seen as guiding and strengthening society through information, knowledge and an understanding to strive for societal sustainability and attain self-reliance, all which are conducive for social change (see 4.3.7).

The South African academics were the only participants who mentioned self-reliance to reach social change as an outcome of communication contained in the definition of empowerment for society. Such inclusion can be based on these academics’ knowledge and experience within a development context. They stated that there should be a constant strive towards mutual understanding leading to mutual accountability (also see 6.2.3) and ultimately, self-reliance. Burger (2017) pointed out: “This will result in the community being ultimately responsible for the initiative and the organisation being one of the role players in the process.” On the different role-players linked to CSR initiatives, she suggested establishing networks during the communication processes that could enhance the empowering of society towards self-reliance. This takes place by gaining knowledge, gathering information, and reaching understanding. These perceptions thus underline the definition in the present study on societal empowerment striving towards self-reliance.

To recap: The definitions of empowering business and society were found to be underpinned by the perceptions of most academics. Therefore, it can be assumed that these participants concur with Theoretical statement 5a above.

## **6.2.6 Nature of communication**

The proposed Integrated CSR communication model describes continuous engagement between different parties within the various communication processes. It is thus important to specify the nature of communication in the processes that contribute to empowerment towards sustainability. This is done by revisiting the definition presented in chapter 4:

### **Theoretical statement 6a: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on the context (4.3.8).

The participants concurred that the nature of CSR communication comprises the constructs of informing, participation, dialogue, empowerment and cultural diversity. The utilisation of these constructs was explained as, “different kinds of communication taking place within different contexts”, according to De Beer (2017).

During the initial conversation on the nature of communication, the European academics only mentioned information sharing, dialogue, and power. From their side, the South African academics also elaborated on participation and cultural diversity. The constructs which the academics pointed out, are discussed subsequently.

### **6.2.6.1 Informing**

The construct, informing, is explicated below, based on the definition in chapter 4.

*Informing entails horizontal, two-way communication with the sharing of information and knowledge in order to advise, educate, or enlighten participants and other stakeholders, thereby empowering both business and society (see 4.3.8).*

All the participants perceived information sharing as important, namely “telling the outside world about the CSR initiatives”, thus one-way communication. Therefore, informing can be used to

enhance the organisation's sustainability, but does not necessarily empower such a business with new information or knowledge to better understand society. Rensburg (2017) perceived information sharing about CSR initiatives as directed mainly towards the beneficiaries, "people want to know what the organisation can do for them". She did, however, caution against paternalistic communication where organisations "tell" communities what they think they need. According to her, the focus should rather be on providing information that empowers people to make their own decisions, which emphasises advising or educating through two-way horizontal communication. Burger (2017) concurred by perceiving information sharing as a means to educate people, thereby establishing a similar level of knowledge between participants for dialogue to take place. These perceptions also underline the definition of "informing" as presented in this study.

Vercic (2017) emphasised the role of communication to provide information and knowledge. He added: "As information networks and knowledge gain more central stage in both social and economic development, communication is becoming more and more important." This view clearly underlines the importance of information sharing in order to advise and educate while seeking to empower both business and society.

All the academic participants mentioned information networks and social media as important tools not only for sharing information and knowledge, but to engage in dialogue as well. Such a process would empower both business and society with information and knowledge. Traditionally, the sharing of information would refer to one-way communication. Nevertheless, the perception is that such sharing should take place to stimulate dialogue in the various communication processes. This will advise and educate people to make their own decision, an outcome that was also highlighted in the definition of informing in the present study.

#### **6.2.6.2 Participation**

Participation will be evaluated based on the following definition from chapter 4:

***Participation** is defined as an on-going process where the parties involved have voluntary but equal opportunity to participate fully and influence the communication processes seeking to empower both business and society (see 4.3.8).*

Participation as the nature of communication was only mentioned by South African academics from a development perspective. Burger (2017) distinguished two types of participation. The first takes place at grassroots level where groups of people converse around issues where they feel they are not being heard, for example social movements, activist and pressure groups. This is seen as true bottom-up communication since the movement started off with the people

clustered around a specific issue, which is driven by the people and not by a project initiated by business. In contrast, the second type of participation is project-driven and this interviewee defined it as strategic participation. This type of participation is externally driven while the community are incorporated strategically into the participation to empower the business. This links to the argument by Rensburg (2017) that the term “engagement” implies a process into which people are “forced” (see 6.2.3.2).

Burger (2017) adds to this view that people participate because they were asked to (strategic participation) but do not necessarily want to, which makes such participation forced. De Beer (2017) named it “an illusion of participation for publicity sake”, pointing out that it contributes only to empowering business. Rensburg (2017) emphasised that through forced participation nothing will be accomplished since there will be no sharing. This highlights the importance of the rapport process as well as the role of the reflective facilitator in creating mutual understanding (see 6.2.3).

In light of the arguments above, Rensburg (2017) preferred the term “involvement” because, “based on enough information to your disposal, you make an informed decision to be involved, and then you will participate and share”. She concluded that “in Africa, communities are invested in sharing because it is only through sharing that you build relationships”. Burger (2017) summarised this point by explaining that although most initiatives are project-driven by business and thus assumes strategic participation, she viewed this proposed model as striving to make participation more authentic.

Participation as part of the nature of communication in CSR is thus defined correctly as acting voluntarily and providing equal opportunity for participation on any issue. However, it was perceived that, in practice, such a process would be inclined towards more strategic participation. It was suggested that sensitivity in practice will encourage people to participate of their own choice. This could be done by providing sufficient information on how participation would benefit those taking part. Only then could the communication strive for mutual understanding and the building of trust-based relationships.

### **6.2.6.3 Dialogue**

Based on the following definition from chapter 4, dialogue as a construct of the nature of communication will be explored:

**Dialogue** is a continuous process of voluntary yet equal opportunity to participate fully in open discourse on any topic without predetermined objectives, rather as equal interlocutors within an environment of trust and respect (see 4.3.8).

Dialogue was the one concept that both European and South African academics linked to the nature of communication in CSR. The overall feeling was that dialogue should help create mutual understanding built on trust-based relationships, which is in line with the first part of the definition on dialogue. Referring specifically to European businesses, Elving (2017) remarked: “We need to work on dialogue more. Organisations seldom step into dialogue because they are afraid of dialogue.” He added that the reason is the lack of knowledge and competencies about dialogue.

The participants perceived dialogue further as a means to find new solutions to CSR problems, reach consensus, gather new information, and build relationships. Such perceptions of dialogue delineate it as an action taking place on the organisation’s terms, aimed at empowering business. This is clearly contrary to the definition of dialogue in the present study – as participation in a process of open discourse on any topic without pre-established objectives about empowering both business and society. The definition will, however, be retained as such. This is based on the argument how dialogue contributes to the empowerment of both business and society as the outcome of this proposed model (see 4.3.8 & 6.2.5) and that there should be continuity between the different communication processes (4.3.5 & 6.2.3).

#### **6.2.6.4 Empowerment**

Empowerment was discussed as an outcome of communication (see 6.2.5). Here empowerment will be evaluated as a construct of the nature of communication by revisiting the following definition:

***Empowerment** within the nature of communication is defined as a conscious and continuous process of addressing power differences between the different participants within the communication processes (see 4.3.8).*

Addressing power between the different participants was viewed from a European context as entering into dialogue with powerful pressure groups clustered around a specific issue. Such interaction is aimed at finding new solutions to limit the impact that these groups may have on the organisation. In this case the organisation engages in dialogue to mitigate the power that such groups may exert on business. In a South African development context, business is viewed as the party possessing the power since they have the resources, whereas the community lacks “real power in the relationship” (Rensburg, 2017).

Burger (2017) argued that within the South African context, power differences should be addressed by transferring power from business to the community, thus empowering the latter to attain self-reliance. Rensburg (2017) supported the argument for a better balancing of power,

arguing that by placing more power in the hands of the community, CSR initiatives would become less paternalistic and the distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities more representative. Rensburg (2017) added that communication can help empower the community:

“CSR becomes more visualized because of CSR communication and that results in a power change between the corporation and the community and results in more power for the community.”

These perceptions of the participants underline the definition where empowerment is viewed as the nature of communication. This means addressing power differences between the participants within the communication processes. Both the European and South African academics supported the definition of empowerment within the present study. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that, from a European perspective, the idea of transferring power to stakeholders is not an aspect that is highly familiar to business.

#### **6.2.6.5 Cultural diversity**

Cultural diversity is the final construct within the nature of communication to be evaluated according to the definition in chapter 4.

*Cultural diversity is a sensitivity and understanding for the different cultures in society as well as for the business culture by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths of the different cultures within the communication processes (see 4.3.8).*

Only the South African academics highlighted sensitivity towards cultural diversity during CSR communication within a development context. De Beer (2017) cautioned that if organisations are not culturally sensitive in their dealing with communities, they would be perceived as “disconnected” from the community. This could lead to resistance from the community and failure for any CSR project. According to her, in such a case, culture becomes a barrier to CSR.

Rensburg (2017) elaborated on the argument above. According to her, the focus should not only be on cultural diversity but include a sensitivity towards diversity in religion, politics, social movements, individuals, and leadership. If not dealt with effectively, these issues could also become barriers. She suggests sensitivity towards contexts and circumstances, more than merely to culture. No participants, however, referred to the business culture as was reflected in the definition.

Based on the feedback from Rensburg (2017), cultural diversity should thus be defined in a broader sense, which includes a sensitivity towards the ways, means, values and norms of different groups and individuals within different contexts and circumstances. These groups and

individuals will be from business and society. Such a broader sensitivity would contribute to the mutually inclusivity of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model. Therefore, the construct of cultural diversity can be redefined as:

**Cultural diversity** is a sensitivity towards an understanding of the **ways, means, values, and norms** of different groups and individuals within the communication processes by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths.

### **6.2.7 CSR communication**

CSR communication, comprising the essence of the proposed model, was defined as:

**CSR communication** is an integrated and on-going process of communication that is embedded in the enterprise strategy, initiated on a strategic level, and evolves where all parties concerned participate continually in the various communication processes, which should help empower both business and society to attain sustainability (see 4.5).

On face value it seems that the perceptions of the academics support the definition of CSR communication in the present study. Further discussion about CSR communication as such did, however, highlight a one-sidedness in the process. Although CSR was perceived as contributing to the sustainability of both business and society, CSR communication was viewed mostly as favouring the sustainability of business. This became evident in perceptions on the outcome of communication, which were linked mainly to reputation, image building, gaining a licence to operate, being viewed as a good corporate citizen, and issues management. Some constructs describing the sustainability of society were mentioned, for example, empowerment but only by the South African academics.

After discussions on the proposed Integrated CSR communication model all agreed that CSR communication must contribute to the sustainability and empowerment of both business and society. The European academics did, however, express concern about the feasibility of pursuing such sustainability and empowerment in business according to their developed worldview. From a developing worldview, the South African academics concurred that practicing CSR communication in such a manner should be feasible in business, especially within a South African context.

## **6.3 GENERAL REMARKS REGARDING THE PROPOSED INTEGRATED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

The summary of the overall perceptions of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model is based on the final observations of the academics of the model.



All the participants were highly positive about the model. Below are some of the remarks regarding the proposed Integrated CSR communication model in general:

- “I think it is very interesting and it makes sense” – European academic.
- “Theoretical very sound and a good heuristic tool” – Vercic (2017).
- “I agree 100% with this model” – Rensburg (2017).

All the participants agreed on the theoretical soundness of this proposed model. The South African academics concurred that this model is workable and necessary in education and in practice. De Beer and Rensburg (2017) highlighted the rapport process and the role of the reflective facilitator as extremely valuable contributions. Rensburg (2017) further emphasised the importance of implementation and evaluation in the action process, and motivated: “You know how seldom we as communication practitioners get to implementation and evaluation and, more so, reflecting on all of this!” Burger (2017) pointed out the value of the strategic process by remarking that limited research is done on this “pre-process”, although this is a crucial process that must be emphasised.

From a European perspective, however, the proposed model was perceived as “idealistic” and too “normative”. These responses do also correspond with their perceptions of CSR communication (see 6.2.7). On the question whether this model will be workable in practice, Vercic (2017) responded: “Aren’t we asking too much?” He had reservations whether the “guys in Silicon Valley” would “buy into” such a process. The reason for these perceptions may be that this model was conceptualised from the perspective of a so-called developing world. Therefore, the academics from Europe may not necessarily understand these concepts, due to their frame of reference from a so-called developed world. Although Elving (2017) supported the argument that this model is “Utopia”, he agreed that such models are necessary to improve organisations by enhancing their communication processes.

The overall perception from both the European and South African academics was also that this proposed Integrated CSR communication model could be applied in an educational context and would contribute to curriculums on communication as well as management. De Beer (2017) concluded that such a model should be used within an educational environment to illustrate how different concepts are related to one another. Elving and Vercic (2017) stated that CSR communication can be used in management training to educate managers “about the purpose of business’s existence” in order to “stimulate managers’ thinking on what they are really doing and what they should be doing”. Elving (2017) also considered this model as valuable for communication students, training them to become change agents in organisations and helping

to ensure sustainability. This assessment is significant, seeing that this model was developed from the perspective of a developing world but is seen as relevant also from a developed-world perspective.

The only negative feedback on the proposed model centred on the word “integrated”. Several participants raised concerns over the use of this specific term. The overall view was that “integrated” refers to various communication functions employed ultimately to build the brand, reputation, and image of an organisation. Such a function is contradictory to the essence of this model, which focuses on the sustainability of both business and society.

Burger (2017) indicated that the newest trends in CSR, which refer to value and purpose (see 6.2.1) is directly the opposite of an “integrated way of thinking”. A European academic also indicated that “integrated” has a certain connotation, which is “usually meant in terms of integrating all the communication tools within an organisation to speak in one voice about CSR”. Again, such a definition would point mainly to the sustainability of business. This interviewee also indicated that a new book “Handbook of Integrated CSR Communication”, published in 2017, addresses CSR communication from this traditional, integrated perspective. In this book, integrated CSR communication is defined as follows:

“We define Integrated CSR communication as the harmonization of all CSR-related communication strategies and activities, whereby CSR is understood as the company’s attitudes and behaviours with regard to its perceived obligations and responsibility toward its stakeholders and society” (Diehl *et al.*, 2017:v).

On the contrary, the present study defined “integrated” as the integration of corporate and development communication (also see 6.1). Nevertheless, the participants perceived this as an inappropriate term for this model. This is due to the traditional connotation of the word with a strong propensity to favour the sustainability of business. Based on the concerns raised about this term, it was decided to only refer to a CSR communication model instead, to avoid confusion.

In essence, the academics perceived this as an applicable theoretical model. However, it “needs proof through field work in practice” as a European academic remarked. Based on the perceptions and feedback from the academics, this model was adapted as discussed in the findings. A new graphic representation was made to illustrate the presently-named CSR communication model, as depicted in the diagram below (Fig 6.1).

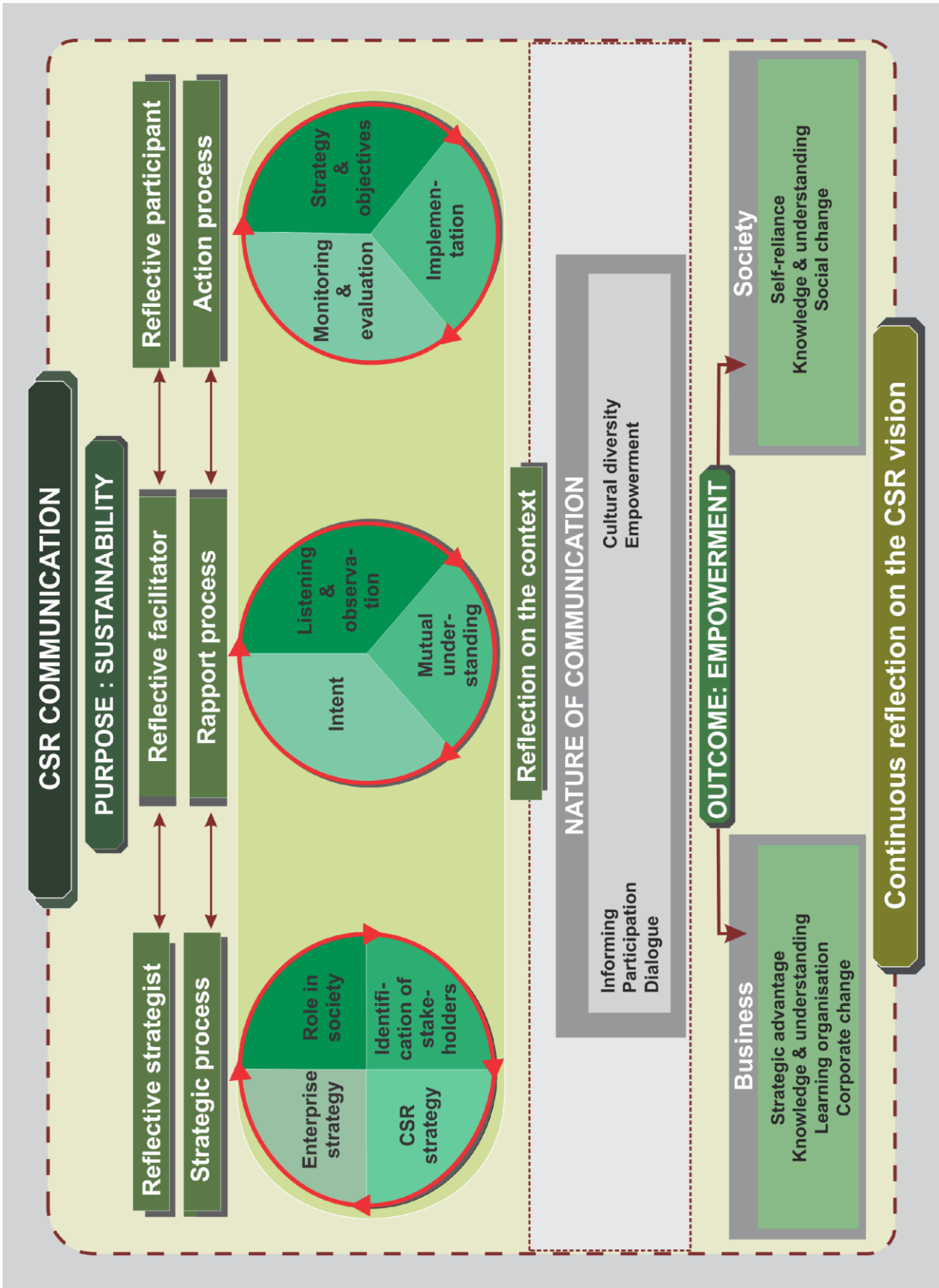


Figure 6.1: The proposed CSR communication model (a)

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

The present study analysed perceptions of academics in the field of corporate communication, CSR communication and development communication towards social change. This was done according to the concepts and constructs of the Integrated CSR communication model, to answer the following research question:

*What are the perceptions of South African and European communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model (1.4.2.4)?*

The South African academics raised their concerns about the usages of the term “CSR” and suggested a different term. All the academics, however, did agree on sustainability of both business and society as the purpose of the concept of CSR. CSR communication was perceived at first as contributing mostly to the sustainability of business. These perceptions changed during the discussion on the Integrated CSR communication model as presented in the present study. The academics agreed that the model was theoretically sound. According to their feedback, the following changes were made to refine the proposed model:

- The scope of the identification of stakeholders was narrowed down to those relating to the *core business* of the organisation (see 6.2.2).
- The engagement process was divided into a *rapport* and *action* process while the *scope* of the communication roles changed accordingly (see 6.2.3.2).
- The empowering of the organisation was refined to include the specification of business as a *learning organisation* (see 6.2.5.1).
- Cultural diversity was redefined to include a *broadened scope* of diverse entities (see 6.2.6.5).
- The term “*integrated*” was removed from the name of the model (see 6.3).

Although this proposed model was perceived as theoretically sound, the European academics expressed reservations on the relevance of the model in practice. On the other hand, the South African academics perceived it as workable in practice. These reservations were answered by evaluating the model in practice. The findings of this assessment will be discussed in the following chapter (chapter 7).

# **CHAPTER 7:**

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS ON THE PROPOSED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

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### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 6 discussed the perceptions of academics about the proposed Integrated CSR communication model regarding the theoretical foundation of the model. It was established that participants perceived the proposed model as “theoretically sound” and “workable”. However, especially academics from Europe viewed it as “idealistic” and mentioned the importance of verifying the model through field work. Based on their feedback, the design was adapted and termed the “CSR communication” model. The third phase in the development entails the evaluation of the proposed model by practitioners.

The perceptions of communication practitioners on the CSR communication model is therefore discussed in this chapter. Feedback on the results of the semi-structured interviews with the practitioners will be examined according to the same constructs and concepts as in chapter 6. Based on this feedback, certain theoretical statements and definitions of constructs within the proposed CSR communication model are revised anew. This is done to formulate a model that would be theoretically sound as well as relevant in practice. Such a model could thus ultimately equip and empower an organisation’s communication function in its strategic contribution to sustainability as the purpose of CSR. In answer to the general research question, the envisaged outcome of the present study would be to empower both business and society.

This chapter aims to answer the following specific research question (1.4.2.5):

*Which perceptions do senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model?*

### **7.2 THE PROPOSED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

The discussion of the findings is based on the theoretical statements as well as the redefined concepts and constructs as illustrated in Figure 6.1 (from chapter 6).

#### **7.2.1 CSR vision**

One of the prominent features of the proposed CSR communication model is the CSR vision, which was defined in the following theoretical statement:

### **Theoretical statement 1a: CSR vision**

The CSR vision is the aspiration of an organisation to attain a sustainable future for the company as well as the society in which it operates. This vision should reflect the purpose of sustainability that guides the CSR strategy for a mutually inclusive and equal commitment to the triple context as embodied in CSR communication (see 4.3.3).

The purpose of sustainability was thus identified as the focus of the CSR strategy guided by the CSR vision.

#### **7.2.1.1 Purpose: Sustainability**

The practitioners held two distinct perceptions about the organisation's purpose as its reason for existence. A number of participants linked the organisation's purpose mainly to its core business. Other participants perceived this purpose as expressed in terms of the triple context "towards a healthier future for business, communities and the planet" (Participant 7). It can thus be assumed that not all participants viewed purpose in terms of the triple context. This would therefore imply that their CSR strategy would also not reflect the sustainability of the triple context, instead they merely focus on the business. In order for the CSR strategy to reflect sustainability as the mutual purpose, it should be addressed within the triple context.

Sustainability was identified as the mutual purpose of the proposed CSR communication model in chapter 4 and defined as follows:

***Sustainability** is the continual long-term process involving the maintenance, endurance, and existence of business, society, and the environment (i.e. triple context) to seek a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates (see 4.3.1).*

The focus on business sustainability was evident in the perceptions of six of the participants. These participants were from the following industries: government (2), agricultural, insurance, alcoholic beverages and groceries and general merchandise. Their view of sustainability centred mostly on the business as reflected in the enterprise strategy. This inclination became evident in remarks such as: "sustainability is actually about saying: how do we make sure that our business practices are not only relevant for today but will remain good and relevant for future" (Participant 10). The same participants also referred to the sustainability of society merely in the context of specific CSR projects and thus did not perceived it as integral to the enterprise strategy. This notion was highlighted by Participant 4 who asserted that "education and skills development are important for the sustainability of society". Such a statement

underlines the project perspective that deals with societal sustainability merely within a CSR strategy. This is thus contrary to the definition of sustainability in the present study, which includes both business and society in the enterprise strategy.

The other four participants placed sustainability within the broader context of the environment in which an organisation operates. They were from the following industries: manufacturing, banking, mining and food and beverages. This includes both business and society, as defined in the present study. Such a broader approach is highlighted by statements such as: “It is about the long-term sustainability of our business and the environment in which we operate” (Participant 7); or: “Sustainability is core for us as a business, our people and our planet” (Participant 5). It can thus be concluded that certain companies perceive sustainability to be embedded in the enterprise strategy, as defined within this study (embedded perspective). Others mainly focus on business sustainability with the societal dimension merely addressed as part of CSR strategy and projects. In other words, sustainability does not function as an integral part of business processes (project perspective).

All the practitioners did however perceive sustainability to be the rightful purpose of this a model, based on the continually increasing emphasis on the importance of sustainability in businesses and society. However, although the participants accepted sustainability as part of the enterprise and CSR strategy, this was not necessarily reflected in their perceptions of CSR communication.

The present study proposed an embedded perspective that will contribute to the sustainability of business and society. Therefore, the definition of sustainability above is retained as such.

The differing perceptions between an embedded and a project perspective is also notable in the perceptions of CSR strategy, which is discussed subsequently.

#### **7.2.1.2 CSR strategy**

To understand the focus of CSR strategy, the definition in chapter 4 is revisited:

*CSR strategy is guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded in the enterprise strategy. The CSR strategy is driven by the communication function, focusing on building relationships between business and society. Through continual engagement with society, issues that are relevant to the sustainability of both business and society are identified and addressed in the CSR strategy (see 4.3.2).*

During discussions on the above-mentioned strategy, practitioners perceived the term “CSR” in various ways. These differences in perceptions influenced the participants’ perceptions about CSR strategy, and are therefore examined below.

Participants used a wide range of terminology for “CSR” in practice. These terms are: “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) (Participant 1); “corporate social investment” (CSI) (Participant 10); “social economic development” (SED) (Participant 3); “citizenship” (Participant 5); “sustainability and responsibility” (Participant 6); and “shared value and shared growth” (Participant 7). This is in accordance with the findings by theory (see 1.1) and the academics (see 6.2.1), that CSR is difficult to define. Therefore, certain academics suggested a move away from CSR due to the multitude definitions and perceptions. This view was also echoed by certain of the communication practitioners.

A number of participants who employed the term CSR, did retranslate it. For example, they referred to it as “making a difference in the community you serve” (Participant 1); or “give back to the community you serve” (Participant 2). This philanthropic view of “CSR” was supported by Participants 3 and 9, namely as giving back to society through community projects. The term CSI was perceived as investing in communities, for example, through skills development and by re-employing those trained people in the organisation, thus getting a return on investment. Participant 3 added that currently, their organisation combined CSR and CSI by naming it “social economic development” (SED), a term also used in Broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) codes as well as in the National Development Plan (NDP).

In light of the discussion above, the terms CSR and CSI were also perceived as legislative driven, project-based initiatives, which is “easy because legislatively you spend an amount and you have done your job”, according to Participant 9. Participant 4 supported this argument by stating that their CSI is based on five to six projects they complete per annum.

Participants who still use the terms CSR, CSI, or SED, linked the CSR strategy to the core business of the organisation. However, significantly is the fact that the CSR strategy is not embedded within the enterprise strategy as defined in the present study. This is evident in the comment by Participant 3: “Our enterprise strategy feeds our CSR strategy so we only get involved in projects that align with our business strategy.” In this case the CSR strategy is thus viewed from a project perspective according to which projects are selected to support the enterprise strategy. However, CSR is not considered embedded within the enterprise strategy, as defined in the present study.

“Sustainability”, “sustainability and responsibility”, “citizenship” and “shared value/growth” were the phrases participants used when referring to “CSR” from an embedded perspective. This



means the CSR strategy is not only linked to the core business but forms part of the overall enterprise strategy, as defined in this study. Participant 8 defined this strategy as seeking sustainability for both business and society, by explaining: “It encompasses sustainable development and is ingrained in the way we conduct ourselves.” Participant 7 linked this strategy to sustained growth: “It is only through sustained growth that you can do development.” The argument thus is that a sustainable business can contribute to the growth of society as well.

In the conversations on sustainability, the concept of citizenship also emerged. Participant 6 explained: “Citizenship is core to our business and part of our business strategy ... it is looking after our social impact and sustainability.” Participant 7 added to this argument: “Corporate citizenship is about being a responsible company and making responsible decisions towards sustainability ... and making it part of your business objectives.”

The outcome of integrating the CSR strategy into the enterprise strategy, was defined by some participants as *shared value*. Participant 5 summarised shared value from an embedded perspective as follows:

“Not ad-hoc and not add-on but an integral part of all your business processes that start at strategy, addresses issues, deals with your social impact, and create a sustainable environment that would lead to transformation and empowerment.”

Participant 10 concurred by explaining:

“It is linked to our day to day operations because if we want to be sustainable in the long term we have to create value for the society where we operate and for the business.”

In terms of the philosophy of shared value, another participant referred to “CSR” in their company as shared growth. She explained this outcome:

“Our focus on society is core to our business ... all of our products and services are being looked at through the lens of society ... we make sure it is relevant to society and creates a business return for us as well ... then we share growth.”

Those companies that refer to citizenship, sustainability, shared value, and shared growth, view CSR strategy as integral to their other business processes by creating value that accelerates change and transformation in both business and society. These perceptions are summarised by Participant 5: “It is about being a responsible company.” These participants did, however, recognise project-based initiatives but linked it to their human resources’ (HR) strategy of employee engagement, to support causes that are deemed important to the employees.

Therefore, it can be assumed that in organisations where the CSR strategy is still referred to as CSR or CSI, it is viewed from a project perspective that supports the enterprise strategy mainly seeking the sustainability of the business. In other companies where this strategy is referred to as citizenship, sustainability, or shared value/growth, it is embedded in the enterprise strategy as well as the business processes. The aim in this regard is to support the sustainability of both business and society, as duly defined within this study.

The overall perception from an embedded perspective on the term “CSR” within this model was summarised by participant 7: “CSR and sustainability are not the same thing. Sustainability is taking a long-term view; it is a higher order as reflected in this model. CSR is projects.” Also opposing the term “CSR”, Participant 10 stated “This model is basically the definition of creating value. So, I don’t think people should refer to it as CSR anymore ... this model demonstrates that CSR has moved on.”

Regarding the CSR strategy, most practitioners related it directly to relationships, as is confirmed by Participant 5: “CSR is about relating to people ... it is all about relationships.” Others did not mention relationships specifically but it can be assumed that relationships are a given in CSR. This was obvious in the names given to the different departments under which the CSR function falls, namely: “corporate relations” and “public affairs”. This indicates that the CSR strategy is driven by the communication function, as it is also defined in the present study.

Participant 3 was the only one not responsible for the CSR strategy but only for CSR communication and perceived this as a problem. This participant remarked that, ideally, CSR should resort under the communication function, “because it is about relationships between people and that’s what communication does”. Nevertheless, it was evident that in certain companies, the CSR strategy, although perceived as a part of the communication function, was used for marketing purposes, especially where the strategy is project driven. This is clear from the statement by Participant 2:

“The responsibility lies with corporate communications and corporate communications falls within corporate marketing. Personally, I think it should sit in marketing because it is a marketing activity.”

It can thus be assumed that the CSR strategy resorts mostly under the communication function – as defined in the present study – but is used for marketing purposes as well.

Furthermore, the findings show: Where CSR is embedded in the business strategy, the focus is on relationships aiming for the sustainability of both business and society. Conversely, where CSR is project driven, it is employed mostly for marketing, thus only supporting the sustainability

of the business. This emphasises the relevance of CSR strategy, as defined in this study: contributing to the sustainability of both business and society.

It is thus evident that the CSR vision is perceived in two ways. Firstly, there are organisations whose vision aspires merely to ensure the sustainability of business as its purpose. In this regard, societal sustainability is only dealt with in CSR projects that support the organisation's enterprise strategy. After presenting the proposed model, these participants did however agree on the necessity of having a vision that includes the sustainability of both business and society. Other organisations do strive for a sustainable future for both business and society by focussing on the sustainability of both business and society as its purpose. This focus guides these companies' CSR strategy, which is integrated fully in the enterprise strategy, or "embedded", as argued in this study.

### 7.2.2 Identification of stakeholders

It is important for business to identify stakeholders since this identification forms the basis of the CSR strategy by determining the parties towards which business has a responsibility. This identification was explicated by the following refined theoretical statement:

#### **Theoretical statement 2b: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose **and core business**. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society (see 6.2.2).

The participants mentioned various aspects as a crucial part of the identification of stakeholders within the CSR strategy. These were described mainly by terms such as: stakeholder analysis, stakeholder mapping, and stakeholder identification. The way the practitioners perceived the identification of stakeholders is discussed by referring to primary stakeholders that include marginalised groups seeing that most of the practitioners referred to them as such. This description is in accordance with the definition of the present study in chapter 4:

***Primary stakeholders** are those who directly and indirectly influence the organisation's sustainability, or are affected by the organisation's pursuit for sustainability. They include marginalised groups in society to whom the organisations perceive a responsibility beyond profit-making and striving for societal sustainability (see 4.3.4).*

The perceptions about identifying stakeholders were based on two aspects, namely: the core business of the organisation (also see 6.2.2) as well as its geographical location, or “geographical footprint” as Participant 7 named it. These trends were identified through statements such as: “We try to serve our direct community” (Participant 10); “We do identification based on things relevant to our core business” (Participant 9); “We don’t try to be everything for everyone ... we focus on our core business within our footprint” (Participant 7). According to these statements, the participants perceived stakeholders in the same way as they are defined in this study. Local communities as marginalised groups were included as primary stakeholders and identified according to their influence on business’s sustainability in the quest towards societal sustainability. This was also notable in the practitioners’ identification of the most important stakeholders. Several participants perceived their employees, community, government, and other partners such as NGOs, as the most important stakeholders to identify with their CSR strategy. The primary stakeholders, according to the participants’ responses, are expounded in the subheadings below.

- **Employees**

With the focus on the employees as primary stakeholders, there were two distinct lines of thought. Firstly, practitioners from companies with a project-driven CSR strategy explained their responsibility as communicating CSR first to their employees. In this regard, Participant 6 explained: “We always start with our staff. People who work for us need to believe and feel that we are different than other companies and worth working for.” According to Participant 9, by communicating internally about CSR, they “inspire people and make them proud to be associated with the brand”. Participant 2 supported this argument by stating that “your staff are your biggest brand builders and should know about your CSR activities.”

Other participants perceived the employees as a stakeholder group towards whom the organisation’s responsibility reaches beyond merely communicating about CSR. This is attested by Participant 7: “Our role is to provide continuity and consistency for our employees and the communities where we operate.” The practitioners who viewed their responsibility to employees as beyond merely communicating CSR to them, were those whose CSR strategy is embedded in their enterprise strategy. They were also the ones who named their employees “change agents” as opposed to the first-mentioned participants who referred to their employees as “brand ambassadors”.

All the practitioners perceived employees as an important group to whom they have a responsibility. The difference occurred where certain participants understood their responsibility to communicate about the CSR projects to the employees. In contrast, others perceived it as a responsibility aimed at the sustainability of the employees. Sustainability of employees can be

linked to that of the business. The reason is clear: as a primary stakeholder group, employees contribute to the sustainability of the business. However, employees as stakeholders can also be linked to societal sustainability, seeing that these employees also form part of society and may even represent marginalised groups.

- **Community**

After the employees, the community was perceived as an important stakeholder group: “We want to make an impact on the community we serve” (Participant 1). This view reflects the perception of all the practitioners about the importance that the organisation should accept its responsibility towards the surrounding community. The reasons for business in identifying community as part of its primary stakeholders are however mainly to support business sustainability. This is evident in participants 1 and 2 who perceived customers as an important part of the community, thus building the company’s reputation and contributing to the profit margin in addressing its responsibility. A correlation was also drawn between employees and communities as is evident from the statement of Participant 7: “Go into the communities where your staff live ... the issues that affect them should affect business too.” Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of communicating about CSR to those communities in support of business sustainability. Participant 7 explicated:

“Communities within your geographical footprint that are benefitting need to be reminded of what you do, that you are an asset to the community because you contribute to community development.”

To recap: Employees and customers are viewed as part of the community. This holds an advantage for the business by communicating about CSR to them (reputation, corporate citizenship, licence to operate, profit margin). Thus, it can be assumed that community is mainly perceived as part of the primary stakeholders, which can include marginalised groups. The inclusion of marginalised groups are however mainly done in order to benefit the business.

- **Government and other partners**

The third important stakeholder group which the participants identified was Government. Government was perceived as an important stakeholder with whom the company should partner on CSR initiatives. Participant 9 emphasised the role of Government by stating: “Do not try to do it all on your own. If you partner with Government, it gives whatever you do legitimacy.” Participant 8 also commented on the advantages of partnering with the government as an “enabling factor” for the initiatives. The role of Government was also mentioned by participants who pointed to formal legislation, especially the BBBEE codes and the Johannesburg Stock

Exchange (JSE) scorecard as well as suggested practices such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Government is thus seen as part of the primary stakeholders based on the advantage for business by partnering with Government and complying with related legislation.

The theme of networks and partnerships were elaborated on further by all the practitioners. In this regard, they particularly mentioned NGOs, (also referred to as foundations, trusts and community organisations), individuals within the communities, and other corporates. Participant 1 expressed frustration since there are no partnerships between corporates on CSR issues within their area. This is because of the “competition for branding where they only care about getting visibility and not about making an impact”. In contrast, Participants 2 and 6 attested to successful partnerships with “like-minded” corporates who may be clients and suppliers in CSR initiatives, however, emphasised that those were non-competitive corporates. Partnerships with other corporates within the CSR context are thus defined mostly in terms of primary stakeholders. The reason is that these groups generally are formed to benefit business by sharing resources and responsibilities for CSR initiatives.

The findings also indicated contrasting perceptions about partnering with NGOs. Certain organisations' CSR initiatives are channelled mainly through NGOs and foundations, as explained by Participant 8:

“Because we are a controversial business, we rely on NGOs and foundations to identify needs and we help them to address those needs because communities don't always want to work with us directly.”

Other organisations partner with NGOs, “because they have access to the community and understand the issues and the culture of the community” (Participant 2). However, another participant raised his concerns about NGOs: “We don't have a lot of effective NGOs to work with ... we are open to work with NGOs but there is few who step up to the challenge” (Participant 10). NGOs are thus also considered primary stakeholders based on their perceived efficiency to help businesses reach their CSR objectives.

Other practitioners viewed individuals within communities as important stakeholders. These include community leaders, political leaders, or opinion leaders who are directly involved in communities. In the development communication and social change theories (see chapter 3) the individual has previously been identified as an enabler within development initiatives. Individuals identified by organisations as important stakeholders can thus be confirmed as a trend in business, as South African academics also pointed out (see 6.2.2). Practitioners referred to these individuals as “people with influence, key enablers, those are the people that

you need to build relationships with for example the chief of the village” – as summarised by Participant 5. These individuals are thus also identified as primary stakeholders because of the influence they have or could exert on the CSR projects.

The practitioners thus agreed on identifying stakeholders according to the core business of the organisation, based on the purpose of sustainability. However, most participants identified primary stakeholders as those who contribute to the *business’s* sustainability. The participants did however acknowledge the importance of identifying stakeholders within society who does not necessarily contribute to the business’ bottom line but need inclusion based on the importance of contributing to a sustainable society. A practitioner narrowed down the identification of stakeholders within society as those communities relevant to the organisation’s geographical footprint, which provide applicable guidelines to pinpoint marginalised groups in society (see 6.2.2).

The overall perception was that all stakeholders within CSR are identified based primarily on their direct or indirect contribution to the sustainability of business. This is in line with the perceptions of certain South African academics that the identification of stakeholders should serve the best interest of the business. This will help the business to function sustainable and contribute to the sustainability of society (see 6.2.1 & 6.2.2).

The South African academics also highlighted the challenge to identify the communities in society (see 6.2.2). This notion was addressed by Participant 7 who referred to the business’s geographical footprint as guideline to help identify the communities as primary stakeholders. In light of this insight, Theoretical statement 2b can be adapted to incorporate this notion as follows:

**Theoretical statement 2c: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose and core business. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society **within the organisation’s geographical footprint.**

### 7.2.3 Communication processes

Communication processes must be implemented for organisations to establish and maintain relationships with the identified stakeholders. This requirement was explained by the following theoretical statement:

### **Theoretical statement 3b: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic, rapport, and action level, with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society (see 6.2.3).

All the practitioners agreed on the three processes as well as its influence on one another. Their perceptions are discussed referring to the individual processes, namely strategic, rapport, and action.

#### **7.2.3.1 Strategic process**

The strategic process was defined in chapter 4 as follows:

*The process takes place on a strategic level to formulate CSR strategy, guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded within the enterprise strategy. This strategy is based on reflection about the organisation's role in and responsibility towards society as well as the identification of stakeholders with whom the engagement will take place through CSR communication (see 4.3.5).*

All the practitioners agreed on the importance of the strategic process. This is reflected in their perceptions on the importance that CSR and CSR communication operate as strategic functions, thus “having a clear strategy that guides you” (Participant 5). In this regard, Participant 7 emphasised the importance of the strategic process as “the communication function showing its value by not only being busy, but being busy with a purpose, thus impacting on business”. Participants also viewed this as an important process for research or assessment of the organisation's environment and stakeholders, helping the company to develop a clear strategy. This process was explained as, “doing your due diligence to see if it is sustainable” (Participant 2); “test your communities” (Participant 7); and “do your homework and research your communities” (Participant 6). Practitioners' perceptions are thus in line with the study's definition which formulate CSR and CSR communication as operating on a strategic level.

Where the CSR strategy was project-driven, the strategic focus was mostly on CSR as a marketing tool (see 7.2.1.3). Based on this focus, the strategic role of CSR communication was viewed as being part of the marketing strategy, “because it is a marketing activity” (Participant 2). Participant 9 supported this marketing-related argument by stating: “I am acutely aware of the Millennials choosing one provider over another based on the work you do in society.” CSR communication was utilised, according to these perspectives, for marketing



purposes such as to increase sales or customer loyalty, thus mostly creating value for the business's sustainability. These perceptions are thus contrary to the definition of the present study that CSR communication should be embedded in the enterprise strategy.

From an embedded perspective, the strategic focus on CSR places it within the enterprise strategy, of which CSR communication is seen as an integral part, as defined by this study. This is evident in statements such as: "communicating our role in society" (Participant 5); "clearly communicating sustainability and responsibility as key drivers within our business" (Participant 8); and "communicating in order for them to understand your business strategy and purpose" (Participant 7). Those who viewed CSR communication from an embedded perspective, also stressed the importance of managing this strategy holistically. Participants 6 and 7 agreed that organisations cannot communicate the good they do in society if other stakeholders such as their employees and customers do not experience the same goodwill towards them. Participant 6 summarised this point by the following explanation:

"You need to be authentic ... if you communicate one thing but people experience something else, you have a big reputational challenge on your hands ... you need a solid business model so that there is no difference between what you say and do in society and what you say and do in business ... that is how you maintain your licence to operate."

Therefore, although all the practitioners linked CSR communication to strategy, some positioned it as part of the marketing strategy, thus viewing it as a mere marketing tool. In contrast, others viewed CSR communication from an embedded perspective, integral to the enterprise strategy. Both these perspectives, however, used CSR communication mostly to seek the business's sustainability. The participants' perceptions thus underline the observation that although the CSR strategy may seek the sustainability of both business and society, CSR communication is employed mostly to the advantage of the business's sustainability (see 7.2.7).

The strategic process as defined in the present study is highly relevant should CSR communication contribute to the sustainability of both business and society. The difference between the two perspectives of CSR communication becomes even more prominent in the outcome of communication, which will be discussed in 7.2.5.

### **7.2.3.2 Rapport process**

Based on the responses from the academics, the rapport process was defined as follows:

*The **rapport process** is the process where the different parties participate to develop rapport with one another through listening, observation and dialogue towards the creation of trust based*

*relationships, mutual understanding and a mutual intent, guided by the purpose of sustainability* (see 6.2.3).

No participants mentioned aspects related to the rapport process before the proposed CSR communication model has been presented to them. After introducing the rapport process, all the practitioners perceived this process as “the most important part because you learn about the community and they learn about you” (Participant 9). They also stressed the importance of reaching mutual understanding and creating mutual intent. For example, Participant 8 perceived this process as “absolutely important to reach common ground”. The latter felt strongly about this process, thus indicating how crucial it is for the overall model.

Some practitioners pointed out that, in reality, the rapport process is the one that is neglected. This causes initiatives to fail since there is no common ground and no intent is being established, which may lead to unrealistic expectations. Participant 7 supported this argument by remarking: “The worst thing is if Head Office sits and thinks up a project and don’t engage with the communities.” In the same vein, Participant 4 added that the importance of the rapport process lies in the gathering of information on needs, issues and expectation which are incorporated into the strategic process and then addressing it with ideas emerging from the community. Setting realistic expectations for mutual accountability was another issue raised about the rapport process:

“This process will limit the setting of unrealistic expectations and will rather set the scene for mutual accountability and ownership and that will lead to empowerment” (Participant 2).

Participant 9 did, however, mention difficulties that organisations may encounter in direct engagement with the community during the rapport process. The issue may be:

“Initial engagement with communities is very tricky ... it can either make or break your initiatives ... you have to use people who have an influence in the community ... partner with others like local NGOs or government to give you legitimacy.”

This argument for partnerships was also supported by other practitioners who emphasised establishing networks within communities, which will all take part in the rapport process. Thus, participants also perceived the rapport process as playing an important role in forming those partnerships, which means building relationships. The participants further emphasised that the rapport process leads to trust-based relationships. They explained it as follows: “Negative relations are the result of poor engagement ... through this process you can build better community relations” (Participant 7); and “This is where you establish trust” (Participant 1).

As an essential aspect of the rapport process, mutual understanding was defined as follows:

**Mutual understanding** is creating an understanding about societal as well as business issues and about the expectations of both business and society in addressing those issues towards sustainability (see 4.3.5).

The practitioners viewed mutual understanding mostly as creating an understanding about issues that affect both business and society, as it is defined in this study. However, the participants understood that those issues should be dealt with according to a set business plan in which the “buy-in” from society should be obtained. This implies that there is no real *mutual* understanding on the expectations of both business and society about addressing the issues.

The findings thus showed that participants concurred on the concept of the rapport process. Based on the perceptions of mutual understanding it can be, however, assumed that this term is used mostly to denote business’s sustainability thus not striving towards a mutual intent but rather a business intent. Therefore, the rapport process, although supported by all the participants, in practice would also be geared to benefit business’s sustainability. Because the present study argues towards the sustainability of both business and society, the definitions of the rapport process as well as mutual understanding will be maintained. Following the rapport process is the action process, which is discussed below.

### **7.2.3.3 Action process**

To understand the action process as the third phase, the definition in chapter 6 can be followed:

*The **action process** is where the different parties participate in setting a strategy and objectives to achieve the mutual intent; this includes the actual implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these strategies (see 6.2.3).*

Participant 5 perceived the action process as follows: “Here it is all about mutual collaboration and mutual commitment in addressing equal concerns.” This accentuates action taken to reach a mutual intent. No practitioners, however, referred to any participation in setting strategy or establishing objectives and evaluating them. Based on previous perceptions about CSR communication and on participation (see 7.2.6.2), it can be assumed that the community’s engagement is based on the organisation’s terms, and contrary to its definition in this study.

The findings showed that no other practitioner truly mentioned the action process directly, although all the participants perceived the action process as part of the communication processes in their organisations. The reason for the limited feedback on the action process may be that all the participants function on a managerial or directors level. Therefore, they are not

involved directly in implementing the CSR initiatives. In the discussion on stakeholder identification (see 7.2.2), it was also mentioned that certain participants use partners in their CSR initiative. Such partners may be the ones responsible for the actual implementation.

This study focused on senior communication practitioners because it was argued that they should manage the CSR strategy as well as the CSR communication (see 7.2.1 and 7.2.4) holistically as a continuous process. Therefore, they should guide the course of the action process to help contribute to the sustainability of both business and society. However, based on the feedback, it can be assumed that this is not the case in practice.

Although participants viewed these three processes as time consuming, they did not consider it an issue. Participant 8 explained: "Time consuming, yes, but people should stop seeing CSR as a quick fix. If you are going to spend time and money, make sure it is sustainable." On the question of how one should motivate the time spent to engage in these processes, Participant 7 replied: "Make it part of the business strategy and have structures in place so that it is viewed as an integral part of the mainstream business." This view clearly supports the embedded perspective of this study.

Overall the three processes were perceived as applicable and the mutual inclusivity of these processes was seen as crucial, as explained by Participant 7: "So, there is no base zero, it is all work in progress and that is good." This statement supports the theoretical statement that it should be on-going processes where one influences the other. The perceptions, however, pointed out that the communication process is also used to support the business's sustainability.

#### **7.2.4 Communication roles**

Different people in practice were identified who would have a certain role to fulfil within the three communication processes. This is confirmed by the revised theoretical statement from chapter 6:

#### **Theoretical statement 4b: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process, the reflective facilitator as the role within the rapport process and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the action process (see 6.2.4).

Regarding the communication roles, the perceptions of the practitioners to be discussed are on the reflective strategist, the reflective facilitator, and the reflective participant.

##### **7.2.4.1 Reflective strategist**

Operating on a strategic level, the reflective strategist was defined as follows:

*The **reflective strategist** is the most senior communication person in business responsible for CSR and CSR communication. This role reflects on and addresses the strategic business as well as societal issues within the purpose of sustainability (see 4.3.6).*

All the practitioners agreed on the role of the strategist based on their own positions as senior communication practitioners responsible for formulating the CSR and CSR communication strategy (directors) or managing the CSR and CSR communication strategy (managers). Only Participant 4 was not responsible for the CSR strategy, but merely for CSR communication. For him, this situation is problematic, which means that CSR communication is not integrated in the business as it should be; rather an “add-on with little strategic relevance” (also see 7.2.1). The role of the strategist is thus perceived as the most senior role responsible for CSR and CSR communication, as defined in the present study.

The reflective nature of this role was not mentioned prior to introducing the proposed CSR communication model. After introducing the model, the practitioners agreed on the importance of being reflective but also bemoaned the lack of such action. Participant 6 summarised the perceptions of “being reflective” as follows: “Yes, it is important to reflect, step back and reflect before going further ... we need to do that more.” Based on the information gathered from the strategic process (see 7.2.3) and the communication roles, it can be assumed that the reflective strategist is perceived to reflect mostly on and address the strategic issues leading to the business’s sustainability. This would be the strategist’s first priority, after which it could be aligned with societal issues in order to focus on the sustainability of society. Within this study

the role of the reflective strategist is however defined as reflecting on and pursuing the mutual inclusive purpose of sustainability.

#### **7.2.4.2 Reflective facilitator**

The reflective facilitator was redefined in chapter 6 as follows:

*The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication within the rapport process by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability (see 6.2.4).*

All the practitioners considered the role of facilitator as being the crucial one, linked to their perceptions of the rapport process's importance. This role was perceived to be fulfilled by diverse people in different institutions and within various contexts.

The role of facilitator varied from that of communication manager, a staff member (and not necessarily a communications person), an NGO or foundation, community organisation, or a consultant. The choice of facilitator usually depends on the group of stakeholders with whom the facilitation is to take place. The facilitator is perceived to have a sound understanding of the dynamics and culture of the group. Participant 10 explained this as "using people who know and live the culture". Participant 7 summarised this role as follows: "Identifying the right people who are plugged into society but also understand the business." By choosing to fulfil this role with an outside-person, the participants viewed it as equally important to select the individuals based on their access, knowledge, and understanding of the stakeholder group as well as the business as such. This view again supports the argument for mutual influence by different communication processes.

From the findings it is clear that the facilitator is viewed as someone who can mobilise parties to communicate and work towards creating trust-based relationships, mutual understanding, and a mutual intent. These outcomes are based on the practitioners' affiliation to the stakeholders group as well as their knowledge of business, as defined within this study. The practitioners did, however, acknowledge the fact that the role of the facilitator in the rapport process was "not well managed" as summarised by Participant 8. This confirms what was pointed out previously about this process (see 7.2.3). Therefore, it can be inferred that the participants perceived the role of the reflective facilitator as defined by the present study. However, this role is not always practiced as such, based on their perceptions of mutual understanding that mainly support reflection on business sustainability (see 7.2.3.2).

### **7.2.4.3 Reflective participant**

The reflective participant was also redefined in chapter 6 and will be evaluated according to the following definition:

*The **reflective participant** is the role of participation within the action process. This role constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the action process, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent (see 6.2.4).*

The participant role was also perceived to be fulfilled by various people, as was the case with that of the reflective facilitator. Certain practitioners viewed this role as a function of employees who are involved with initiatives “that are close to their hearts” (Participant 2). Such a function is based purely on employee voluntarism from a project perspective (i.e. voluntary participation in projects). Employees were also perceived as role-players within communities of which they are part. In other instances, the “facilitator is also the participant in the action process” (Participant 7). This proved to be the case where a community liaison, an NGO, or consultant, managed the initiative on behalf of the organisation.

As was the case with the action process, the role of the participant received the least feedback with limited reflection on participation by all practitioners. This role was perceived merely as participating in the action process as a representor of the organisation to oversee the business’s interests, and not reflecting on the participation of all parties. Such a condition corresponds with the overall focus on business sustainability within CSR communication (see 7.2.1.4). Beside the reasons given in 7.2.3, the reason no mention was made to participation may be that practitioners did not understand the construct of participation. This dilemma will be explored further when referring to the nature of communication (see 7.2.6).

The findings showed that all three roles were not practiced throughout the organisations as they should be. Nevertheless, the practitioners all agreed on the importance of the roles and acknowledged the negative impact that the absence of these roles could have on their business. It can thus be inferred that all three roles are acknowledged as important in the communication process and should ideally influence each other, although they are not necessarily practiced as such.

### **7.2.5 Outcome of communication**

The proposed CSR communication model suggests specific outcomes for communication to support the purpose of sustainability. These outcomes were explicated in the following theoretical statement:

### **Theoretical statement 5a: Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication is empowerment where both business and society are guided and strengthened through information, knowledge and an understanding of themselves and the other. This will help create a strategic advantage for the organisation and contribute to self-reliance for society (see 4.3.7).

The question relevant to this concept posed to the participants was: “What do you see as the outcome of CSR communication for your organisation?” In their response, the practitioners related the outcome of CSR communication, namely empowering business, to various constructs such as reputation, legitimacy, and social risk. The outcome, empowerment of society, was linked to the following constructs: sustainability, shared growth, shared value, empowerment, and change/transformation. These two mentioned outcomes are expounded in the subsequent subheadings.

#### **7.2.5.1 Empowerment of business**

Based on the feedback from the academic, the empowerment of business was redefined as follows:

***Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by becoming a learning organisation, gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change (see 6.2.5.1).*

The outcome of communication as empowering business was explained as follows: “to maintain our social licence to operate” (Participant 5); “be seen as a good corporate citizen” (Participant 7); “to build our reputation” (Participant 2); and “manage risk” (Participant 6). The two constructs thus mentioned the most was reputation and risk management.

The practitioners considered reputation building as one of the most important outcomes of CSR communication. From a project perspective, reputation was related to brand building by communicating CSR initiatives to various stakeholders as a means to “showcase what we are doing and thus building our company’s brand” (Participant 2); “to make them understand that we are a different kind of organisation” (Participant 6); “It helps the brand, it moves the brand and it



creates equity for the brand through making people believe that the organisation does some greater good” (Participant 9).

In this line of thought, the participants viewed communicating CSR to employees as vital for them to become “your brand ambassadors”, according to Participants 1 and 9. CSR communication is thus perceived as a “tool” to build the brand and enhance the reputation of the organisation. These outcomes do not correspond with the definition of empowering business, because it is viewed mainly as a one-way communication action to build the brand. According to these perspectives, however, the organisation is not empowered through communication. The reason is that the organisation gains no knowledge or information for a better understanding of business or society which can be used in the company’s enterprise strategy. It also suggests that these organisations, through CSR communication, attempts to avoid change, rather than utilising the information, knowledge, and understanding to effect corporate change.

On the other hand, from an embedded approach, practitioners perceived the outcome of communication as not a mere exercise that is brand driven and aimed to build reputation, but part of the company’s core business. Participant 6 explained: “It shouldn’t be a brand thing; it should be core to the DNA of the business.” This perception was confirmed by Participant 7 who remarked: “If you need to market it, it becomes unauthentic.” These participants viewed CSR communication as a process of creating value aimed at transformation and change for both business and society. Through this process, the organisation’s reputation is build but “in a non-chest-beating way” (Participant 9). Accordingly, Participant 10 summarised the focus on transformation and change:

“You are not just a brand. You should effect development changes within society and even policy to better people’s lives. That is who you are, that is your importance and your role in society. That should guide your communication.”

Participant 7 supported the building of an authentic reputation based on a development focus:

“Displaying the right approach towards change is important if you want to be seen as authentic, honest and having a clear reputation. Then you can start building your brand.”

In this regard, practitioners focused firstly on the importance of creating value in the sense of social as well as corporate change, and being part of the company’s core business. Secondly, organisations communicate about these changes as proof of their commitment, thereby building a reputation for being authentic.

These participants also mentioned the outcome of CSR communication for employees as “creating change agents” within business and society, instead of “brand ambassadors” from a project perspective. From an embedded perspective, these participants thus perceived the empowering of business more in accordance with the definition of the present study. The reason is that the focus is on change, which can only be created through knowledge, information, and an understanding of society; through such information the brand is built.

A further outcome that was mentioned was risk management. In the embedded approach, the outcome of communication was perceived as an important part of identifying and understanding risk. Participant 5 explained:

“Through stakeholder mapping as part of your strategic process, and engagement within the rapport process, you can identify stakeholder issues and therefore be attentive to potential social risks.”

This approach is in line with the definition of empowering business where information and knowledge are applied to understand society, thus, identify and address potential risks.

From a project perspective, risk management was linked purely to reputation: “It is about social risk as well ... if you say one thing but you do something else your reputation is at risk” (Participant 6), thus protecting business’s reputation but not necessarily identifying other potential risk.

No practitioner referred directly to the outcome of communication as the empowerment of business. However, some statements implied the use of information and knowledge to understand society. Only one participant mentioned information and knowledge directly as part of empowerment by stating: “I am empowered because it teaches me about human beings, about our country, about real lived experiences of people.” From this response, it can be inferred that although the practitioners did not directly refer to empowering business through information, knowledge and understanding, this outcome was implied. Thus, it is evident that from an embedded perspective, the participants perceived the empowerment of business as defined by the present study. However, CSR communication practiced from a project perspective did not lead to the empowerment of business.

#### **7.2.5.2 Empowering society**

The empowerment of society was defined as follows:

*Empowering society is seen as guiding and strengthening society through information, knowledge and an understanding to strive for societal sustainability and attain self-reliance, all which are conducive for social change (see 4.3.7).*

The practitioners also did not directly mention the outcome of communication as empowering society. This topic was touched on only briefly by certain participants with statements such as: “Make a sustainable difference that would lead to transformation and empowerment” (Participant 5). Others referred to an outcome that would empower society and business as “to create shared growth” (Participant 6); or “to create shared value” (Participant 10). References to the empowerment of society were also mostly made by participants whose companies follow an embedded CSR strategy. From these statements, it can be inferred that the practitioners did perceive the empowerment of society as defined by the present were the four who’s companies are empowered by following an embedded approach.

Certain practitioners linked this outcome to BBBEE as a form of legislation that companies must adhere to through their CSR initiatives. Conversely, others voiced their concern that CSR would be employed purely to satisfy BBBEE demands. Regarding BBBEE, several practitioners viewed skills development as “tangible empowerment” (Participant 3). From a stronger development perspective, participants perceived empowerment as a process moving towards ownership and accountability: “It is an ongoing process towards change” (Participant 8); “it is about empowering communities to take ownership” (Participant 5); “accountability goes hand in hand with the whole empowerment process” (Participant 2). Participant 7, arguing from an embedded perspective, suggested that BBBEE codes should be combined with the empowering of communities: “It is about empowering communities and taking into account what the BBBEE codes require ... when we see all of this as one, there is better focus.” Participant 6 supported this line of argument by confirming: “For us empowerment is also about how we involve small black business vendors in our supply chain.”

After being presented with the proposed model, all the practitioners agreed on empowerment, whether it is project- based, driven by legislature, or reached through an embedded business approach. This view is in accordance with the theory on empowerment, which argues that people are empowered through skills development but also by gaining the ability to develop themselves to become self-reliant (see 3.4.2.3).

Therefore, although only a few practitioners originally perceived empowerment as the outcome of CSR communication, their perceptions were in line with the constructs used for business as well as society in this study. This corresponding view was evident in responses such as: “creating shared value with a shared vision – that is an empowered state” (Participant 5) and “If you empower society, you empower yourself.” (Participant 2). This perception was also

reaffirmed after discussing the proposed model, where all the participants concurred that empowerment should be the outcome of CSR communication. So although the participants agreed with empowerment of both business and society, it could be assumed that they have a limited understanding of what the empowerment of society entails. This is evident in their assumptions that shared value equals empowerment. Although some of the participants perceived shared value as the outcome of communication, the researcher decided not to include it as a construct within the proposed model. The reason being that shared value was criticised as insufficient in empowering society towards self-reliance because it is mostly viewed as an action to achieve business objectives (see 3.2). Therefore, shared value do not contribute to the mutual purpose of sustainability.

## 7.2.6 Nature of communication

Different means of communication should be used in the various communication processes to reach the outcome of empowerment. This requirement was outlined in the following definition:

### **Theoretical statement 6a: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on the context (see 4.3.8).

Perceptions on the nature of communication are discussed below in terms of the constructs of informing, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity.

### **7.2.6.1 Informing**

The first construct to explain the nature of communication was defined as below:

***Informing** entails horizontal, two-way communication with the sharing of information and knowledge in order to advise, educate, or enlighten participants and other stakeholders, thereby empowering both business and society (see 3.4.8).*

The majority of practitioners, especially those from a project perspective, viewed the original meaning for the nature of CSR communication as providing information through one-way communication to different stakeholders such as employees, customers, and communities about the CSR initiatives. This takes place through various channels such as the Internet,

Intranet, newsletters or periodicals as well as community media. In this regard, participants perceived social media and integrated reporting as the most prominent channels of communication. The reason why information is shared was perceived as mostly to enlighten the stakeholders, as Participant 7 clarified: “The communities that are benefitting needs to be reminded of what we do.”

A notable trend in information sharing was employing stories or narratives. The practitioners referred to their use of stories or narratives to communicate: “We do prosper stories of someone whose life has been impacted based on something that the company did for them” (Participant 6). The practitioners agreed that they use storytelling internally to motivate and inspire their employees and externally to create awareness of their impact on communities. A number of organisations recount the stories on behalf of the beneficiaries, whilst others prefer to let the beneficiaries speak for themselves:

“You need to involve the people you are communicating about ... let them who benefitted from the initiative tell their story ... this is how we communicate the impact that we have in communities” (Participant 10).

From a project perspective, it can be inferred that the sharing of information is viewed as mainly to enlighten different stakeholders through one-way communication, thus not to give advice or educate through two-way horizontal communication as defined in the present study. Such communication may contribute to the sustainability of business. However, this does not occur, seeing that limited learning or change is taking place within the business. This process also fails to address the empowering of society. From an embedded perspective, sharing of information is perceived as a two-way horizontal communication process through which business can become a learning organisation (see 7.2.5) to empower both itself and society. Nevertheless, it is argued in this study that informing as defined above, can help empower both business and society. Therefore, this definition is retained as such.

#### **7.2.6.2 Participation**

Participation as the second construct was defined as follows:

**Participation** is defined as an on-going process where the parties involved have voluntary but equal opportunity to participate fully and influence the communication processes seeking to empower both business and society (see 4.3.8).

No practitioners mentioned participation originally when asked about the nature of communication. They only provided perceptions about participation after asked directly about it. Therefore, it can be assumed that practitioners typically do not consider participation as part of

the nature of CSR communication. This may be the reason for their lack of responses about the notion of participation within the action process (see 7.2.3.3).

When asked directly about participation, all the practitioners agreed on its importance, as stated by Participant 10: "It is important and it is necessary because you can't do development without involving the subject." Participant 10 noted the danger when participation does not occur: "You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you are imposing your ideas on people, your programme will fail." Participant 4 agreed by stating: "You can't just tell them what to do because then you won't get their buy-in or support and your project will not succeed ... you need full participation towards a mutual goal." Participation was also viewed as "joint decision-making to get total buy-in towards mutual understanding and mutual accountability" (Participant 2).

The responses above indicate that the practitioners, after being prompted on this matter, did consider participation as important. However, their responses indicated a lack of understanding of participation as evident in statements as the one above that mentions "joint-decision making" as well as "buy-in" as participation. It can thus be assumed that, for them, participation takes place on the organisation's terms. Such a view excludes voluntary and equal participation being part of the various communication processes, as defined by this study. It is argued that for actual empowerment, participation should occur as defined in the present study (see 4.3.8). Therefore, the definition above will be retained.

### **7.2.6.3 Dialogue**

The third construct namely dialogue, was defined as below:

*Dialogue is a continuous process of voluntary yet equal opportunity to participate fully in open discourse on any topic without predetermined objectives, rather as equal interlocutors within an environment of trust and respect (see 4.3.8).*

The practitioners at first perceived dialogue as "face to face conversations" (Participant 6) that is "absolutely necessary" (Participant 8); and "critical because without it there will be no success in any programmes" (Participant 10). In this regard, they did agree on the importance of dialogue within the nature of communication. There was also an overall agreement that organisations employ dialogue for different reasons. These may be to persuade, negotiate, establish collaboration, add to the context, set mutual goals and objectives, and gain buy-in and commitment. According to these responses, dialogue is viewed as an action by the organisation to accomplish certain objectives, but not as a voluntary and on-going process, as defined in this study. It is also evident that practitioners perceived dialogue as an action on the organisation's

terms (as in the case of participation). In this sense, dialogue is not considered as a process in which the role-players have equal opportunity to participate in open discourse on any topic without pre-established objectives.

By using words such as “buy in”, it is evident that in the dialogical process, the different participants are not considered throughout as equal interlocutors. The reason is that business seeks “buy-in” on matters it has already decided on, thus pre-established objectives. Certain practitioners did, however, acknowledge that their “dialogical processes could be better utilised” (Participant 3), whereas others admitted to “only recently changing our systems towards a more dialogue-based approach by constant asking and listening” (Participant 7). It can thus be argued that dialogue is defined mainly in contrast to the definition in the present study. However, there are indications that business is realising the importance of a more open dialogical process, as defined by this study. Therefore, the definition of dialogue as proposed will be retained as such.

#### **7.2.6.4 Empowerment**

The fourth construct to explain the nature of communication was defined as below:

***Empowerment** within the nature of communication is defined as a conscious and continuous process of addressing power differences between the different participants within the communication processes (see 4.3.8).*

Participant 7 explained his understanding of empowerment typifying the nature of communication where organisations use their power to address issues, relevant to the community, through CSR initiatives, while the community experiences that, “the company is using its power to look after all of us”. Such a perception contrasts with the definition of empowerment in the present study. The reason is that power differences are not eliminated but rather presented as motivation why the organisation should have the power and how this condition would benefit society. Other practitioners accepted the equalisation of power as a given, as is attested by Participant 2: “Power doesn’t need to be an issue. By communicating we recognise we need each other to reach a mutual goal, so there is the equal power.” Participant 3 supported this argument: “If we have mutual understanding towards a mutual goal we have mutual power.”

From the responses above, it can be inferred that practitioners also did not perceive empowerment as it is defined by this study. The reason is that organisations did not specifically mention this notion within the communication processes. It is rather accepted as a given, without verifying this assumption with society. Business may thus not view equal power as an

issue but society may perceive it as such. Participant 5 disagreed with such statements from the other practitioners. He pointed out: "Equal power for all is unrealistic ... giving equal power to all will influence the ability to reach consensus ... you need power structures to govern the projects, otherwise it turns messy." This statement is also in contrast with the definition of empowerment in the present study. Furthermore, it reflects the overall perception of business about using CSR communication to ensure business sustainability by emphasising consensus and the management of the projects based on company terms. The present study maintains that to empower both business and society, the concept of empowerment should be viewed consciously as the nature of communication, in the sense that it is defined in the present study. Therefore, the definition of empowerment above is retained.

#### **7.2.6.5 Cultural diversity**

The last construct to explain the nature of communication was redefined in chapter 6 as follows:

***Cultural diversity** is a sensitivity towards an understanding of the ways, means, values, and norms of different groups and individuals within the communication processes by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths (see 6.2.6.5).*

All the practitioners felt strongly about the importance of communicating in a culturally sensitive manner, to such an extent that they considered this as a "non-negotiable" (Participant 9); and "critical in every communication context" (Participant 4); but also "very complex" (Participant 10). According to Participant 8, being culturally sensitive means being attuned to the culture of the community that receives the initiatives. This was supported by Participant 2 who emphasised that culture plays a major role in people's view and perceptions. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact that culture may have on projects. He also highlighted the complexity and challenges of culture: "Don't try to change culture, accept the culture and find a way to work with it not against it."

The perceptions above on culture correspond with the present study's definition of cultural diversity as having a sensitivity to and an understanding of differences and working with the differences. These perceptions, however, only focused on the different cultures in the communities and did not incorporate *business culture* as it was defined in this study; nor did they consider utilising culture diversity within CSR initiatives. The argument is maintained that to empower both business and society, culture should be considered as it is defined within the present study. Thus, the definition above is retained.

All the practitioners thus agreed on the aspects comprising the nature of communication, namely informing, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity. They also



understood that this process should take place within an environment of trust and respect, as proposed in Theoretical statement 6.

The nature of communication was originally perceived to be applied mostly to the advantage of business sustainability. After a discussion of the proposed model, the practitioners acknowledged that the nature of communication should contribute to the empowerment of both business and society. However, the practical feasibility of it was questioned. The practitioners concurred that the context in which the communication takes place is an important aspect that would determine the nature of the communication (see 4.3.8). It could thus be assumed that the nature of communication as defined in this study is a normative definition with the context determining the practice.

Some practitioners suggested that “internal and external communication channels” should be added to the proposed model to indicate the avenues through which the nature of communication will take place. Therefore, Theoretical statement 6a will be revised to read as follows:

**Theoretical statement 6b: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity that **take place through various internal and external communication channels**, depending on the context.

The practitioners’ perceptions of the different constructs do, however, indicate that the nature of communication is practiced mostly to empower the organisations to attain its business objectives. This was evident from the way the practitioners defined the different constructs which comprise the nature of communication. The aim is thus not on the empowerment of both business and society, as defined in this study. Seeing that the present study focused on empowerment to reach sustainability, the argument remains that the nature of communication should also support this focus.

### **7.2.7 CSR communication**

CSR communication, which comprises the essence of the proposed model, was defined as follows:

*CSR communication is an integrated and on-going process of communication that is embedded in the enterprise strategy, initiated on a strategic level, and evolves where all parties concerned participate continually in the various communication processes, which should help empower both business and society to attain sustainability (see 4.5)*

All the practitioners perceived CSR communication as a strategic function that should deal with reputation and the risk within business sustainability. Those who viewed the CSR strategy from a project perspective, perceived it as action taking place to “tell people what we do” (Participant 2). This was linked to the marketing strategy focusing on the sustainability of the business

(see 7.2.3).

From a stronger embedded approach, CSR communication was viewed as continuous engagement, as also defined in this study. Such a view is highlighted by Participant 7 who emphasised: “CSR communication should not be an add-on or a once-off ... it should be an integral part of everything that you do.” The overall view also focused on the outcome of CSR communication in terms of reputation and risk management (see 7.2.5), thus mainly on the business’s sustainability. Therefore, although the practitioners viewed the sustainability of both business and society as relevant to CSR, their perception of CSR communication support mainly business’s sustainability. This difference in perceptions about CSR and CSR communication was also noted by the academic participants (see 6.2.7). Thus, even though CSR communication is viewed as an on-going process of engagement, it does not embody the CSR vision due to its limited focus only on the business’s sustainability.

After discussing the proposed CSR communication model, the practitioners did agree that CSR communication should contribute to the sustainability of both business and society. This broadened their view of CSR communication, as was the case with the academics (see 6.2.7).

### **7.3 GENERAL REMARKS REGARDING THE PROPOSED CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL**

The preceding discussion focused on the individual theoretical statements and constructs of the proposed CSR communication model. After evaluating the CSR communication model in this manner, the practitioners gave feedback on their overall perceptions of the model. Some of the previously discussed constructs were highlighted again with specific reference being made about the overall relevance of the model in practice.

They perceived the proposed CSR communication model in an extremely positive sense. All participants agreed that this model is workable and necessary in their different organisations.

Those practitioners from international organisations even found this model applicable throughout their organisation, which includes their European and American subsidiaries.

Listed below are responses demonstrating the overall perceptions on the proposed model:

- “A good approach that illustrates how CSR communication should be done” – Participant 1.
- “This makes perfect sense” – Participant 2.
- “This model illustrates how you create a state of shared vision and a state of shared vision is an empowered state” – Participant 5.
- “Our company strives to practice CSR as reflected in this model and we have seen the positive results” – Participant 7.
- “This is absolutely workable. It is summarising everything in an ideal situation but leaving space for where you may encounter difficulties” – Participant 8.
- “Beautiful! This is creative, but workable.” – Participant 10.

All the participants thus perceived this model to be valuable to business, society and especially, the communication function. Participant 1 felt that the model can be utilised to illustrate how CSR communication should be conducted and how all the different aspects interlink. Participant 9 supported this argument and added: “The combination of these things will make people think differently.” Participant 6 maintained that, when such a model is implemented, “one would see less project-specific initiatives and more sustainable processes.” Participant 6 reasoned that the proposed model will contribute to “a solid business model that’s given benefit to all”. Participant 7 argued that communication practitioners who apply this model will be able to make a larger impact on the organisation and prove their value: “Communication practitioners will be able to show their value by not only being busy but being busy with a purpose.” Participant 4 summarised this implementation by asserting: “If communication practitioners apply this model, we will see better CSR managers.”

Overall the practitioners agreed that CSR communication should be initiated on a strategic level, embedded in the enterprise strategy, as an evolving process of on-going communication. The participants also reached consensus on the focus of sustainability as a means of empowerment. However, again this entailed mainly the sustainability of the business.

The feedback and input from the practitioners on the proposed model was applied to conceptualise a new graphic representation of the model as illustrated in the diagram below (Fig 7.1).

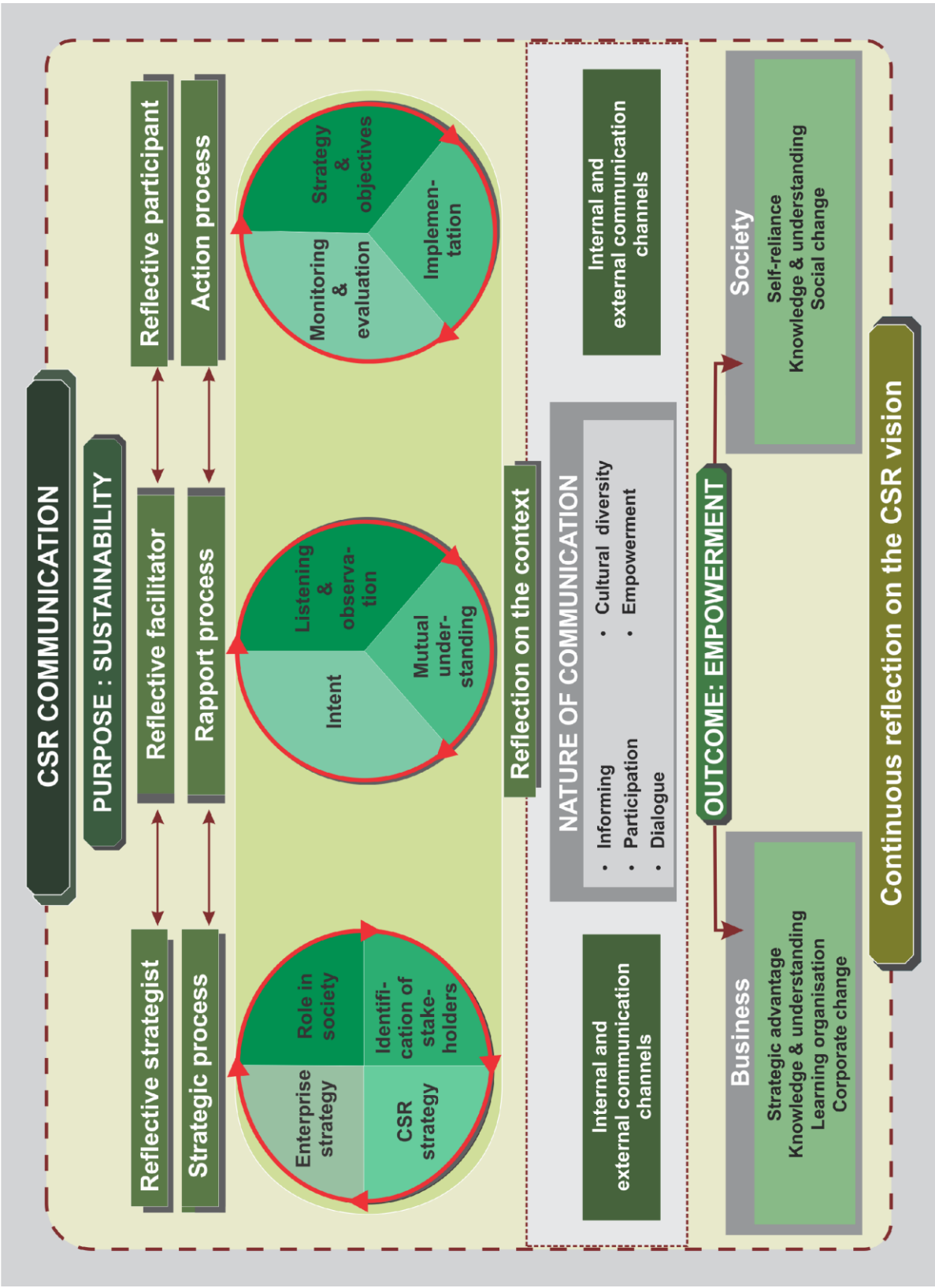


Figure 7.1: The proposed CSR communication model (b)

## 7.4 CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to answer the following specific research question:

*Which perceptions do senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model (see 1.4.2.5)?*

Overall the findings did show that the participants perceived the proposed model to be workable and necessary in practice. Based on their perceptions of the specific concepts and constructs that comprise this model, it can, however, be argued that they were stronger inclined towards the sustainability of business. Their views do not necessarily reflect the integrated nature of CSR communication, as defined by this study.

The practitioners understood sustainability in terms of two perspectives. Firstly, a project perspective where mostly business's sustainability is attained through CSR projects. From this perspective, the process of CSR communication holds limited empowerment for business or society. Secondly, the embedded perspective views CSR as integral to the enterprise strategy, thus part of the various business processes. From the embedded perspective, the focus was also mostly on the sustainability of business even though the sustainability of society was mentioned. Based on the embedded perspective, participants perceived most organisations as being empowered through learning, which in turn, empowers society.

A number of practitioners, as was the case with the academics, voiced reservations on the term "CSR". The concept was considered as outdated and irrelevant in current practice. The practitioners did perceive sustainability as the purpose of the concepts that describe CSR, as employed in the present study.

Thus, the findings indicated agreement on the proposed CSR communication model in general. Based on the feedback and input of the practitioners, certain adjustments made the model practically more feasible, which added value to its design. The following adjustments were made:

- The identification of stakeholders was once again refined to specify marginalised groups as those resorting within the organisations geographical footprint (see 7.2.2).
- Regarding the nature of communication, internal and external channels were added to specify the avenues the nature of communication would follow (7.2.6).

In most instances where the practitioners' perceptions differed from the defined constructs and the theoretical statements, it was decided not to adjust the statements or definitions. The motivation is that their perceptions did not keep to the focus of the proposed model, namely empowerment towards sustainability.

The proposed Integrated CSR communication model from chapter 4 was adapted to the CSR communication model in chapter 6, based on the feedback of the practitioners. In chapter 7 the proposed CSR communication model was again adapted through the feedback from practitioners. The name however remained as the "CSR communication model".

In the following chapter (chapter 8), the perceptions, feedback, and input from both the academics and practitioners will be synthesised to present a final CSR communication model, aimed at answering the general research question. Within this final model the name "CSR communication" will be revisited based on the perceptions of the academics and practitioners that the term "CSR" is defunct.

## CHAPTER 8:

### CSR COMMUNICATION MODEL AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

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#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 of the present study discussed the current assumptions of CSR communication in research and practice as well as its theoretical grounding. Based on the current viewpoints of CSR communication and its complex nature, the following were formulated: a problem statement, general research question as well as specific research questions and aims. These research questions and aims guided the present study (see 1.4 & 1.5).

The literature review was conducted in chapters 2 and 3, to identify and evaluate principles that could be utilised to conceptualise CSR communication as contributing to the dual purpose of CSR. Chapter 2 identified and evaluated principles from a corporate communication perspective to answer Research question 1.4.2.1. Research question 1.4.2.2 was answered in chapter 3 by identifying and evaluating principles from a development communication perspective. Based on these principles, the proposed Integrated CSR communication model was conceptualised and presented in chapter 4 as answer to Research question 1.4.2.3. This model was conceptualised to address the dual purpose in an integrated and mutually inclusive manner by focusing on empowering both business and society to attain the mutual purpose of sustainability. Thereafter, the aim was to refine this proposed model according to feedback gathered through semi-structured interviews with academics and communication practitioners.

Chapter 5 explained the empirical part of the present study by indicating how the empirical questions 1.4.2.4 & 1.4.2.5 have been answered. Chapter 6 discussed the findings of the research conducted in the academic context, to answer Research question 1.4.2.4. Based on the feedback, certain alterations were made to the proposed model to enhance its theoretical soundness. Chapter 7 entailed a discussion on the findings from the semi-structured interviews with practitioners, thus answering Research question 1.4.2.5. The proposed model was again refined based on the feedback from practice in order to make it more relevant to the work environment.

In this chapter all the specific research questions are answered firstly, which give direction for answering the general research question for the present study:

*What concepts and constructs should a CSR communication model integrate that could help create a strategic advantage for business as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society in a mutually inclusive manner?*

By addressing this question, the proposed CSR communication model is discussed based on information from the literature study as well as the empirical study. This chapter concludes with a final adaption of the model, based on overall findings. General conclusions will be drawn, limitations of the study highlighted, and recommendations made for future research.

## **8.2 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

In chapter 1 the current assumptions of CSR communication were discussed. This discussion pointed to the fact that, although CSR communication should contribute to the dual purpose of CSR, the focus in practice and research is mainly to gain a strategic advantage for the organisation (corporate communication) and not necessarily contributing to sustainable development of society as well (development communication). The goal in this study was thus to conceptualise a CSR communication model that would represent the dual purpose in a mutually inclusive manner.

### **8.2.1 CSR communication: A corporate communication perspective**

The first aim of the study was to answer the first research question (1.4.2.1): *Which principles of corporate communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?* To answer this question, the current corporate communication literature relevant to CSR communication was studied. According to the main trends in this literature, CSR communication was defined as follows:

***CSR communication from a corporate communication perspective*** is communication employed largely to benefit business by creating a strategic advantage for the organisation through CSR communication. Such communication should promote the organisation's reputation to create legitimacy and a licence to operate. It should also reduce risk by managing positive long-term relationships whilst considering their impact on society and the environment, which will help empower the business to seek sustainability (see 2.4).

This definition was formulated based on the identification and evaluation of different principles captured from the theoretical fields of public relations and marketing communication. The following were examined as the relevant theories for CSR communication within the cybernetic tradition: stakeholder theory, strategic communication management, shared-value communication, the reflective paradigm, and the excellence theory (2.3.1 & 2.3.3). A CSR communication approach was formulated based on the following key constructs: the purpose of the organisation (2.4.1), the CSR strategy (2.4.2), the identification of stakeholders (2.4.3), the communication processes (see 2.4.4), the communication roles (2.4.5), the outcome of communication (2.4.6), and the nature of communication (2.4.7).



### **8.2.1.1 Purpose**

Purpose is defined as the organisation's reason for existence and should reflect the triple context (people, planet, profit, see 1.1). In the process of corporate communication, a company's reason for existence is based mostly on *profit* which helps ensure the financial sustainability of the organisation.

### **8.2.1.2 CSR strategy**

The CSR strategy that should be guided by the purpose of the organisation, is defined in corporate communication as the *management of societal relationships to the advantage of the organisation*. It was argued further that the CSR strategy should be embedded within the enterprise strategy to support the CSR vision. The CSR strategy should also be driven by the communication function because of the latter's focus on relationships.

### **8.2.1.3 Identification of stakeholders**

Stakeholders are specified as *primary stakeholders* within a broader societal view, referring to those that may impact on, or be affected by the organisation.

### **8.2.1.4 Communication processes**

Communication processes are a series of communicative actions aiming to achieve certain outcomes. These processes occur within the organisation as well as between the organisation and the stakeholders.

- The *strategic process* entails the formulation of the CSR and CSR communication strategy, which are embedded within the enterprise strategy.
- Another series of communicative actions occur within *the implementation process* where communication is employed to implement the strategies.
- The process that establishes mutual understanding is referred to as a *negotiation process*, which facilitates the negotiations and dialogue between the organisation and its multiple stakeholders.

The aim of the communication processes is the creation of mutual understanding. *Mutual understanding* can be defined as reaching an understanding about mutual issues. This includes agreement about the way the organisation incorporates those issues in its CSR strategy seeking to achieve the business objectives.

### **8.2.1.5 Communication roles**

The present study identified communication roles as those assigned to different people responsible for CSR communication in the various processes.

- The *reflective strategist* was identified as the role responsible for the process dealing with the strategic CSR issues of the organisation but also development issues from a wider perspective, namely the role of the organisation in society.
- The *facilitator* was perceived as having the responsibility to create an environment in which dialogue and negotiations can take place to reach mutual understanding.
- The role of the *participant* was defined as one where the organisation participates in the negotiation processes as a participant, seeking mutual understanding about negotiated outcomes.
- The technical role of communication responsible for the different communication actions was identified as that of the *implementer*.

### **8.2.1.6 Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication was identified as that which is strived for as a result, consequence, or effect of engaging in communication. Within a CSR approach from a corporate communication perspective, most outcomes were identified mainly as seeking the advantage of the organisation. This includes the following: building an organisation's *reputation* and *image*, *issues management* as well as gaining *legitimacy* and a *licence to operate*. It was, however, also found that corporate communication treats certain outcomes of communication as benefitting both business and society, in particular creating *mutual understanding* (also see 8.2.1.4). This is accomplished by building mutually beneficial relationships that focus on shared responsibilities and the creation of shared value.

### **8.2.1.7 Nature of communication**

The nature of communication implies that in the various processes, communication takes place in different ways to accomplish certain goals. The following were identified as the constructs about the nature of communication, viewed from a corporate communication perspective:

- *Information dissemination* – sharing of knowledge, information or facts, given the context in which this is required or perceived as a requirement. This may follow a two-way process where feedback is sought and given, or a one-way process where feedback is seemingly unnecessary.

- *Persuasion* – a deliberate act of influencing someone’s thoughts or actions. This is based on the sharing of knowledge, information, facts, and perceptions through arguments and reasoning.
- *Negotiation* – each party in the communication process enjoys equal capacity of power and opportunity to change or effect the other party’s actions, behaviour, perceptions, attitude, and opinions through dialogue.
- *Dialogue* – a deliberate, open and transparent process of equal participation through honest and fair negotiation, which considers potential power dynamics aimed at mutual understanding. The dialogue is guided by preconceived messages or topics and takes place on the organisation’s terms.
- *Participation* – various stakeholders engaged in dialogue with the organisation on the latter’s terms seeking consensus and encouraging collaboration.
- *Empowerment* – expanding power between the organisation and its stakeholders through a process of dialogue on the organisation’s terms.
- *Cultural sensitivity* – understanding culture in order to respect the stakeholder’s customs and its associated worldviews and values in the pursuit of mutual understanding.

Based on the above-mentioned principles, a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective was formulated as providing a strategic advantage for the business enterprise.

### **8.2.2 CSR communication: A development communication perspective**

After CSR communication was explored from a corporate communication perspective in chapter 2, the focus shifted in chapter 3 to identifying and evaluating principles from a development communication perspective that can inform CSR communication as contributing to the sustainable development of society. Thereby Research question 1.4.2.2 was answered: *Which principles of development communication should be utilised to inform an integrated CSR communication model, according to literature?*

Chapter 3 investigated and discussed the theory informing communication within the CSR context from a development communication perspective which should contribute to society’s sustainable development. This included the critical theory as the meta-theoretical tradition, participatory approach and Habermas’s communicative action theory (see 3.3). From this

theoretical basis, CSR communication from a development communication perspective was defined as follows:

***CSR communication from a development communication perspective entails continual communication employed to benefit mainly the surrounding society by empowering beneficiaries, through participation in dialogical discourse, to become self-reliant. This is done by formulating a CSR strategy which should contribute to sustainable development relevant to local contexts. This means considering the local community's world views, values, culture, and realities, in order to form long-term and trust-based relationships geared towards the transformation of society (see 3.4).***

This definition was based on the identification of different principles of CSR communication from a development communication perspective. This was done according to the same concepts utilised in the development of a CSR communication approach from a corporate communication perspective, namely: purpose (3.4.1), CSR strategy (3.4.2), identification of stakeholders (3.4.3), communication processes (3.4.4), communication roles (3.4.5), outcome of communication (3.4.6), and nature of communication (3.4.7). These concepts are expounded below.

#### **8.2.2.1 Purpose**

It was found that the triple context should guide an organisation's purpose as its reason for existence (see 1.1). *People* are identified as the main purpose for development communication. This entails the sole focus on the people within society who should be empowered through the CSR strategy to become self-reliant.

#### **8.2.2.2 CSR strategy**

According to the critical tradition, the CSR strategy in should focus on the *transformation of society* by addressing the social differences, conflicting interests, imbalance in power, and inequality in society. This is accomplished by empowering society towards sustainable development.

#### **8.2.2.3 Identification of stakeholders**

Stakeholders are identified in the critical theory as *marginalised groups* such as *communities* whose existence should be acknowledged and whose rights and interests should be catered for through the CSR strategy. *Participants* are also identified as *beneficiaries* with voluntary and equal opportunity to participate in the various communication processes as part of development projects.

#### **8.2.2.4 Communication processes**

Communication involving different people within a development context can be differentiated into particular processes. It entails a *participatory process*, which is on-going and voluntary and in which all parties of interest can partake. Within the participatory process the *communicative process* is also identified as on-going dialogue that seeks mutual understanding, consensus and collaboration. The aim of the communication processes is the creation of *mutual understanding*. The latter can be defined as an on-going dialogical process that strives to establish shared meaning about different realities. This is done to serve a common interest by co-creating new meaning.

#### **8.2.2.5 Communication roles**

The different communication roles applicable from a development communication perspective are viewed as those people who participate in the communication processes. The *facilitator* was identified as the person who guides other participants in the communication process seeking a mutual understanding of a shared vision. The *participant* was identified as any individual who participates in the various levels of the communication processes.

#### **8.2.2.6 Outcome of communication**

It was found that the overall intention of from a development communication perspective is to avoid pre-established objectives. Nevertheless, certain outcomes of communication are strived for, namely as a result, consequence, or effect of engaging in such interaction. The primary outcome was found to be the creation of *mutual understanding* (also see 8.2.2.4). Such understanding may result in resolving conflict, reaching consensus, and promoting cooperation. However, in some instances this may also involve an understanding that the conflict will not be resolved, consensus cannot be reached and cooperation is unattainable, thus terminating the relationship. *Empowerment* is another construct that was identified as an outcome of communication. This entails that through participation in the communication processes, beneficiaries should be empowered towards self-reliance.

#### **8.2.2.7 Nature of communication**

The way in which the communication takes places in an environment of trust and respect, refers to the nature of communication. This nature consists of the following: dissemination of information, participation, dialogue, cultural diversity and empowerment, which are explicated below:

- *Dissemination of information* – equal distribution of information to help empower people at grassroots level through learning, enabling them to participate in development projects.
- *Participation* – active and voluntary engagement and mobilisation of the relevant stakeholders throughout the communication processes, affording them equal power, thus equal influence on the process.
- *Dialogue* – continuous, open and reflective horizontal discourse that empower participants to reflect critically on their own realities, understand those of others, and find solutions to deal with those realities through mutual understanding.
- *Cultural diversity* – parties must be sensitive for the world views, values, indigenous knowledge, traditions, customs, beliefs and symbols of each culture within a specific community. These aspects should be considered and employed in development initiatives, thereby emphasising the uniqueness of each community and its right to cultural freedom.
- *Empowerment* – people participate through dialogical processes where they have access to information and where power differences are dealt with, enabling beneficiaries to influence their own circumstances.

A CSR communication approach from a development communication perspective was thus formulated in terms of the above-mentioned principles, with its aim to contribute to the sustainable development of society. It should be noted that empowerment within this perspective is viewed as a construct linked to both the nature and the outcome of communication (also see 8.2.2.6).

### **8.2.3 The proposed Integrated CSR communication model conceptualised**

CSR communication examined from both a corporate and development communication perspective, were viewed as conflicting approaches due to their singular focus on different purposes. The two approaches did show similarities as well, but these aspects were perceived to be defined according to either a business, or societal perspective. Thus, to formulate a mutually inclusive CSR communication model, it was argued that the dual purpose of CSR and CSR communication should be re-evaluated. The present study identified sustainability to be the mutual purpose that guides the proposed Integrated CSR communication model. Within the mutual purpose of sustainability there should be equal reflection on the sustainability of both business and society. This should be done because business can't operate in a sustainable manner within an unsustainable society.

The proposed Integrated CSR communication model was conceptualised in chapter 4 based on the principles that informed the concepts and constructs of the two CSR communication approaches as identified from a corporate and development communication perspective (see Table 4.1). This entailed an integrated model in which these principles supplement each other to follow the purpose of sustainability for both business and society. This was done to answer Research question 1.4.2.3: *How can an integrated CSR communication model be conceptualised that incorporates principles from a corporate and development communication perspective?*

CSR communication was defined originally in chapter 4 as *an integrated process of communication that should reflect the mutual purpose of sustainability* (see 4.3). Guided by this definition, the proposed Integrated CSR communication model was conceptualised according to several theoretical statements on which the definitions of particular constructs were based. These statements are revisited and discussed below.

### **8.2.3.1 CSR vision**

It was argued that an applicable vision should direct the CSR strategy to attain the purpose of sustainability.

#### **Theoretical statement 1a: CSR vision**

The CSR vision is the aspiration of an organisation to attain a sustainable future for the company as well as the society in which it operates. This vision should reflect the purpose of sustainability that guides the CSR strategy for a mutually inclusive and equal commitment to the triple context as embodied in CSR communication (see 4.3.3).

Sustainability was identified as the mutual purpose of CSR as described by its vision. Therefore, it was important to define the concept of sustainability as well:

**Sustainability** is the continual long-term process involving the maintenance, endurance, and existence of business, society, and the environment (i.e. triple context) to seek a sustainable future for the organisation as well as the society in which it operates (see 4.3.1).

Striving for sustainability as its purpose, the **CSR strategy** is guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability and embedded in the enterprise strategy. The CSR strategy is driven by the communication function, focusing on building relationships between business and society. Through continual engagement with society, issues that are relevant to the sustainability of both

*business and society are identified and addressed in the CSR strategy.* This strategy should thus reflect the CSR vision guided by the mutual purpose of the organisation. In this regard, CSR should be embedded within the company's enterprise strategy and managed by the communication function. This process occurs through CSR communication based on the relationship between business and its surrounding society (see 4.3.2).

It was argued further that the communication function should drive the CSR strategy by establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders that seek mutual sustainability.

### **8.2.3.2 Identification of stakeholders**

As was explained above, the communication function should drive the CSR strategy. Therefore, the next step was to identify the stakeholders to be included in the CSR strategy and with whom the organisation should build relationships. This was done in terms of the following theoretical statement:

#### **Theoretical statement 2a: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society (4.3.4).

It was thus found that marginalised groups should form part of the primary stakeholders of the organisation. In this regard, **primary stakeholders** are those who directly and indirectly influence the organisation's sustainability, or are affected by the organisation's pursuit for sustainability. They include marginalised groups in society to whom the organisations perceive a responsibility beyond profit-making and striving for societal sustainability. These stakeholders are identified as those in society to whom the organisation has a responsibility beyond profit making but working together towards mutual sustainability (see 4.3.4).

### **8.2.3.3 Communication processes**

Different communication processes were identified through which the organisation should engage with its stakeholders. This form of communication was explicated in the following theoretical statement:



**Theoretical statement 3a: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic and engagement level with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society (see 4.3.5).

Firstly, the **strategic process** takes place on a strategic level to formulate CSR strategy, guided by the purpose of sustainability and embedded within the enterprise strategy. This strategy is based on reflection about the organisation's role in and responsibility towards society as well as the identification of stakeholders with whom the engagement will take place through CSR communication (see 4.3.5).

Secondly, the engagement process was identified. The **engagement process** specifies the participation of all parties in creating mutual understanding about societal and business issues and establishing a mutual intent in resolving these issues. It also entails the participation of the relevant parties in formulating strategy and objectives to address the mutual intent as well as help implement and evaluate the strategy (see 4.3.5).

Mutual understanding is considered as crucial for the engagement strategy. In light of the varying definitions for mutual understanding within corporate and development communication, it was decided to clarify the term to include it in the Integrated CSR communication approach. Thus, **mutual understanding** was defined as *creating an understanding about societal as well as business issues and about the expectations of both business and society in addressing those issues towards sustainability* (see 4.3.5).

**8.2.3.4 Communication roles**

It was argued that different roles must be identified that would play a part in the various communication processes. These roles were outlined in the following theoretical statement:

**Theoretical statement 4a: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process and the reflective facilitator and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the engagement process (see 3.4.6).

The role guiding the strategic process was identified as the reflective strategist. *The **reflective strategist** is the most senior communication person in business responsible for CSR and CSR communication. This role reflects on and addresses the strategic business as well as societal issues within the purpose of sustainability (see 4.3.6).*

Regarding the strategic as well as engagement processes, the *reflective facilitator* was identified. *The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability (see 4.3.6).*

The *reflective participant* was identified as the role of participation within the engagement process. *This role constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the process, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent (see 4.3.6).*

#### **8.2.3.5 Outcome of communication**

Empowerment was identified as the outcome of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model in support of the mutual purpose of sustainability. Since empowerment is mostly addressed within development communication with the focus mainly on empowering society, literature was consulted to motivate the empowerment of both business and society. Following this consultation, the outcome of communication was explicated in the following theoretical statement:

##### **Theoretical statement 5a: Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication is empowerment where both business and society are guided and strengthened through information, knowledge and an understanding of themselves and the other. This will help create a strategic advantage for the organisation and contribute to self-reliance for society (see 4.3.7).

The study thus distinguished the empowerment of society from that of business.

***Empowering society** is seen as guiding and strengthening society through information, knowledge and an understanding to strive for societal sustainability and attain self-reliance, all which are conducive for social change (see 4.3.7).*

***Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should*

*be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change (see 4.3.7).*

#### **8.2.3.6 Nature of communication**

It was proposed that the Integrated CSR communication model focuses on empowering both business and society to seek sustainability. Therefore, the nature of communication should also contribute to this focus. This requirement is elaborated in the following theoretical statement:

##### **Theoretical statement 6a: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on the context (see 4.3.8).

The different constructs describing the nature of communication were outlined by Theoretical statement 6a above. However, it was deemed necessary to define these constructs in terms of their function to help ensure empowerment and sustainability. The different constructs were defined as follows (see 4.3.8):

- **Informing** entails horizontal, two-way communication with the sharing of information and knowledge in order to advise, educate, or enlighten participants and other stakeholders, thereby empowering both business and society.
- **Participation** is defined as an on-going process where the parties involved have voluntary but equal opportunity to participate fully and influence the communication processes seeking to empower both business and society.
- **Dialogue** is a continuous process of voluntary yet equal opportunity to participate fully in open discourse on any topic without predetermined objectives, rather as equal interlocutors within an environment of trust and respect.
- **Empowerment** within the nature of communication is defined as a conscious and continuous process of addressing power differences between the different participants within the communication processes.

- **Cultural diversity** is a sensitivity and understanding for the different cultures in society as well as for the business culture by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths of the different cultures within the communication processes.

The conceptualising of the proposed Integrated CSR communication model led to a deeper understanding of CSR communication. Therefore, it was redefined as follows:

**CSR communication** is an integrated and on-going process of communication that is embedded in the enterprise strategy, initiated on a strategic level, and evolves where all parties concerned participate continually in the various communication processes, which should help empower both business and society to attain sustainability (see 4.5).

This Integrated CSR communication model was evaluated through interviews with communication academics to validate its theoretical soundness.

#### **8.2.4 Perceptions of academics regarding the proposed Integrated CSR communication model**

The perceptions were ascertained of the academics about the mentioned Integrated CSR communication model to answer the following specific research question (1.4.2.4):

*What are the perceptions of South African and European communication academics on the proposed CSR communication model?*

This question is answered below according to the theoretical statements and definitions of constructs as discussed in 8.2.3. Some of these theoretical statements and definitions, were redefined during the process, based on the feedback from the academics.

##### **8.2.4.1 CSR vision**

All the academics stressed the importance of a *purpose* linked to the *sustainability* of both business and society that reflects the CSR vision (see 6.2.1). The participants also agreed on the *CSR strategy* that should be guided by the purpose of sustainability and driven by the communication function through CSR communication (see 6.2.1.1 & 6.2.1.2). The academics found that the term “CSR” should be examined further. According to their perceptions, the South African academics’ emphasised that this term should be redefined or changed all together (see 6.2.1.2).

#### **8.2.4.2 Identification of stakeholders**

The participants agreed that the identification of stakeholders holds a major challenge for communicators when deciding towards whom the organisation has a responsibility. The academics from Europe understood the identification of stakeholders based on the stakeholder theory, which clusters different groups according to their interests and issues and how that may affect business. The focus is specifically on employees and customers forming environmental clusters, thus implying mainly the traditional *primary stakeholders*. The South African academics perceived stakeholders based on the organisation's role in broader society with a specific focus on communities, individuals of influence within those communities, and employees as part of the communities.

In this regard, the South African academics considered marginalised groups thus as part of the primary stakeholders, as is also defined in this study. The South African participants also highlighted the challenge of identifying these marginalised groups in society. Certain participants argued that these groups should be identified according to the *core business* of the organisation. Therefore, this concept was added to the theoretical statement to make the identification of stakeholders especially relevant to each organisation. Theoretical statement 2a was thus revised as follows:

#### **Theoretical statement 2b: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose **and core business**. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society (see 6.2.2).

#### **8.2.4.3 Communication processes**

The academics agreed on the communication processes as a series of on-going actions that mutually interact. There was also agreement that the *strategic process* entails the formulation of the CSR and CSR communication strategy, which should be embedded in the enterprise strategy, guided by the purpose of sustainability (see 6.2.3.1). It was agreed that the *engagement process* focuses on reaching mutual understanding about a mutual intent. Mutual understanding in turn was viewed as creating an understanding on societal as well as business issues. This includes the expectations of both business and society to deal with those issues, as defined in this study (see 6.2.3.2).

Certain academics, however, voiced their concerns about “engagement” as a term with connotations that may imply “forced” participation. Based on these concerns, the two processes were divided into three, namely the *strategic* process, followed by a *rapport* and an *action* process. The definition of the strategic process was retained (see 6.2.3.1). The additional *rapport* and *action* processes were defined as below (see 6.2.3.2):

- The **rapport process** is the process where the different parties participate to develop rapport with one another through listening, observation and dialogue towards the creation of trust based relationships, mutual understanding and a mutual intent, guided by the purpose of sustainability.
- The **action process** is where the different parties participate in setting a strategy and objectives to achieve the mutual intent; this includes the actual implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these strategies.

Based on the inclusion of the two new processes, Theoretical statement 3 was revised as follows:

**Theoretical statement 3b: Communication processes**

Communication processes are viewed as a series of on-going communicative actions on a strategic, **rapport, and action** level, with a mutual influence on sustainability for both business and society (see 6.2.3.2).

#### **8.2.4.4 Communication roles**

All the academics agreed on the necessity of the three communication roles, namely the reflective strategist (see 6.2.4.1), the reflective facilitator (see 6.2.4.2), and the reflective participant (see 6.2.4.3) as well as their mutual influence. The identification of the reflective facilitator was highlighted as a significant contribution by the present study. However, the academics only partially agreed with the assumption of this study that identifies the *reflective strategist* as the communication role in the strategic process, with the *reflective facilitator* and *reflective participant* function as communication roles in the engagement process. Questions critiquing the engagement process was discussed in 8.2.4.3.

The above-mentioned roles were thus identified within the redefined communication processes. As a result, the theoretical statement on the communication roles as well as the definitions of the reflective facilitator and reflective participant were revised as indicated below:

#### **Theoretical statement 4b: Communication roles**

Communication roles are assigned to people enabling them to fulfil different functions and have certain responsibilities within specific communication processes, but also to influence other processes mutually in order to seek sustainability. The reflective strategist is identified as the communication role in the strategic process, the reflective facilitator as the role within the **rapport process** and reflective participant represent the communication roles within the **action process** (see 6.2.4.3).

After including the rapport and action processes in the model, the definitions of the reflective facilitator and the reflective participant were adjusted accordingly (see 6.2.4.3):

- *The **reflective facilitator** is the role responsible for enabling communication **within the rapport process** by establishing an environment conducive to the creation of trust-based relationships, mutual understanding and agreement of mutual intent, by constantly reflecting on sustainability.*
- *The **reflective participant** is the role of participation within the **action process**. This role constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of the parties involved in the **action process**, with the aim to work towards the mutual intent.*

#### **8.2.4.5 Outcome of communication**

The assumption of the present study was that both business and society should be empowered through information, knowledge, and an understanding of themselves and the other to contribute to a strategic advantage for the organisation and self-reliance for society. The academics underlined the importance of CSR communication in building reputation and relationships (see 6.2.5.1). Based on this perception, they agreed that the creation of a strategic advantage was a clear outcome of communication to *empower business*. However, a South African participant had concerns about the word “empowerment” linked to business. As corrective, this participant pointed out that a business can only be empowered by becoming a “learning organisation”. Thus, this concept was included in the definition of business empowerment to read as follows:

***Empowering business** is seen as being informed and strengthened by **becoming a learning organisation**, gaining information and knowledge, implying a better understanding of business and society. This understanding should be used to create a strategic advantage for the organisation in terms of corporate change. The information, knowledge and understanding*

*should also be used to empower society to strive for sustainability and effect social change* (see 6.2.5.1).

Only the South African academics included in their perceptions about the outcome of communication, the *empowerment of society* to become self-reliant and effect social change, as it was defined in this study. They explained empowerment as creating value for both business and society, which supports the notion of benefitting both business and society.

#### **8.2.4.6 Nature of communication**

The study assumed that in the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of informing, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on the context (see 6.2.6). The academics all agreed with this assumption although their perceptions of the different constructs were not necessarily as these were defined in this study.

**Informing** was considered important to communicate about the CSR initiatives as well as provide knowledge and information by advising and educating people to become empowered. This view of informing is in accordance with the definition in this study (see 6.2.6.1).

**Participation** was only mentioned by the South African academics. They distinguished two types of participation, namely: *strategic* participation (which some considered forced) and *voluntary* participation based on knowledge of how the participants will benefit. In the present study, participation was viewed as having voluntary and equal opportunity to participate. This approach underlines voluntary participation, thus providing participants the opportunity to participate of their own volition (see 6.2.6.2).

**Dialogue:** All the participants agreed that this form of communication should help create mutual understanding aimed at trust-based relationships, as defined within this study. The participants, however, perceived dialogue as an action still taking place on the organisation's terms, thus more inclined towards empowering the business. This approach is contradictory to dialogue as defined in this study as an on-going process of open discourse on any topic without pre-established objectives aimed at empowering both business and society (see 6.2.6.3).

**Empowerment** can be explained as a conscious and continuous process of levelling power differences between participants. The European academics perceived this process as equalising power between the organisation and powerful pressure groups to limit the power those groups exert on the organisation. In contrast, the South African academics viewed business as possessing most of the power and transferring power to society, to share in the responsibilities and accountabilities for their own empowerment. The South African participants also highlighted the importance of communication in equalising power. Both the European and



South African viewpoints about empowerment support the definition of this study that power differences between different parties in the communication process should be dealt with. From a European perspective, it could be assumed that sharing power with less powerful groups is not the norm for companies (see 6.2.6.4).

**Cultural diversity** was only perceived by the South African academics as important regarding the nature of communication. This concept was, however, defined from a broader perspective to include sensitivity towards differences in ways, means, values, and norms of diverse groups and individuals within corresponding contexts. Based on these perceptions, the definition of cultural diversity was refined because of its contribution to the mutually inclusive focus of the Integrated CSR communication model:

***Cultural diversity** is a sensitivity towards an understanding of the **ways, means, values, and norms** of different groups and individuals within the communication processes by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths (see 6.2.6.5).*

#### **8.2.4.7 CSR communication**

Although the academics perceived CSR to advance the sustainability of both business and society, they considered CSR communication as mostly benefitting business in this regard. From a development perspective, the South African academics did, however, mention constructs focusing on the sustainability of society such as the empowerment of society. After a discussion on the Integrated CSR communication model, the academics did concur that CSR communication should contribute to the sustainability of both business and society. The European academics did, however, raise concerns about the practical application of such a CSR communication (see 6.2.7).

#### **8.2.4.8 The overall perceptions of academics on the proposed Integrated CSR communication model**

Before being presented with the proposed model, most academics tended to define the concepts and construct of the model mostly in support of business sustainability. After discussing the model, it was agreed that such a model should reflect the mutual purpose of sustainability. Suggestions made to expand the proposed model's focus on mutual sustainability were therefore incorporated. This included the identification of stakeholders according to the organisation's core business; the introduction of the rapport and action processes; business being empowered by becoming a learning organisation and a broadened scope of cultural diversity.

The overall perceptions on the Integrated CSR communication model were extremely positive. All the academics considered the model to be theoretically sound. From a European perspective, it was, however, queried as being overly idealistic and normative, whereas the South Africans in contrast, viewed it as workable and necessary. All the academics underwrote the value which this model may have within management as well as communication education. The academics also agreed that the value of the model would only be established by evaluating it in practice. This requirement was validated by the feedback from practice.

Furthermore, academics voiced concerns about the term “integrated” due to the perceived different connotations of the word. Therefore, this term was removed from the name of the model, which thereafter was referred to only as the CSR communication model (see 6.3). Some academics also had their reservations on the term “CSR” being utilised within this model because they viewed the term as outdated.

### **8.2.5 Perceptions of practitioners on the proposed CSR communication model**

The proposed Integrated CSR communication model was thus revised, based on perceptions of the academics. Thereafter, the renamed CSR communication model was evaluated in practice to answer the following specific research question (1.4.2.5):

*Which perceptions do senior communication practitioners responsible for CSR communication in various South African organisations have of the proposed CSR communication model?*

The answer to this research question is examined below by referring to the theoretical statements and the definition of the associated constructs.

#### **8.2.5.1 CSR vision**

Purpose was perceived in two ways. Certain practitioners viewed *purpose* mainly based on their company’s *core business*. Others perceived it, as defined in this study, based on the *triple context* as suggested in King IV (see 1.1). The same participants who perceived purpose as linked to the core business, viewed *sustainability* as related mainly to the business’s financial sustainability. Those practitioners who included the triple context in their purpose linked sustainability to both the business and society, as it is defined in this study (see 7.2.1.1).

The perceptions on *CSR strategy* (see 7.2.1.2) centred on the multiple terms used for this concept by different organisations. As a result, several practitioners were deeply critical about the term “CSR”. These participants suggested a move away from CSR, due to the different and often conflicting perceptions of the term, which range from philanthropy on the one side, to shared value, sustainability and citizenship on the other side. The same concerns were raised

by certain academics as well (see 6.2.1.2). Those organisations who still view this as CSR or CSI, manage their strategy from a CSR-project perspective through which the organisation's reputation is build. Organisations who consider CSR as shared value/growth, sustainability, or citizenship, have CSR embedded within their enterprise strategy, and incorporated into the overall business processes. Such an approach supports the sustainability of both business and society, as defined in this study.

All the practitioners agreed that the communication function should manage the CSR strategy due to the latter's focus on relationships. Those participants following a project-based CSR strategy, perceived its management as part of marketing to promote the organisation's objectives. From an embedded perspective, participants perceived CSR as managing relationships to attain the sustainability of both business and society, as defined in this study (see 7.2.1.2).

The study assumed CSR to be an organisation's mutually inclusive commitment to both business and society. The purpose is sustainability with a view to empower both business and society. This view was shared only by organisations who focused on CSR from an embedded approach. Such an approach is clearly in accordance with the CSR communication model, thus agreeing with the assumption of this study about purpose, sustainability, and CSR strategy (see 7.2.1.2).

#### **8.2.5.2 Identification of stakeholders**

All the practitioners perceived the identification of stakeholders as crucial in CSR communication and thus an important part of the proposed model (see 7.2.2). The practitioners concurred with the assumption that stakeholders should be identified as those towards whom the organisation deems to have a responsibility, based on its purpose and core business. Society, which includes marginalised groups, was perceived specifically as those within the organisation's geographical footprint. These perceptions gave further guidance to specifying marginalised groups, as certain academics pointed out (also see 6.2.2). Forming part of the organisation's geographical footprint, important stakeholders were identified such as the employees, community, Government, and other partners as well as influential individuals within these groupings.

From the perceptions above, it is evident that such groups and individuals are identified as *primary stakeholders* because of their contribution to the sustainability of business. These perceptions are thus not supporting the assumption of this study of identifying stakeholders based on the mutual purpose of sustainability.

Based on the identification of stakeholders who fall within an organisation's geographical footprint, Theoretical statement 2b was redefined as follows:

**Theoretical statement 2c: Identification of stakeholders**

Identification of stakeholders is a process in which the organisation decides to whom it has a responsibility, based on its mutual purpose and core business. These relations are identified as primary stakeholders, including marginalised groups in society **within the organisation's geographical footprint** (see 7.2.2).

### **8.2.5.3 Communication processes**

The assumption about communication is that it entails on-going processes, divided into strategic, rapport and action processes. These processes influence each other while striving for the sustainability of both business and society (see 7.2.3). From a project perspective, the participants perceived the *strategic process* (see 7.2.3.1) as part of formulating a CSR strategy, while CSR communication forms part of the marketing strategy and is employed as marketing action to support the business's sustainability. From an embedded perspective, the strategic process was viewed as formulating a CSR and CSR communication strategy that are embedded within the enterprise strategy with the focus on the mutual purpose, as defined in the present study.

The practitioners viewed the *rapport process* (see 7.2.3.2) as the most important one, but also acknowledged that it is the most neglected process, which causes initiatives to fail. Practitioners also agreed that the process should lead to realistic expectations and mutual accountability based on mutual understanding between the parties. However, the participants mentioned having mutual understanding on related issues but dealing with those issues mostly according to a business plan that requires the buy-in of society. Such an approach is contrary to the definition in this study.

Furthermore, practitioners perceived the *action process* (see 7.2.3.3) to include mutual collaboration aimed at dealing with the issues, thus suggesting the participation of all parties concerned. However, it was found that no practitioners mentioned participation as part of the action process, such as it was defined in this study. The practitioners' perceptions of participation will be discussed in 8.2.5.6 below. From the findings it can, however, be assumed that, in the action process, participation occurs on the organisation's terms and only within a certain context. This is namely, initiated by the organisation seeking the sustainability of the

business as such. This approach is clearly in contrast with the way the action process is defined in this study.

It can be concluded that although the practitioners all agreed on the importance of the various processes, they viewed it as mostly supporting the sustainability of business.

#### **8.2.5.4 Communication roles**

The practitioners agreed on the importance of all three roles in CSR communication and acknowledged the negative impact that the absence of any such roles may have on an organisation. The participants thus concurred with identifying the following communication roles: reflective strategist in the strategic process, the reflective facilitator in the rapport process, and the reflective participant in the action process (see 7.2.4). However, the practitioners perceived these three roles only as reflecting on the sustainability of business and not on both business and society, as defined in this study. The *reflective strategist* (see 7.2.4.1) was perceived as reflecting on and addressing the strategic business issues. Thus, the first priority would be business sustainability, after which these issues are aligned with societal ones to address the sustainability of society.

The role of the *reflective facilitator* (see 7.2.4.2) was perceived to be practiced as defined in this study. However, practitioners acknowledged that this does not always happen as such in practice. This finding is in line with the perception about the rapport process in which the reflective facilitator functions to create mutual understanding. Significantly, practitioners did not perceive mutual understanding as it is defined in this study (see 8.2.5.3). Again this points out that the reflective facilitator reflects mostly on the sustainability of business.

Practitioners perceived the *reflective participant* (see 7.2.4.3) as participating in the action process. The role is to represent business and oversee its interests, in other words, not reflecting on the participation of all relevant parties. This view is in accordance with perceptions about participation in the action process (see 8.2.5.6) and the focus on business sustainability within CSR communication (see 8.2.5.7), which is highlighted in the other roles as well. Thus, it can be concluded that all three roles are accepted as important in the communication processes and ideally should influence each other to seek the sustainability of both business and society. However, the roles are not necessarily practiced as such.

#### **8.2.5.5 Outcome of communication**

**Empowering business** was perceived mainly as the main outcome of communication (see 7.2.5.1). This includes constructs such as reputation, risk management, corporate citizenship, and legitimacy. The practitioners perceived empowerment in various ways.

From a *project perspective*, they viewed it purely as a one-way communication action to build the business brand. This perception is contrary to the empowerment of business as defined in this study as becoming a learning organisation by engaging in two-way symmetrical communication. The problem is that when following a one-way communication approach, the company gains no knowledge or information to understand business and society better. Thus, they lack understanding that they can apply in the enterprise strategy, and are thus not empowered towards organisational change. Such organisations also lack any contribution to the empowerment of society.

From an *embedded perspective*, the practitioners perceived the empowerment of business more in line with the definition of the present study. This implies a focus on change, which can only be effected through gaining knowledge, information, and a better understanding of society. This finding is in line with that of the academic who suggested that the empowerment of organisations should be linked to the concept of “learning organisation”.

**Empowering society** (see 7.2.5.2) was implied in perceptions concerning shared value, shared growth, and sustainability as the outcome of communication. The practitioners did not mention the empowerment of society directly as an outcome. Nevertheless, it can be assumed this view is implied in some instances, as it is defined in this study. This entails empowerment through participating in the communication processes and gaining knowledge and information that could lead to self-reliance and social change. Thus, the findings showed that only a few practitioners from an embedded perspective originally perceived empowering both business and society as the outcome of CSR communication.

#### **8.2.5.6 Nature of communication**

The nature of communication was perceived in terms of informing, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity. This process should take place in an environment of trust and respect, as highlighted in this study (see 7.2.6). However, the practitioners did not necessarily perceive the different constructs about the nature of communication as they were defined in this study.

**Informing** (see 7.2.6.1) was understood mainly from a project perspective as a process to enlighten different stakeholders, as one-way communication thus not to advise or educate by means of two-way communication as defined in this study. This form of communication may contribute to business’s sustainability. However, seemingly business is not empowered by this information distribution, seeing that learning is not necessarily taking place in the organisation. Such a process also fails to empower society. From an embedded perspective it was perceived

as contributing to the empowerment of both business and society by becoming a learning organisation (see 8.2.5.5).

**Participation** (see 7.2.6.2) was perceived to take place on the organisation's terms. Therefore, the communication does not entail voluntary and equal participation within the various processes, as defined by this study. This is also reflected in practitioners' perceptions of the action process (see 8.2.5.3) and the role of the participant (see 8.2.5.4).

**Dialogue** (see 7.2.6.3) was viewed as an organisational action to accomplish certain objectives but not as a voluntary and on-going process, as defined by this study. This action was also viewed as taking place on the organisation's terms (as in participation). Thus, evidently this was not viewed as a process in which all participants have an equal opportunity to participate in open discourse on any topic without pre-established objectives.

**Empowerment** (see 7.2.6.4) was not perceived as a conscious and continuous process to level out power differences, as defined in this study. A number of practitioners assumed that power differences were dealt with but did not verify it with society. Others perceived power as a phenomenon that could not be shared but should only be entrusted to the few who manage the projects.

**Cultural diversity:** All the participants felt strongly about the importance of communicating in a culturally sensitive manner. These perceptions correspond with the definition of *cultural diversity* (see 7.2.6.5) in this study. This implies a sensitivity towards and understanding of differences and working with them. These practitioners' scope was, however, limited to the different cultures in the communities and did not factor in business culture as well, as suggested in this study.

The practitioners' perceptions of the different constructs indicate that the nature of communication is inclined mainly towards empowering business to accomplish its objectives, not aimed at both business and society, as defined in this study.

Certain practitioners suggested the inclusion of communication channels to the model, which would specify how the communication could take place. This suggestion was accepted as contribution to the practicality of the model. Therefore, Theoretical statement 6a was revised as follows:

### **Theoretical statement 6b: Nature of communication**

The nature of communication entails the different ways in which communication can take place within an environment of trust and respect aimed at empowering both business and society. In the communication processes, the nature of communication consists of information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity that **take place through various internal and external communication channels**, depending on the context (see 7.2.6.5).

#### **8.2.5.7 CSR communication**

Certain practitioners did view the CSR strategy as well as its management as contributing to the sustainability of both business and society (see 7.2.1). However, this was not the case with their perceptions of CSR communication. The participants agreed that CSR communication should be a strategic function but this was understood mainly as enhancing the reputation and mitigating risks, to ensure the business's sustainability. From a *project-based* perspective, CSR communication was perceived as an action to promote the organisation. From an *embedded perspective*, it was viewed as continuous engagement – as defined in this study – but strongly inclined to the sustainability of business.

Thus, although certain practitioners viewed the CSR communication from an embedded perspective, as defined in this study, they did not always perceive CSR communication as contributing to the sustainability of both business and society. After further discussion on the CSR communication model, these participants' perceptions changed. They agreed about the importance of CSR communication to help ensure the sustainability of both business and society.

#### **8.2.5.8 The practitioners' overall perceptions of the proposed CSR communication model**

Most practitioners defined the concepts and constructs of the CSR communication model according to business sustainability. After being presented with the proposed model, all practitioners however agreed on the focus of the model towards mutual sustainability. There was also agreement that the outcome should be empowerment for both business and society. However, it was found that some practitioners had a limited understanding of the empowerment of society since the creation of shared value and the empowerment of society were viewed as the same concepts. Therefore, although many practitioners referred to shared value as



empowerment, it was not included within the proposed model because it does not reflect the mutual purpose of sustainability.

The nature of communication was another concept that was mostly viewed towards business sustainability. The practitioners again agreed that it should reflect the mutual purpose of sustainability but perceived it as challenging in practice. They concurred that the context in which the communication takes place would be the determining factor to guide the nature of communication.

Suggestions that contributed to the mutual purpose of the proposed model was included, such as the specification of marginalised groups as those within the geographical footprint of the organisation as well as the different internal and external channels through which the communication would take place.

The practitioners' general perceptions of the CSR communication model were however very positive with only one exception. They critiqued the term "CSR" being utilised in this model since this design represents a focus beyond CSR.

All the practitioners agreed that the model is necessary and workable in their organisations in the South African context and globally. They perceived sustainability as the rightful purpose of the model. This outcome they perceived as empowering business and society, although these perceptions were not necessarily applied in practice. The practitioners also commented on the perceived value the model hold for educating people on CSR and CSR communication.

The feedback and input from the academics and practitioners were used to refine the model. This helped make it theoretically sound and practically relevant. The model was refined by adapting certain theoretical statements and definitions. In this regard, statements and definitions, as conceptualised in chapter 4, were refined and altered in chapters 6 and 7. Based on the mentioned feedback from academics as well as practitioners on the CSR communication model, the general research question could be answered. This answer is presented and discussed subsequently.

### **8.3 GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION ANSWERED**

The general research question that launched the present study was (see 1.4.1):

*What concepts and constructs should a CSR communication model integrate that could help create a strategic advantage for business as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society in a mutually inclusive manner?*

Within chapter 4 the proposed Integrated CSR communication approach was conceptualised based on the literature study. The name “Integrated CSR communication” was adapted in chapter 6, based on the concerns of some academics regarding the term “integrated”. It was then generally referred to as the “CSR communication model”. Both academics and practitioners however perceived the term “CSR” as outdated and in need of refinement. In order to answer the general research question, it was deemed necessary to address the concerns regarding the term “CSR” by formulating a new term.

Certain academics suggested the term “corporate citizenship” based on the terms used in business and in codes such as King IV (see 6.2.1.2). This perception appeared to be accurate, seeing that “corporate citizenship” is utilised in several departments where participants are responsible for “CSR” from an embedded perspective, as it is defined in the present study as well (see 7.2.1.2). It also reflects the organisation being a citizen of society who are directly influenced by the sustainability of society (see 4.2). This model was also perceived to reflect sustainability that reaches beyond CSR, which participants considered merely philanthropic (see 7.2.1.2 & 7.3).

Based on this feedback about revising CSR, it was concluded that the model’s name can be changed ultimately to the Sustainable-citizenship communication (SCC) model. The CSR communication model constructed based on the findings of the literature review as well as the interviews with both academics and practitioners (see fig 7.1), was used as cognitive model for the finally proposed Sustainable-citizenship communication model. Therefore, all the concepts and constructions used for the CSR communication model, do also apply to the Sustainable-citizenship communication model. This includes the construct of *sustainability* as the focus of the model. It also incorporates the concept of *citizenship*, which represents the embedded approach that supports the empowering of both business and society through organisation being a responsible citizen of society.

Based on the theory discussed in chapters 1 and 2 as well as the empirical feedback from academics (chapter 6) and practitioners (chapter 7), Table 8.1 below summarises the concepts and constructs that answer the general research question.

**Table 8.1 Concepts and constructs of the Sustainable-Citizenship Communication model**

CONCEPTS	CONSTRUCTS
Sustainable-citizenship (SC) vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Purpose</li> <li>* Sustainability</li> <li>* SC strategy</li> </ul>
Identification of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Primary stakeholders</li> </ul>
Communication processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Strategic process</li> <li>* Rapport process</li> <li>* Action process</li> </ul>
Communication roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reflective strategist</li> <li>* Reflective facilitator</li> <li>* Reflective participant</li> </ul>
Nature of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Informing</li> <li>* Participation</li> <li>* Dialogue</li> <li>* Empowerment</li> <li>* Cultural diversity</li> </ul>
Outcome of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Empowering business</li> <li>* Empowering society</li> </ul>

Including the concepts and constructs identified in Table 8.1 above, the model can be presented as a theoretically sound design that contributes to the body of knowledge of CSR communication, and is workable in practice.

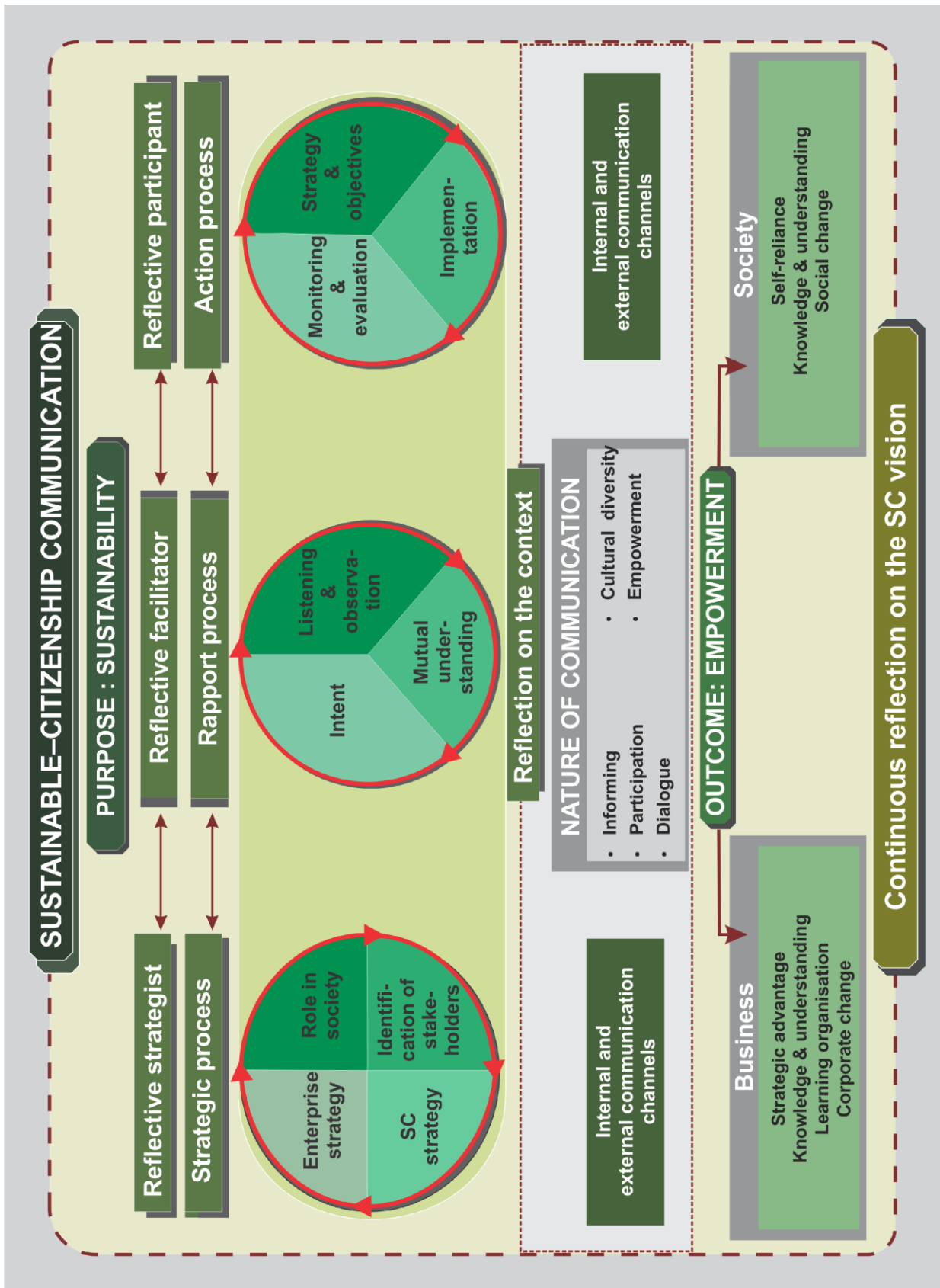


Figure 8.1 The Sustainable-citizenship communication model

### **8.3.1 Sustainable-citizenship vision**

The sustainable-citizenship (SC) vision of an organisation should guide its aspirations to seek a sustainable future for the business as well as the society in which it operates. This focus should be reflected in the organisation's overall purpose. Such a purpose should thus reach beyond profit making to focus on the sustainability of both business and society since a business cannot be sustainable when operating in an unsustainable environment. Sustainability can thus be defined as a continual long-term process comprising the maintenance, endurance, and existence of the business, society and the environment (i.e. triple context).

This mutual purpose of sustainability should guide the above-mentioned sustainable-citizenship strategy aimed at empowering both business and society to function sustainably. The sustainable-citizenship strategy should be embedded within the enterprise strategy and driven by the communication function. The communication within the sustainable-citizenship strategy should be initiated at a strategic level and evolve through continuous engagement with stakeholders by pursuing the purpose of sustainability. The same constructs that informed the CSR communication model, can be applied to the Sustainable-citizenship communication model, as indicated below.

### **8.3.2 Identification of stakeholders**

Business should decide to whom they have a responsibility. This should be based on the organisation's mutual purpose of sustainability as well as the nature of its core business. Thereafter, management should identify the primary stakeholders who directly impact, or are affected by the organisation's pursuit of sustainability. Included with primary stakeholders should be marginalised groups within society. These include groups within the organisation's geographical footprint to whom the company has a responsibility beyond profit making, but rather supporting societal sustainability.

### **8.3.3 Communication processes**

Sustainable-citizenship communication should consist of three on-going communication processes, on a strategic, rapport, and action level, which influences each other to seek sustainability for both business and society.

The *strategic process* should firstly reflect on the sustainable-citizenship vision and how this vision aligns with the core business of the organisation, in other words, the enterprise strategy. Stakeholders should be identified by reflecting on the company's role in society, its core business as well as the organisation's geographical footprint. Thereafter, the sustainable-citizenship strategy could be formulated as embedded within the enterprise strategy.

Sustainable-citizenship communication should embody the purpose of sustainability through continuous engagement with stakeholders.

Within the *rapport process*, different parties should participate to develop rapport through listening, observation, and dialogue aimed at creating trust-based relationships, mutual understanding, and a mutual intent, guided by the mutual purpose of sustainability. This process should start off by listening and observing before moving to interpersonal communication. Communication should establish mutual understanding about societal and business issues as well as the expectations of both entities to deal with those issues, thus leading to a mutual intent. Such communication would limit unrealistic expectations and lead to mutual responsibilities and accountability. This process could, however, also result in terminating the relationship if no mutual intent could be established.

The *action process* should be based on the participation of all parties concerned, by establishing a strategy and objectives guided by the mutual intent. There will also be participation in the implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation of this process based on mutual accountability and accepting mutual responsibilities.

These three processes influence each other through continuous reflection on the information needed and gained from one process that is applied in the others and visa-versa.

#### **8.3.4 Communication roles**

Communication roles should be assigned to people and have certain associated responsibilities within the three communication processes. These roles should also provide input to other processes, which implies mutually influencing the communication processes to seek sustainability.

The *reflective strategist* should be a senior communication practitioner responsible for sustainable-citizenship and the sustainable-citizenship communication strategy within the strategic process. This role should reflect on and address strategic business as well as societal issues that relate to the mutual purpose of sustainability. This practitioner should have input in the organisation's enterprise strategy to ensure that the sustainable-citizenship strategy and sustainable-citizenship communication are integral to the various business processes.

The *reflective facilitator* should be responsible for enabling communication within the rapport process. This would be done by establishing a communication environment conducive to building trust-based relationships, and mutual understanding towards a mutual intent. The reflective facilitator should accomplish these outcomes by attentive listening and observation.

Different people may fulfil this role, based on the context in which the communication takes place.

The role of the *reflective participant* may also be fulfilled by various people, depending on the context. The reflective participant would partake in the action process. The practitioner constantly reflects and gives input on the participation of all parties. This participation should take place in establishing the strategy and objectives, implementing as well as monitoring and evaluating the strategy. Thus, the aim is helping to empower both business and society through representative participation.

### **8.3.5 Outcome of communication**

The outcome of communication should be to empower both business and society through information, knowledge, and an understanding of themselves and the other parties. The focus would be to create a strategic advantage for the business and help society becoming self-reliant.

**Empowering business** should imply business being a “learning organisation” by gaining information and knowledge, thus having a better understanding of itself and society. Such deeper “know how” should be applied in the enterprise strategy to help create a strategic advantage for the organisation while striving for corporate change. This information, knowledge and understanding, should also be used to empower society towards sustainability and social change.

**Empowering society** takes place by society utilising information, knowledge and understanding of their own realities as well as those of business, to reach self-reliance. This should be done by identifying and relying on their own abilities, power, and resources to meet their needs for social change. However, this also means ascertaining their own limitations or challenges together with knowledge and understanding of the role that business could play in addressing these deficiencies. In other words, such a communication process implies that society takes ownership and accepts accountability for social change.

### **8.3.6 The nature of communication**

The nature of communication explains the different ways in which communication can take place to seek empowerment within an environment of trust and respect. In the communication processes for sustainable-citizenship communication, the nature of communication should consist of the same aspects as proposed and refined for the CSR communication model. These entail: information, participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural diversity, depending on

the context. The mentioned constructs that describe the nature of communication could thus be defined as follows (see 8.2.3.6):

- **Informing** entails horizontal, two-way communication with the sharing of information and knowledge in order to advise, educate, or enlighten participants and other stakeholders, thereby empowering both business and society.
- **Participation** is defined as an on-going process where the parties involved have voluntary but equal opportunity to participate fully and influence the communication processes seeking to empower both business and society.
- **Dialogue** is a continuous process of voluntary yet equal opportunity to participate fully in open discourse on any topic without predetermined objectives, rather as equal interlocutors within an environment of trust and respect.
- **Empowerment** within the nature of communication is defined as a conscious and continuous process of addressing power differences between the different participants within the communication processes.
- **Cultural diversity** is a sensitivity and understanding for the different cultures in society as well as for the business culture by embracing the differences and utilising the strengths of the different cultures within the communication processes.

The communication takes place through various internal and external channels, deemed appropriate for the specific nature of communication.

## 8.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarised the answers to all the specific research questions. In addition, the theoretical contribution of this study was presented by answering the general research question (see 1.4.1):

*What concepts and constructs should a CSR communication model integrate that could help create a strategic advantage for business as well as contribute to the sustainable development of society in a mutually inclusive manner?*

The Sustainable-citizenship communication model is an important contribution to the body of knowledge of CSR communication. The model integrated the two approaches (which stem from diverse and often conflicting meta-theories) in such a way that both help empowering business as well as society to attain sustainability for both.



Although this model may be viewed as normative, practitioners and academics agreed on the importance and feasibility of this model in striving towards mutual sustainability, thus addressing the singular focus within current CSR communication research as practice. This model was thus perceived to be not only theoretically sound but also relevant in practice.

## **8.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It was established that the proposed model provides new insight and contributes to the body of knowledge as well as the practice for CSR communication. Nevertheless, certain problems and challenges were experienced in the empirical part of the study. These limitations were discussed in 5.6 to indicate how they may have influenced the results of the study.

Firstly, since only 10 organisations took part in this study, the results could not be generalised to all organisations in South Africa. However, the study's aim was not to generalise the results, but rather understand the specific context.

Secondly, this qualitative study focused not on the perceptions of practitioners and academics globally, but within specific contexts. In the case of practitioners, the focus was only on those from companies directly responsible for CSR and CSR communication within South Africa. This was done to determine best practices in business with regards to CSR communication. The reason for focussing on practitioners within the business context was because CSR initiatives are predominantly initiated by business. In the choice of academics, the focus was only on those acknowledged as experts in their fields.

Thirdly, although input from practice was gathered about this model, it was not tested in practice. The model can thus be presented as theoretically sound and perceived by practitioners to be workable, but still needs to be tested in practice and within different contexts.

## **8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the proposed model and the above-mentioned limitations, recommendations for future research can be made:

- The perceptions of society on this Integrated CSR communication model should be the next phase in the evaluation of this model. As was argued, this model strives for the mutual inclusivity of business *and* society. In this regard, it would be valuable to evaluate this model within society.
- The feedback from both academics and practitioners on the term “CSR” indicated clear deficiencies, for example, that the concept is “outdated”. The present study suggested

sustainable-citizenship as an alternative. Future studies are however recommended that could investigate the development of a new, more applicable term, thus also for the concept of “CSR communication”.

- Future research studies could include other countries from the developed as well as the developing world for a more representative view.
- A comparative study could be undertaken on the difference in views and perceptions between the so-called developing countries (e.g. South Africa) and developed ones (from Europe, UK and the USA).
- The model could be evaluated by focusing on the perception of primary stakeholders and especially the marginalised groups within society.
- Future research could investigate the relation between PR and CSR communication and the “marketing angle” within current business.
- Such research could focus on the pursuit for sustainability and levelling power relations between business and society by adherence to BBBEE demands.
- Future researchers could test the model in different contexts within business and society, or compare the perceptions of business with those of stakeholders within society.

**In conclusion:** The essence of sustainable-citizenship communication should be the empowerment of both business and society towards the mutual purpose of sustainability.

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# ANNEXURE A : ETHICS CERTIFICATE



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**Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee**  
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## ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts (FA-REC) at the meeting held on 01/08/2016, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Project title:</b> A CSR communication model for empowering business and society towards sustainability.																																														
<b>Project Leader/Supervisor:</b> Prof Lynnette Fourie																																														
<b>Student:</b> L. Bezuidenhout																																														
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>9</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Project Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr><tr><td colspan="15"><small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small></td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	3	9	3	-	1	6	-	A	7	Institution			Project Number					Year		Status					<small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small>														
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<b>Commencement date:</b> 2016-08-01	<b>Expiry date:</b> 2017-11-30	<b>Risk:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>N/A</td></tr></table>	N/A																																											
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### Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the Informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the FA-REC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the FA-REC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-RERC via FA-REC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the FA-REC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC via FA-REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC and FA-REC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the FA-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- FA-REC can be contacted for further information via Ms Yvette van der Merwe - [13128388@nwu.ac.za](mailto:13128388@nwu.ac.za) or 018 285 2301.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or FA-REC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya**  
Chair NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC)

## ANNEXURE B : CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

WELLINGTON  
7655  
14 March 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby confirm that the PhD thesis *A CSR communication model for empowering business and society towards sustainability* by Ms L Bezuidenhout (student no: 10230599) was edited and groomed to the best of my ability. This included recommendations to improve the language and logical structure, guide the line of argument as well as to enhance the presentation.

Rev Claude Vosloo  
Language and knowledge practitioner and consultant

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<http://homeofcreativity.co.za/info>

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**South African Translator's Institute reference no: 100 2432**  
**Associate Member of PEG (Professional Editor's Group)**

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*Don't think outside the box, reinvent the box*