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**THE FOUR FLOWS MODEL AND ORGANISING: A CASE STUDY OF THE
GROUNDING PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE.**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Nomzamo Dube, do hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is my original work which has not been submitted anywhere else for the purpose of obtaining a degree. The dissertation is built on literature cautiously acknowledged as required by the University research ethics.

Signature..... Date.....

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Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Almighty God for taking me this far. He has been a pillar of my strength and sole comforter. I also want to thank my parents Mr F Dube and Mrs P Dube for being there, supporting me throughout my entire life. To my sisters Mrs Skhosana, Hope and little brother Andisa, much love, thank you for supporting me. My friends, Vongie, Daphne, Tracey, Wayne and Paula, thank you for caring.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Grounding Programme/Life Knowledge and Action. I am confident that the findings of this work will be highly useful for the betterment of the Programme.

ABSTRACT

The research focuses on McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model prevalent in the Communicative Constitution of Organisation (CCO) school of thought to explicate its applicability in the organisation of the Grounding Programme, a compulsory trans-disciplinary first year programme at Fort Hare University. This thesis diverts emphasis from studying organisation as a noun to Karl Weick (1979)'s view of seeing organisation as a verb, shifting emphasis to the term organising, thus looking at organisation as an on-going process not as an entity. The theoretical basis of the research is Giddens' structuration theory which attempts to offer a conceptual stability to the friction of employees' compelling needs for freedom and the organisational rules and policies. The structuration theory is foundational to the CCO perspective which gave birth to the four flows model, therefore perfectly ideal for the purpose of the study. Research methods used in this study are open ended interviews, participant observation and document examination. These complement each other and are impeccable for this study.

Upon intersecting the four flows model and the Grounding Programme, it came to light that the model was formed out of a series of models and theories, the weaknesses of each model or theory perpetuates to the next hence causing series of problems. Unsolved issues of the structuration theory perpetuates to the CCO which in the long-run extend to the four flows model. Findings also show that the inadequacies of one communicative flow of the four flows model affect the other flows hence it is sometimes difficult to track how the actual problem began. Again, not all flows are relevant for organisational purposes. In spite of McPhee and Zaug's attempt to narrow the model into four distinct flows, the model still remains incomprehensive and has loopholes when linked to a particular organisation because organisations are different. However, McPhee and Zaug's model ought to be credited for its successes too, which are outlined in the thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Research in organisational communication has generally shifted its view from seeing communication as something contained within organisation, to seeing organisations as constituted in communication. This view was largely precipitated by the Karl Weick (1969, 1979), who argued that the term *organisation* was more a verb than a noun; a continuous process of collaboration facilitated by organisational members. Thus, organisational communication scholars such as Smith (1993), McPhee and Zaug (2000), Taylor and Van Every (2000), Putnam and Fairhurst (2004) and Cooren *et al.* (2011) who posit that organisations are communicatively constituted, base their arguments largely on Weick (1969, 1979)'s. A development from this conception of organisation as organising is found in the Communication Constitutes Organisation (CCO) school of thought, which closely aligns Weick's thesis with Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration.

The CCO school endeavours to understand the mechanisms behind organisation constituted in communication. Different scholars hold different positions within this perspective, for instance, McPhee and Zaug (2000) posit that communication constitute organisation in four analytically distinct ways called the flows: *membership negotiation, organisational self-structuring, activity co-ordination and institutional positioning*. These flows are specific ways of understanding how communication constitutes organisation,.

To begin with, Karl Weick's (1979) publication marks a dimensional shift from the historic conventional way of seeing organisations as already formed entities (noun) to the process approach where organisation is seen as a perpetual state of becoming (verb). In his view, organisations are shaped not only by buildings, but ideas and discourse of people involved, this discourse is often conceptualised as communication itself because it is the construction of oral, written, and even gestural text (Foucault 1972). In other words, an organisation can exist even if it is not containerised. Weick (1979) influenced Putnam and Fairhurst (2004), who interweave the three orientations necessary to understand organisation namely the object/container approach, the becoming/process approach and the action approach to organising. The traditional object/container approach sees organisation as already

formed static entity, a container where series of communication processes take place (Taylor and Van Every 2000). The process approach is a more recent endeavour of comprehending organisations, it proposes that discourse properties shape organising into a continuous process. Lastly, the action approach holds that the organisation is, because of members' action, it is the collective action of individuals which makes an organisation. Putnam and Fairhurst (2004)'s underlying position is that the three approaches could be simultaneously used to unfold the complexity of organisational discourse, all the orientations are ideal ways of explaining organisations.

Another influential organisational communication theorist was Smith (1993) who studied the organisation-communication relationship and like many others, believes that communication constitutes organisation. She proposes that on the other hand, scholars who equate communication and organisation claim the two are related mainly because organisations are companies where communication takes place. In the same vein, Pepper (1995) supports the proposition, arguing that communication and organisation are equivalent yet they have a duality in the sense that communication produce organisation, organisation produce communication, and the two produce each other. Since communication/talk gives birth to the structure of organisation, it makes a lot of sense to study organisations from a communication perspective (Taylor 1993). Putnam and Nicotera (2009) dismiss the equivalent approach, their argument is that communication and organisation cannot be seen as equivalent, simply because an organisation is a communication accomplishment not vice-versa, it is communication that constitute organisation, organisations are called into being by interacting members who put their ideas together.

It is crucial to understand the variety of theoretical roots of the CCO perspective, particularly that of Giddens' theory of structuration. The origin of the CCO model can be traced back to Giddens' book, *Central problems in social theory* (1979), where he encapsulates the paradoxical dualism of structure and human agency, hereafter known as structuration. The conceptual margin between human agency and structure is that agency entails that human beings act in their free will, yet structure is a constructed system that limits the actions or desires of individuals, it consists of rules and regulations. Although seemingly divergent, structure and agency are also constitutive and preferably ideal to be understood with simultaneity because

structure gives shape to social everyday life and human actions (agency) also create structure, it is human actions that decide structure. Structure perpetuates social order, governing and moulding the actions of participants yet on the other hand, human agency plays the societal transformative role of facilitating change, where participants voice out their discontent, fight or oppose any supposedly oppressive system. It can then be argued that the tension between human agency and structure plays a necessary role between the organisation and its participants, synthesising both parties to reach a beautiful consensus through fruitful talks. The structuration theory is an ideal tool for studying social phenomena; it offers conceptual stability to the quandary of structure and human agency.

Giddens's structuration theory in the first place was influenced by the economic determinism concept which postulates that economics determine all other societal sectors such as religion, politics, and so forth. The economic determinism became very popular in the period of early market capitalism and historic materialism where capitalists were the most imminent figures in the society, oppressing the proletarians (working class) (Ritzer 1996). It is the imbalance of power between the capitalists and the proletarians that influenced Giddens's structuration theory. The economic determinism was highly criticised for seemingly reducing every social aspect to economics at the same time short-circuiting proletarians' agency and making them insignificant figures in the economy (Ritzer 1996). The omission and failure to theorize agency in economic determinism therefore inspired Giddens who attempts to give a conceptual stability to agency and structure, accommodating both. For Giddens, structure and human agency constitute one another, it is this same constitution notion that has also been applied to communication and organisation, giving birth to the CCO school of thought (McPhee and Poole 2001).

1.2 The four flows model

Central to the CCO school is McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model, a narrower and specific extension to the CCO. Pamela Zaug is an emerging organisational communication theorist who, in conjunction with Robert McPhee, a communication professor and researcher, modelled the four flows, which is a specification of the CCO school of thought. McPhee and Zaug (2000) argue that communication constitutes organisation in four analytically distinct but interdependent information flows. These are namely *membership negotiation*,

organisational self-structuring, activity co-ordination and institutional positioning.

Their argument is that there is need for a variety of these flows because “complex organisations require distinct types of relations to four audiences”. McPhee and Zaug’s (2000) argue that their four distinct yet interdependent flows are communicative and they each constitute organisation in a unique way.

Membership negotiation has been likened to ‘courtship’ of new members into an organisation, stretching from the advert itself, interviews and members’ orientation. Therefore, membership negotiation constitutes organisation, acting as a binding force between employees and the organisation. Organisational self-structuring is facilitated by communication between managers and ordinary members. It is these interactional relations that shapes work progress. So it appears as though the organisation is structuring itself yet it is the transparency of roles and responsibility which makes the organisation structural and this precipitates orderly action. The third flow, activity co-ordination constitutes organisation by the collaborative actions of organisational members, working together towards a common goal. In activity co-ordination, participants communicate about their goals and how they are working towards them, as opposed to formal structure which dictates how work should be done (Rausch 2012). Lastly, institutional positioning relates to how an organisation relates to external stakeholders inclusive of the media. Institutional positioning is constitutive of organisation by its ability to position the organisation to its macro environment. Although theoretically differentiated, each of these flows influences the other. The four flows model has been awarded credit for narrowing down how each communication flow constitutes organisation.

This research uses McPhee and Zaug’s four flows model prevalent in the CCO school to explore it’s applicability in the organisation of the Grounding Programme at Fort Hare University to solve organisational communication problems that the programme faces. The programme is mostly student run, rooted in *incoko* (dialogue) and seeks to instil an innovative pedagogy. By virtue of it being a programme, it is constantly organised and re-organised through dialogue, new ideas are conceived and incorporated to sustain its pedagogical goals.

The Grounding Programme is a compulsory trans-disciplinary first year programme which has been recently converted into a module that carries sixteen credits and a requirement for all undergraduates at Fort Hare University. The

Grounding Programme was conceived out of the need to consolidate Fort Hare students into one human society despite their departmental diversity and cultural diversity. Students gather together, take ownership of education by discussing highly topical and sensational matters affecting humanity and the society they exist in (Garutsa and Mahlangu 2014). The fact that students are being facilitated by a fellow student breaks the traditional style of learning where the teacher is assumed to have all the knowledge. Therefore, since the programme is a requirement for all first year students, it equally requires 58 facilitators and 8 interns. It is in this process of organising the programme that communication/organisational problems erupt.

This thesis is therefore situated in the CCO perspective, central to this is Karl Weick's (1969, 1979) view of seeing *organisation* as a verb, thus shifting the emphasis to the term *organising*. Organisation in this case refers to the constant processes of organising, and the facticity of any particular organisation is equal to the activities and practices that give that entity a form. Thus, the research significantly explores the relative occurrence of each of McPhee and Zaug's four flows in 'organisation' of the Grounding Programme.

1.3 The research problem

The central question this study addresses is: how does the Four Flows model explain the organising and organisation of the Grounding Programme at the University of Fort Hare and how can it help eradicate organisational communication problems the programme faces. These problems include miscommunication, imprecise expectations and unclear roles and responsibilities.

1.4 Research objectives

This research focuses on the following research objectives: exploring whether the four flows model adequately explains organising in the absence of a formal organisation, determining the relative occurrence of each flow in strong organising and determining whether McPhee and Zaug's model best describes the cased programme.

1.5 Research questions

The research questions address what is to be studied and they also influence the methodology to be used in the study. In this particular research, the questions are as follows.

1. Does the four flows model adequately explain organising in the absence of a formal organisation?
2. To what extent is the relative occurrence of each flow in strong organisation?

1.6 Theoretical framework

1.6.1 Structuration

The CCO approach and McPhee and Zaugg's four flows model cannot afford to be discussed in isolation of the structuration theory. The genesis of the CCO is traced back to Giddens' (1979) publication where he describes structure and agency (structuration), his view is that the two are constitutive of one another (Bisel 2009:125). The constitution of structure and agency has also been applied to communication and organisation by recent scholars leading to the conception of CCO model which later led to the birth of the four flows model.

In the organisational context, Harrison (2000:117) clarifies what organisations and employees want from each other. She highlights that an organisation does not want employees working for it, but 'drivers' of an organisation towards identified goals (*structure*). On the extreme end, employees want payment and fair working conditions (*agency*). Therefore there is a conceptual margin between agency and structure. Agency is the ability of people to behave independently and make their own choices yet structure is a constructed system that limits the actions or desires of individuals.

The traditional distinction between structure and agency does not require seeing society in terms of one or the other. Giddens ambivalently avoids the dualism that has bedevilled social theories between subject/object, agency/structure, and process/structure. Giddens opposes a view that individuals just create society (relativism), and that society determines individual behaviour (determinism). Structure and agency are intimately related and interwoven together in the processes through which social life is reproduced and transformed.

1.7 Case study: The Grounding Programme

This case study concerns a trans-disciplinary Grounding Programme, also known as Life Knowledge Action (LKA), a compulsory module for all first year students at the University of Fort Hare. The Grounding Programme came into existence in 2006,

when a group of University intellectuals came together to discuss a way of ploughing trans-disciplinary at the University. The idea was, 'Universities have departments, yet the world has problems', how then can the University break these departmental divisions, yet uniting university students into one society that engages with whatever knowledge that they are exposed to? It is these departmental divisions that isolate students from the rest and cause unnecessary student detachments from the real world they exist in. The programme's main agenda is to break the boundary of ignorance and interweave students from diverse backgrounds and departments into one community (Garutsa and Mahlangu 2014). Students from various departments are incorporated into the programme at first year level to share ideas about the world at large, at the same time solving common issues that are surrounding them.

The programme is mostly student run, that is to say, the majority of its staff are post graduate students at the University. So by virtue of the programme being student run, it desires to break the old teacher style of pouring knowledge into the heads of supposedly empty vessels. The fact that students are being facilitated by a fellow student makes them free to contribute as they feel that they own their education. Students come together, share ideas, mix and mingle with one another to break these departmental barriers. The majority of the programme's staff are employed on short term contracts since they are students whose stay at the University is short-lived. This means that with each and every University semester that passes by, new staff members are incorporated, trained and assimilated into the programme. This process encapsulates mostly the first three micro flows of the four flows model namely, membership negotiation, activity coordination and organisational self-structuring. Once an employee is assimilated into a full member of the organisation, he/she starts functioning productively in the organisation.

The programme is rooted in *incoko* (dialogue) and seeks to instil an innovative pedagogy to learning. Because of its innovative nature and by virtue of it being a programme, the Grounding Programme is constantly organised and re-organised through acts of communication. New ideas are conceived and incorporated to sustain its pedagogical goals, the programme is dynamic in nature and endeavours against all odds to incorporate all potential methods of teaching.

Of the three approaches of organisation, the Grounding Programme can be properly seen as embedded in the process approach since it emerged out of

discourse/interaction. Because it is a programme where organisation or organising takes place, it is unseen, untouchable, hence it is far from being a container, it is a mere an on-going process of interaction and action. Therefore the researcher looks at the programme, not as an entity but as an on-going process. The people under study are the employees of the programme who are directly involved in organising the programme.

The trans-disciplinary nature of the Grounding Programme also enables it to incorporate and interact with other projects similar to itself for instance the Nelson Mandela Champions Within programme and the Mapungubwe institute of Technology, in fact, it borrows and shares ideas with these collaborators. It is through these interactions that exchange forums take place to improve the programme, since, like any organisation, the programme cannot function as a vacuum: it needs external guidance, institutional positioning is there for its establishment and for survival. Most organisations exist because they draw resources and ideas from each other, which is institutional positioning (McPhee and Zaig 2000). An organisation is in fact a partner of other organisations.

Like any other organisation, the Grounding Programme is faced with communication and organisational problems. Sometimes it is difficult to trace what exactly is wrong in the whole dilemma of communication problems. In some instances when organisations face problems, they deem communication as the answer to communication adequacies yet instead communication is usually the root cause of problems hence it being an answer worsens the situation. Many communication scholars have in their studies focused on too little communication but ignored too much communication which is also a problem.

When communication becomes too much, it simply leads to information overload leading to more organisational problems. Who to listen to, is also another crucial issue: in as much as all the voices needs to be heard, employees end up confusing and misleading each other because of lack of clarity on who has valid information. This on its own affects the act of organising. Unclear roles and responsibility is also another submarine cause of concern, when roles are not clearly defined there is likely to be problems, staff start being at each other's throat in terms of who should be doing what.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher uses a particular CCO model – the Four Flows model (McPhee and Zaug 2000) – to explicate the role played by communication in *organizing* the programme, rather than to see it as an objective organisation *sui generis*. The question is, to what extent is McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flow model a valid model of bridging the organisational communication gap existing in the Grounding Programme? The study seeks to reveal the organisational communication problems that the Grounding Programme is faced with, at the same time endeavouring to find out the role that the four flows model can play in solving the problems at hand. There are a quite number of researchers who discuss in detail the four flows model but perhaps there is need to link it to a particular case, a programme to prove its validity.

Although communication is the lifeblood of every organisation, there is no doubt that every organisation has at some point been affected by communication problems. "People suffer from the curse of knowledge and have difficulty taking another's perspective; they also underestimate how easy it would be to communicate their knowledge to the other party" (Heath and Walston 2000:177). This therefore explains the problems associated with communication which is said to be the answer yet it is the root cause of problems or the problem itself. The inquiry is how then does McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model of organisational communication fit-in in the Grounding Programme to solve the communication problems and pave way for proper organisation?

Heath and Staudenmayer (2000:174) state that inadequate communication is almost inevitable because individuals' psychological processes hinder them from taking someone else's perspective when they were trying to communicate. In simple words, people hardly consider other people's perspectives before they communicate. People know what they want to convey but they fail to imagine what others think of what they convey, hence that switch causes communication problems. "Communication will always be incomplete because organisations are filled with constrained information processors" (Heath and Staudenmayer 2000:174).

Kupers (2012:115) argues that "... often the paradoxes, ambivalences and complexities of the process of communicating are ignored, oversimplified or communication is touted as 'panaceas' for all kinds of problems". Communication is usually the most common problem in most organisations yet most organisations

believe that communication is the answer. The unthought-of answer is 'how is communication an answer?' It is difficult to solve a problem by another problem; hence communication matters have to be given first preferences in organisations. In the same vein, Woffinden (2009:9) argues that communication is political because persons get involved with different motives and goals, this causes communication friction between communing individuals. All these are examples of communication issues found in the organisation of the Grounding Programme.

Information overload is also an organisational communication problem facing the Grounding Programme and usually caused by organisational structure. When there is one person whom all information has to pass through, usually a person holding a higher position, information overload becomes inevitable. For instance in the Grounding Programme, when roles are not clearly stated, the campus coordinator is likely to suffer from information overload as everyone reports to her. Information overload creates omission and distortion. In any organisation, there is some information that has to by-pass other people, some issues that could be solved without the involvement of others. However, it is crucial not to make a mistake of by passing someone who needs to receive the information. Now that organisational communication problems are clear, the question is; to what extent does the four flows model bridge the communication gap if not widening it? This research seeks to answer this question.

1.8 Research methods

1.8.1 Qualitative Research

The study qualitative research design, allowing the researcher to interpret phenomena in terms of the researched' perspectives and capture social action in its natural context. This study made use of three methods of data collection, namely participant observation, unstructured interviews and document examination. These perfectly employ complementary diversity to yield best results.

1.8.1.1 Participant observation

Participant observation was used as a method of corpus collection. Participant observation has in some instances been treated synonymously with ethnography (Bryman 2005:118). According to him, both methods entail that the researcher has to spend his research time with those under study. However Rosen (1991:5) argues

that the difference between ethnographic research and participant observation is that the latter means living among those who are the data, doing what they do. This means interacting with them frequently and getting first-hand knowledge. Therefore, the researcher is a full and domestic participant observer, an employee in the Grounding Programme.

1.8.1.2 In-depth unstructured interviews and document examination

Unstructured interviews enable interviewees to be diverse in responding to the subject being discussed as they are exploratory in nature. Fahad (2013:21) highlights that “given more time to talk, people eventually become more comfortable and let their feelings out”. This unfolds the nature of the unstructured interviews. The examination of documents on the other hand is the most crucial part of qualitative research because most organisational information is documented to account for everything that takes place and for legal purposes (Bryman 2005:124). Thus the researcher studied the organogram in the first semester of 2014. The Grounding Programme is mostly student-run, so as an informal and quick method of communication, a group *WhatsApp*, a social network chat was created, so the *WhatsApp* chats were also examined too.

1.8.2 Population

Population can be defined as all available elements of analysis (Du Plooy 2004:100). In the case of this study, the population is the Grounding Programme employees. These total to 72 employees, namely 58 facilitators, 8 interns, 3 administrators, 2 co-ordinators and the director.

1.8.2.1 Sampling

Sampling is the procedure of choosing a certain number of units of analysis from the available population of the study. The population under study is a homogenous one as units share common characteristics; this therefore makes the sample to be small. The researcher uses non-probability sampling because of the nature of the Grounding Programme’s structure where every employee is known. Non probability sampling entails that all the units of the population do not have an equal chance of being selected during sampling. The type of non-probability sampling to be used in this research is purposive sampling.

The sample size will be 40 employees, 15 of whom are facilitators who have been in the programme for more than a year, 15 who were enrolled in 2014, two new interns, and 2 interns who have worked for a year or more, the three administrators, the two co-ordinators and the director. The main reason why facilitators and interns had to be separated according to their length of time in the programme is to analyse the membership negotiation of the four flows model. The administrators, co-ordinators and the director are in the sample because they are deeply involved in the organising of the programme and meet regularly. Purposive sampling only applies to interviews. With regard to participant observation and document examination, the whole population is studied as it is difficult to select whom to observe.

1.8.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails narrowing data into findings. Data collected was themed and interpreted into findings. The researcher used an ethnographic interpretative study as a data analysis method where data from documents observed, participant observation and interviews was grouped and separated in order of its similarities. Each flow of the four flows model is intersected with the grounding programme's activities to reveal if the model is an ideal model to explain the organisation of the programme. This plays a role of unfolding either the strengths or the loopholes of the model and also highlights where to improve the programme. The findings were then analysed and explained under certain identified themes to find out how the four flows explains organising.

1.9 Ethical considerations

Seeking permission to observe a certain group of people is itself an ethical consideration. The researcher sought permission to use the Grounding Programme as a case-study. The researcher does not seek to tarnish anyone or the programme's image but to be as genuine as possible to reveal problems and solutions that will be very relevant for the benefit of the programme and similar organisations. An ethical clearance certificate was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Fort Hare. There is no risk of physical harm in the research, as respondents were treated with dignity and respect. Respondents were informed of their right to participate or withdraw from the research at any time. Respondents' personal details were private and confidential, not released without

their permission unless upon agreement. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent and findings were reported honestly without any manipulation of data.

When conducting interviews, the respondents have to be told the purpose of the research. Although covert observation has been distorted by most scholars, the researcher used it in participant observation as it does not alter the reality of the setting, people's behaviour and activities, at the same time the observed may feel deceived when a research is done on them anonymously. However, one may therefore argue that the observed may only feel deceived when the research is on sensitive issues. Respondents were clearly informed of their right to participate or withdraw from the research at any time, particularly with interviews.

Qualitative researchers have often been criticised for their inability to separate personal impressions with the real findings hence their inability to avoid bias. However, in this study the researcher employed personal discipline against all odds for the authenticity sake of the research as Erickson (1973) contends that qualitative research requires a lot of self-consciousness and continuous examination of findings to avoid bias.

1.10 Overview of Chapters

Chapter **One** is an introductory chapter to this study. Its main objective is to give a background of the study, significance of the study and also outline an overview of the research methods to be used. The chapter also outlines the case study which is the Grounding Programme at the University of Fort Hare. The description includes the history of the programme, how it is organised and the kind of employees the programme has.

Chapter **Two**'s purpose is to outline scholarly literature on the similarity and duality of communication and organisation. This chapter also gives an overview of the foundational theories to the four flows model, namely the structuration theory and the CCO school and their relevance to organising. The short falls of the theories and models are also clearly outlined in this chapter.

Chapter **Three** presents the methodology used in the research. These include the information collection methods, the population under study, sampling methods and data analysis procedures. The methods used in this study are namely participant observation, document examination and open ended interviews. All these are done under the case study approach.

Chapter **Four** answers the purpose of the research. The chapter serves as a presentation of primary information found from the study. In this chapter the four flows model is intersected with the Grounding Programme to show if the model is ideal for explaining organising in the absence of a formal organisation (containerised entity).

Chapter **Five** sums up the entire research, rounding up the findings, recommendations, limitations of the research and also concluding the entire study.

1.11 Conclusion

The study finds out the extent of the applicability of McPhee and Zaug's four flows model in organising. It is significant in the organisational communication studies as it bridges the knowledge gap in the validity of the four flows model in 'organisation' as a continuous process of talk and action by organisational members. The findings will help determine the future 'organisation' of the Grounding Programme to eradicate organisational communication problems.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This thesis draws on literature in organisational communication studies that focuses on the communication constitutes organisation (CCO) perspective, central to this is Weick's (1979) view of seeing *organisation* as a verb, thus shifting emphasis to the term *organising*. Communication plays a central role in organising and organisation: it is the heart of any organizing process (Miller 2002). 'Organisation' refers to constant processes of organising and the facticity of any particular organisation is equal to the activities and practices that give that entity a form. In order to understand the communicative constitution of organisation perspective, there is need to unpack the concepts of communication and organisation individually. These are intimately linked in current organisational theory where some scholars draw a causal relation between the two while others treat the terms synonymously.

2.2 Organisation

An organisation is when individuals work systematically towards achieving a common goal through collective collaborations and clearly defined hierarchical ranks. The main reason why people organise is to reach a common purpose with the knowledge, efforts and abilities of multiple people (Canary and McPhee 2011:1). An organisation can also be understood as a group effort with distinct goals, stated tasks and reward structures. Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) view an organisation as an ambiguous process continuously 'made and remade'. This entails that an organisation is a process as put forward by Weick (1979) who shifts emphasis from *organisation* to *organising*, which is a continuous process of becoming. Bronn and Bronn (2001:159) make a strong argument that the word *organisation* itself is a noun and also a myth. If one looks for an organisation one will not find it, what will be found are events linked together.

Putnam and Fairhurst (2004) interweave all the above arguments by saying that organisations are framed as discursive constructions, so they can be seen in three different dimensions; organisations as objects/container (*noun*), organisations as continuous state of becoming/process (*verb*) and organisations as embedded in action (*verb*). The container view sees organisations as buildings or housed

collaborations where individuals systematically work towards achieving common goals which are reflected in discourse while the process approach sees organisation as a continuous process taking place in spite of buildings or housing. The action approach is fixed in the social practices of organisational members. These three different orientations are used to explore different organisational language used by different people and researchers in discourse analysis (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004).

2.2.1 The container approach

The container approach sees the organisation as an already formed entity that occupies a permanent space (Woffinden 2009, Putnam and Fairhurst 2004:10). This approach views organisations as independent institutions that are in existence even in the absence of members and their discursive practices. Putnam and Fairhurst (2004:9) acknowledge that this approach makes organisations appear as independent of their creators, where communication is a simple act of transmission of information. Chasi (2007:85) equates the object approach to a cup metaphor, a mere container which houses the communication process. The object approach supports the idea of an organisation as a 'noun' as it looks at the physical side and the location of a particular institute.

The container metaphor has been criticised by most organisational communication scholars such as Taylor and Van Every 2000, Bisel 2009 and McDonald 2010 for its failure to recognise the importance of human beings. Although criticising the container metaphor, McDonald (2010:9) is flexible in his arguments, he also points out that non-human *objects* are however equally important in an organisation, they are key to the CCO because they include things like text and documents, which are also communication elements. An organisation is called an organisation because of its physical site, people are first exposed to the organisational building before they meet organisational members, and the building has the organisational name hence speaking volumes about the organisation itself. Although little research has so far been done to theorise the materiality of physical sites that is; what value they have, it is clear that material space and place influences the resources available for interaction (Ashcraft *et al.* 2009).

2.2.1.1 Critiques of the container approach

Of the three approaches, the object or container approach has been criticised mostly. Taylor and Van Every (2000:143) alludes that organisations are a *flatland*, to

express metaphorically their opposition to the dominance of organisations as entities. In their view, an organisation exists even if it is unseen, so it does not mean that an organisation has to be containerised for it to exist. Bisel (2009:125) says that organisations should not be seen as fixed stable vessels but as collaborations called into being by interacting and reasoning individuals who try to coordinate their thoughts and actions to achieve common goals. Bisel values the importance of persons who make communication possible. We might give credit to the important role of communication in organising but we need not fail to realise the important role of the persons in the communication process who facilitate the existence of organisations. Thus, one may argue that the object approach does not give enough credit to the role of interaction by human beings, it has been discredited for its inability to recognise the power of discourse in organisational formation.

Organisational self-structuring of the four flows model confirms that an organisation is not a mere container or building because it is individual groupings which pave way for progress in an organisation, hence the container approach is an inadequate way of defining an organisation. McDonald (2010: 6) argues that the CCO approach challenges the idea that an organisation can be viewed as a 'container' because it is communication that constitutes organizing, not vice-versa.

Putnam and Fairhurst (2004:11) contend that the object approach detaches the organisation from the action of its members and it does not acknowledge the power of agency. By virtue of being a static entity, it means it has a structure, rules and regulations that prohibit organisational members' agency. Despite its criticism, scholars need to acknowledge the role of material entities because they do play a communicative role in the organisation, stakeholders usually see the material form before they are absorbed into the organisation. McDonald (2010:6) comments that the viewpoint of the container approach has seen a lot of scholarly criticism, however credit has been given to the process approach.

2.2.2 The process approach

Instead of viewing organisation as a product, most researchers look at it as a process, mainly focusing on *organising* and how talk transforms the whole process (Woffinden 2009:4). Organisational members talk the organisation into existence, it is the instructiveness of language that makes things to become and members' collectivism is achieved through talk (Boden1994). Putnam and Fairhurst (2004:13)

contend that organisation emerges through linguistic forms and the process approach dwells on the role of discourse in organising. Most scholars of the CCO School are in agreement that organisation only comes to exist through the interaction of organisational members (McDonald 2012: 2). Talk occurs prior to organisations. It is language properties and communication that produce organising (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004:13). In the same vein, Bisel (2009:2) acknowledges that “organisations are not fixed and stable but are rather called into being by interacting and sense-making persons who attempt to co-ordinate their behaviour to accomplish goals”. Thus the becoming approach loosely explains how talk sustains organisations (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004).

Weick (1979) points out that organisations are dynamic, they are not static, and hence the process approach becomes the most appropriate way of explaining organisations. This approach has been credited for its acknowledgement and appreciation of agency, the desire of organisational members to act independently by collectively discussing their thoughts and having their voices heard. The process approach focuses on what the organisation is at the moment, not any fixture or building (Woffinden 2009:4).

The digitalization of resources also gradually paves way for the becoming/process approach. Now that resources are kept online, the reason for tangible organisations becomes reduced. Thus one can possibly argue that the advent of technology and its improvements paves way for the gradual decay of the container metaphor.

The process approach however has a weakness in that it substitutes *organisation* with *organising*, which are two different concepts (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004:15). The approach fails to explain the transition from *organising* to *organisation*, the difference between the two is difficult to explain under the process approach. Despite its weakness, the becoming approach ought to be credited for its vivid explanation of the concept of organising. Complementing the process approach is the action approach.

2.2.3 The action approach

The action approach postulates that discourse and organisation, structure and action are constitutive in the same way communication is constitutive of organisation (Bisel 2009). Hence it is tempting to treat the action approach as a combination of the object and the process approach (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004). The action

approach states that structure is found in action and action is found in structure. Proponents of Giddens' (1979) structuration theory are the ones mostly theorising the grounded action approach simply because it endeavours to interweave structure and action. Weick (1979) sees organisation as a way of interpreting an enacted environment in a way that leads to logical action. Although Weick's main focus area was the becoming approach, his definition also hinges on the action approach, which is almost inseparable from the process approach. The strength of the action approach is that it jointly conceives of *organising* and *organisation* as compared to the becoming approach, it vividly explicates that action can take place even in contained collaborations, hence intensely explaining the relationship and transition from *organising* to *organisation*.

2.2.4 Summary of the three approaches

Organisations exist through the actions of the particular members that compose it, while at the same time it exists as something larger than the members. Without the individual members, an organisation would not be an organisation, but conversely the organisation is an entity beyond a group of individuals like people waiting for a bus stop (Gesler 2013:8).

Gesler's view accommodates all three viewpoints of an organisation. The three dimensions altogether encompass all the possible elements of an organisation and add a unique way of comprehending the complexity of organisations. Despite the divergent views, all the definitions of organisation make sense in social sciences.

2.2.5 Informal organisation

Every organisation, no matter how exclusive its vision is, has to give room for informal activities. The importance of informal activities and networks is that it is where most communication and conversation take place and it is usually where employees lay their complaints and make their voices heard. The Grounding Programme makes use of informal networks such as the group *WhatsApp*, a social networking site as an informal communication tool to get a sense of, and accommodate facilitators' viewpoints. Informal communication perfectly intersects with the four flows model under study. Usually when members are assimilated into the organisation, (*membership negotiation*) it is almost impossible to explain everything about the organisation, some crucial information is left unsaid hence perpetuating ignorance. Therefore the use of informal networks such as *whatsapp* bridges the knowledge gap existing.

The provable 'grapevine' is also very crucial for organisational existence. Organisations should feed, water and cultivate grapevine as it helps in the early identification of problems and amending them as soon as they arise. Grapevine is one way of informal communication and it usually takes place when members are working collectively (*activity coordination*). In the process of coordinating organisational activities, informal talk takes place, it is very easy for employees to influence one another especially if they are of the same rank. It is in these discussions that they awaken one another on critical organisational issues that others might have overlooked. Grapevine usually unites workers into striking, in cases where the organisation is not meeting their needs. Grapevine is very important in an organisational setting as it promotes employees' agency, the desire to have their voices heard, and the power to disapprove what is not ideal to them.

2.3 Communication

Man is a communicating animal, all the five senses are a form of communication, like birth, death, growth and decay, communication is a part of individual life as well as organisational existence. Bronn and Bronn (2001:19) analyse communication this way, "communication is a process that looks like a lubricant in an engine; it is what allows the engine to function, therefore, too little or too much can be damaging to the engine". The act of communication is the thread that holds any organisation together if not the skeleton that determine its structure, therefore it is very important for organisational existence (Rogers and Rogers 1976:108). Since communication has been defined as a process, It is meaningless to talk about the beginning or an end of communication because, like all other processes communication flows like a stream. Communication has been, but cannot afford to be reduced to a tool, it is not just a mere tool but like breath to man (Chasi 2007:52). This therefore explains that it is communication that calls organisations into being.

2.3.1 Types of communication

2.3.1.1 Internal organisational communication

Before an organisation is able to communicate on a macro level (*institutional positioning*) with its external stakeholders, there should be good communication channels with internal employees or internal stakeholders. Internal communication enables the creation of a more democratic and harmonious oriented organisations

and helps mediating conflict. Harrison (2000:119) expresses that it is mandatory for organisations to invest in internal communication before anything else, if employees are well informed they become productive. Employees or internal stakeholders have to be always conscious of the changes taking place in an organisation, the objectives of the organisation and how changes may affect them. This is obviously done through internal communication.

Three of McPhee and Zaug's four flows model (*membership negotiation, activity coordination and organisational self-structuring*) are mostly centred in internal organisational communication. The process of internal communication begins as soon as a member is called for an interview, up to the time the individual leaves the organisation. It is internal communication that binds the employee to an organisation and gives security to the employee. Gregory 2003:52 states that features like employee morale, retention, performance, customer service and satisfaction hinges mostly on internal communication. In other words, internal communication is the thread that holds the organisational fibre altogether into an organised system, it is very important as it welds unique parts of the organisation into a team (Gregory 2003:52).

2.3.1.2 Face to face communication

The importance of face to face communication is that it builds confidence between parties. They reach consensus through face to face communication and there is usually less humiliation as compared to group communication such as meetings (Gregory 2003:48). It is almost impossible not to pay attention during face to face communication and it is also rare not to understand what is being said, except where language is the barrier. Gregory (2003:49) also point out an important issue that has been overlooked, which is feedback. He says some managers are paranoid of feedback as it reflects their own performance. Face to face communication encourages feedback which has to be highly bred and fertilised for good organisational progress.

2.3.1.3 External organisational communication

Apart from meeting the needs of organisational internal stakeholders, there is need to consider external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and competitors (Harrison 2000:145). It is in these external interactions that exchange forums take place. This directly reflects McPhee and Zaug's last flow (*institutional*

positioning) of the four flow model, which addresses the need of organisational environmental exploration and indicates how crucial it is for organisations to positively relate to external stakeholders. External organisational communication grounds an organisation as it markets the organisation, hence attracting further stakeholders.

2.4 Documents and text as communication tools

“Focussing on the role of text challenges our overreliance on face to face interaction” (Cooren 2004:374). “Documents inform, indicate, say, tell, assert, deny, suggest, predict, and even prophesy” Cooren (2004:380). Text and any other documents play a crucial role in the act of organising. It is in documents that rules and regulations are laid. Text has become the most important form of communication now that organisational members are dispersed and or work from home. Gone are the days when an organisation entailed a group of people gathered in one place, now organisational members are dispersed all over the world yet connected via text, which is Short Message Service (SMS), social networks and so on. In fact, work orders are now often in text forms. The question that part of this research seeks to find out is the correlation of the intended message versus the deduced message when it comes to text. A lot of communication takes place in the form of text and documents, however, it is also crucial to note that the intended message (written message), is not always the deduced message by the reader. Hence the misunderstandings cause a lot of turmoil in organisations.

2.5 Communication and organisation: Same yet different?

The association of communication and organisation has caused scholarly debates, but one common agreement among the scholars is that the conception of organisation is rooted in communication (Bisel 2009). Some scholars view communication and organising as basically the same phenomena (Smith 1993), these include Taylor and Van Every (2000:4), whose argument is that communication and organisation are equivalent. However Putnam and Nicotera (2009:4) disagree. They argue that the relationship between communication and organisation does not mean that they are synonymous. There is communication that has nothing to do with organising for instance a group of people chatting at a beer hall. Therefore, that is why communication is said to constitute organising and not

vice versa. Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) view communication and organisation not as synonyms but argue that communication is the 'substance of organising' meaning that it is a crucial ingredient to organising.

Fairhurst and Putnam (1999:2) and Pepper (1995) postulates that communication and organisation are equivalent yet they have a duality. They can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Communication is found in organisation and organisation is found in communication. Smith (1993)'s argument is that scholars who synonymise communication and organisation claim that the two are related mainly because organisations are companies or institutions where communication takes place. So the two phenomena produce one another. Thus communication produces organisation, organisation produces communication and the two co-produce each other. Since communication gives birth to the structure of organisation, it is ideal to examine organisations from a communication viewpoint (Taylor 1993).

Communication and organisation are theories that are basically the same phenomenon expressed in different ways which is to say communication is organising and organising is communicating. The two processes are isomorphic (Chasi 2007:12).

His argument is that communication and organisation can be viewed as a reclusive harmony or a similar phenomenon conveyed differently. However, Putnam and Nicotera (2009:4) stress that to make an assumption that an organisation is constituted by communication is to treat communication and organisation as the same thing which is irrational. The two are different from one another and cannot afford to be treated as identical because organisation is a communication achievement not vice-versa (Putnam and Nicotera 2009).

Chasi (2007:137) contradicts his first argument by saying that the equivalence thesis of organisation and communication views organisation as a myth, better understood as existing only in communication. His argument is that likening organisation to communication means "the space-time-location and the passing of the organisation as object of the study are contested", thus the equivalence approach robs organisation of its important constituents such as time and location.

Adequately planned internal communication is the 'glue' that binds employees and the organisation together (Gregory 2003:44). So communication and organisation cannot be the same because it is communication that gives strength to organisation, hence to say organisation is communication is misleading (McPhee and Zaug 2000). Woffinden (2009:7) suggests that each of the different approaches to defining

organisation and communication adds significance to the study of organisations and paves the way for an understanding of the relationship between organisation and communication.

To summarise this dilemma, Putnam and Nicotera (2009:2) posit that “communication and organisation are abstract constructs that are difficult to anchor individually as well as interdependently”. Hence, a discussion of the other hinges on the other. In as much as communication is viewed as the backbone of organizing, the two are different.

2.6 Communication Constitutes Organisation (CCO) school

The idea of communication establishing organisations led to the formation of the CCO school of thought. The CCO perspective has various theoretical roots, these include speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle, 1969); systems theory (Luhmann 1995); ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967); phenomenology (Schutz 1967); conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974); critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995); structuration (Giddens 1979); semiology (Barthes 1954); and critical theory (Foucault 1972). Although all these theories play a critical interwoven role in the foundation of the CCO perspective, it is difficult to say which specific theory or methodology the analysis of communication in the Grounding Programme will need in the event of requiring deeper analysis than imagined. However, Giddens’ concept of structuration does play an important and central role in the founding of the CCO perspective (McPhee and Poole 2001).

Anthony Giddens’ (1979) book, *Central problems in social theory* lays a foundational phase in the conception of the CCO approach. Giddens clarifies the two concepts of structure and agency, his argument is that structure and agency constitute one another. This constitution is similar to that of communication and organisation as put forward by proponents of the CCO model. A number of organisational communication scholars such as Karl Weick (1979), Smith (1993), MCPhee and Zaug (2000), Taylor and Van Every (2000), Putnam and Fairhurst (2004, 2009) and Cooren *et al.* (2011) and many others theorize that communication is constitutive of organisation. This idea then led to the conception of the communication constitutes organisation (CCO) school of thought. The CCO approach has drawn attention of a lot of scholarly researchers such as Putnam and Fairhurst (2004, 2009), MCPhee and Zaug (2000, 2009), Taylor and Van Every

(2000) and Cooren *et al.* (2011) who scrutinized it even up to date. As a result, the four flows model which is pillar of this research was conceived by McPhee and Zaug (2000) out of the limitations of the CCO approach which is said to be rather too broad. In other words, Giddens' structuration theory led to the conception of the CCO approach and the CCO approach led to the birth of McPhee and Zaug's four flows model.

In the light of the CCO model, most recent research scholars agree that communication conceives and sustains organisations (Putnam and Nicotera 2009). Organisations are constantly being modified by talk and by other communication processes such as electronic mail. In fact organisations evolve because of communication (McDonald 2010:6). Instead of being formed by communication, organisation emerges within communication (Taylor and Van Every 2000). If communication really constitutes organisation, it cannot be just a method of expression of 'realities', but a way of establishing organisations and sustaining them (Cooren *et al.* 2011: 1150). Communication is the pivotal site of organising work, ranging from store rooms, to living rooms, class rooms to rest rooms and bar rooms (*ibid*). In the same vein, Putnam and Nicotera (2009:4) highlight that communication is more than just organising; organising cannot exist apart from communication. However Bisel (2009), on the other hand, argues that the presence of communication alone is inadequate to guarantee the occurrence of organising since it could in some instances weaken organising, misunderstandings evolve in the process of communication due to cases such as information overload and inadequate communication.

In as much as the CCO sees organisations and organising as occurring in a space of structural and discursive tensions, it can also be seen as tensions between product and process. These two difficult levels of tensions extend to difficult positions held by different scholars in understanding organisations. The constitution of communication and organisation has alarmed scholarly debate. The first view is the synonymous scholarship of communication and organisation, where scholars such as Taylor and Van every (2000) argue that communication and organisation are identical. The second view is an extreme reaction, where scholars maintain that communication and organisation cannot be seen as equal, they are entirely different, there is communication that has nothing to do with organising, therefore that is why

communication is said to constitute organising and not vice versa. Communication is definitely more than just a mere element of organising.

Putnam and Nicotera (2009:4) neutralise the argument by highlighting that “communication produces organisation, organisation produces communication; the two co-produce each other...communication and organisation are both abstract constructs that are difficult to anchor individually as well as interdependently. Thus, unpacking one concept often leads to anchoring the other one as an abstraction”. Putnam and Nicotera’s (2009:4) point of view is that to treat ‘communication’ and ‘organisation’ as the same phenomena is irrational, yet the other extreme is also wrong-headed. They agree to the relationship of communication and organisation without conflating the two. In order to comprehend the theoretical roots to the CCO, there is need to understand the structuration theory by Giddens and the economic determinism concept.

2.7 Economic determinism

The economic determinism concept gave an impulse to Giddens’ structuration theory mainly because the birth of a theory is usually influenced by the inadequacies or limitations of the other. The concept puts economic factors as the most important in any society, determining and influencing all other societal denominators such as religion and politics. Proponents of the economic determinism concept place human needs first, their argument is that most human needs are fulfilled by economic determinants, these stretch from food, shelter, clothing to mention a few, hence the economic primacy. In other words, economics is an essential condition for all other factors. In spite of the proponents’ endeavour to support their argument, there has been a wide reaction against the economic determinism idea, being criticised for reducing society to economic factors (Martell 2009). Society has many denominators and cannot afford to be reduced to only the economy.

The economic determinism concept’s popularity sprouted in the early market capitalism period where capitalists were the most imminent figures oppressing the proletarians (Ritzer 1996). It is the conflicts between the capitalists and the proletarians that gave an impulse to Giddens’ structuration theory. The omission and failure to theorize agency in the economic determinism concept inspired Giddens who endeavours to offer a conceptual stability to agency and structure, accommodating both, in his explanation of the structuration theory.

2.8 Structuration

It would be improper to discuss both the CCO approach and McPhee and Zaugg's four flows model in isolation of structuration theory. The CCO model and the four flows model were both inspired by the structuration which is a theory conceived by Anthony Giddens in an attempt to synthesise two conflicting phenomena, agency and structure, which seem to contradict each other yet they are both equally crucial in an organisational setting. Giddens (1984) posits that agency and social structure are not entirely diverging phenomena but ways of studying social action in general. "Agency in structuration theory is expressive of power" (Chasi 2007:129), it is the ability of people to behave independently and to make their own choices. Yet structure is a constructed system that limits the actions or desires of individuals. Giddens (1984:377) explains structure as instructions and rules, repeatedly associated with the reproduction of social systems somehow limiting the freedom of workers.

Harrison (2000:117) attempts to clarify what organisations and employees expect from each other. Her argument is that an organisation does not want employees working for it but 'drivers' of an organisation towards an identified goal (*structure*). On the other hand, employees want payment and a fair working condition which is not exploiting (*agency*). De Santo (2011:283) postulates that reality is that employees care less about the organisational goal but for their wellbeing, good working conditions and their salary. Thus it would be irrational for one to assume that all employees care much about the organisational common goal. The fact is that most employees work towards a common goal to impress, keep their job and not be laid off. Therefore, the conflicting wants between the organisation and its employees is what Giddens synthesizes as *structuration*. The role of communication in organisation, in this case, is to settle the predicaments and inevitable conflicts of structure and agency and be able to balance and harness these conflicting goals. In the same vein, Gregory (2003:44) expresses communication as the switch between an organisation's constant need for change and employees' constant need for security. This definition emphasises the different and diverging needs of both the employees and the organisation (*structuration*) where proper or calculated communication is the only solution. It is crucial to note that it is communication that unites both parties into a mutual understanding.

Individuals convey different behaviours when in and when outside of the organisation. It is the organisational structure that shapes the behavioural change and structure that limits agency. An organisational structure tends to affect the communication process, interaction initiated by a subordinate to a superior is different from communication between employees of equal rank; communication flow is guided and limited by organisational structure. Thus “the structuration theory proposes a lens for understanding the tension between individuals and organisations” (Gesler 2013:8). Grunig (1992:563) points out that the dilemma of structure and agency is inevitable because it is communication that helps create structure but also structure somehow limits communication. In as much as structure is said to limit communication, there is no way one cannot communicate (Chasi 2007:53). Communication takes place even in silence, the absence of an emotion or expression is just as important as the presence of one. Structure may suppress the voice momentarily, but cannot erase it. Gesler (2013:7) postulates that structuration is a meta-theory which is an extreme broad perspective of communication analysis, it has led to the birth of a number of theoretical branches which have inclined either towards structure or agency, in some instances one element dominating while the other subordinating (Archer 1982).

In a nutshell, properly calculated communication results in a balanced structuration. Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) argue that it is senseless to view agency and structure as substitutes one has to choose amidst, they are both important phenomena in an organisational setting.

2.9 Four flows model

McPhee and Zaug (2000)’s four flows model stemmed from the (CCO) approach. These unique flows have a different contribution to the CCO (McPhee and Zaug 2000:10). Bisel (2009:127) views McPhee and Zaug’s model as an attempt to narrowly define the “constitutive features of communication”. They confront the CCO by specifying and generalising it using the four flows.

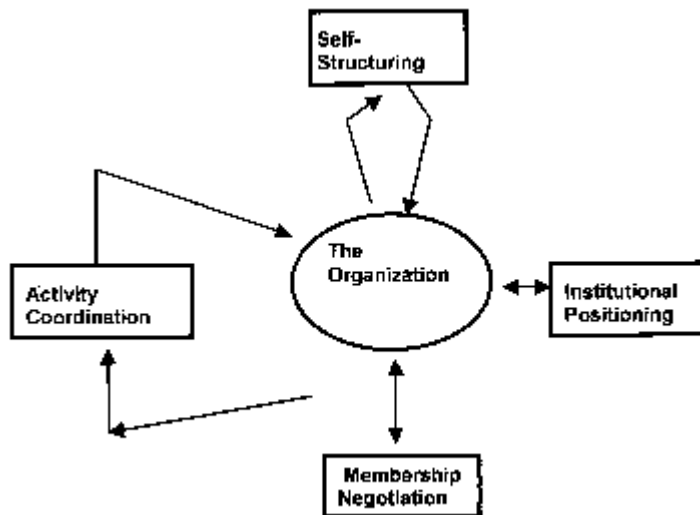


Figure 1. The four analytically distinct flows of the four flows model (Source: McPhee and Zaug (2000)).

McPhee and Zaug (2000) saw the CCO perspective as too generalising, they state that:

Organisations... are so varied in size, origin, and 'member' status, and thrive so persistently through changes of membership and structure, that a theory of constitution must be highly general, allowing organisations to occur in a variety of ways.

Their line of argument is that communication constitutes organisations in four analytically distinct yet interdependent ways, called "flows" (Putnam and Nicotera 2009:62). These flows are namely; *membership negotiation*, *activity co-ordination*, *organisational self-structuring* and *institutional positioning*, they unite the previously divided macro and micro levels, the global and local organisation (Putnam and Nicotera 2009). The first three flows explain organisation at a macro level yet the last, institutional positioning shows organisational activities at macro level inclusive of its association to external stakeholders. Their main purpose of these flows is to bind the organisation to its members.

2.9.1 Membership negotiation

Membership negotiation is what McPhee and Zaug (2000) liken to 'courtship' of new members into the organisation. It involves the relationship of members at entry level of the organisation, how they are enrolled, associated and oriented into the organisation. It is basically entrance level, getting used to the policies of the organisation on the part of new members. Membership negotiation is also inclusive of old organisational members, how they welcome and appreciate new ones and

how they respond to questions asked by new members. Communication of new members is usually different from that of the old ones, as the assimilation of new members is usually associated with communication problems such as inadequate communication and other communication barriers.

Putnam and Nicotera (2009:64) highlight that there are basically three boundaries as a new member becomes part of the organisation. These are, 'the boundary of ignorance', 'illegitimacy' and 'disconnection'. As members are incorporated into organisational routines, they feel distant from the organisation by virtue of their being new members. The boundaries of legitimacy and disconnection explain the distance of new members from the organisation as they feel alienated from the organisational on-goings and hierarchical structure. However it is the passage of time, proper association and planned adequate communication which can break the above mentioned boundaries. All these mentioned boundaries at the entrance level of a member can only be solved by communication, it can be both formal and informal but preferably informal communication because it makes employees feel at ease and welcomed. During the induction process, there are high chances that some things are overlooked that is, not everything is said, and the assumption is that it is common sense. This is a common problem that the Grounding Programme faces and this is usually where communication problems begin. It is human nature to overlook some organisational information at the induction, hence perpetuating ignorance among employees therefore causing organisational problems and confusion in the long run. Hence the genesis of most organisational problems stem at membership negotiation level.

2.9.2 Organisational self-structuring

The way an organisation is designed makes it different from a mob, it is structured, has clarity of roles and responsibility and every individual knows what to do (McPhee and Zaig 2000). Clarity of roles and responsibility in an organisation unconsciously paves way to organisational self-structuring and create organisational progress. The way an organisation is designed makes it structure itself when organisational members know what to do and vice versa. Self-structuring is when organisational members commune with one another towards a common goal at the same time being guided by organisational policies and procedures. It is clarity of

work, workers' respect and trust for one another that pave way to organisational self-structuring.

Organisational self-structuring demonstrates that an organisation is not just a container but its existence is facilitated by its members. McPhee and Zaug (2000) assess that it appears as if the organisation is the one "structuring itself yet in fact it is structured by its members as well as organisational properties". The self-structuring of the organisation hinges greatly on communication. Policies and procedures are usually documented which is still a form of communication.

2.9.3 Activity co-ordination

Workers are united or co-ordinated by the work they do. They work collectively and all this is possible through communication with one another. Activity coordination entails that employees talk over their goals and how they are aiming at achieving them, as opposed to formal structure which commands how work should be done (Rausch 2012:37). Therefore, it is through informal communication that most activity is co-ordinated. It is also crucial to note that members can as well coordinate their own agendas such as strikes, it does not necessarily mean that activities co-ordinated are fruitful for the organisation. Bisel (2009:127) criticises activity coordination, he says it includes street gangs and social movements. At the same time one would argue that such co-ordination could be an attempt by individuals to show their organisational discontent (agency), in the light of Giddens' structuration theory. Therefore one can conclusively say that, activity co-ordination is accommodative of both structure and agency.

2.9.4 Institutional positioning

Institutional positioning speaks to how an organisation relates to external stakeholders inclusive of the media. It is basically communication at a macro level and "identity negotiation", marketing the organisation to external stakeholders (McPhee and Zaug 2000). This flow looks at external communication as an organisation does not exist in a vacuum. Therefore there is need for environmental exploration as well as enhancing good media relations. It is necessary for the programme to learn, re-learn and unlearn from other institutions as they draw a lot of resources from one another. The Grounding Programme featured in this research as a case study co-operates with other similar trans-disciplinary programmes from other

Universities mostly in exchange forums to share ideas and expand the new concept of the trans-disciplinary pedagogy.

Although theoretically differentiated, each flow influences the other, an organisation grows out of the overlap among the flows rather than from each flow constituting sites in different ways (Putnam and Nicotera 2009). Each flow serves as a catalyst to compare and contrast different approaches to the CCO approach.

2.10 Theoretical shortfalls

2.10.1 Weaknesses of the structuration theory

The structuration theory is a meta-theory which is an enormously broad perception of analysing communication and some scholars including Archer (1982) agree that Giddens' structuration theory is rather an unfinished theory. Giddens mentions the dilemma of structure and agency, a tension between individuals and an organisation but does not offer concrete solution to the plight. Archer (1982) argues that Giddens only highlights but does not solve the conflict between structure and agency, hence the structuration theory appears somewhat incomplete. Therefore, it has been difficult for Giddens' 'grand theory' to be taken too seriously because Giddens himself did not support his argument to give it substance. He became effortless in re-uniting the dualism of structure and agency (Archer 1982). However, Giddens ought to be credited for realising the dualism of structure and agency.

2.10.2 Weaknesses of the CCO approach

Basing his argument on the critical feminist theory, McDonald (2010:4) contends that the CCO approach overlooks other occupations. If we were to look at communication as a department or occupation such as the organisational communication officer, it would mean that the CCO approach assumes that this role is the back bone of the organisation yet undermining other occupations that play a vital role for an organisation to run. The CCO approach sugar coats the role of communication in organisations yet there are other occupations that are equally important that play a significant role in organising such as the human resources occupation which plays a crucial role in McPhee and Zaug's membership negotiation flow. McDonald (2010:13) proposes that "it is communication that names occupations and defines what they are; occupations are also transformed through

communication”, therefore other occupations do not have to be overlooked but to be taken into consideration in the CCO perspective.

Bisel (2009:127) argues that most organisational communication scholars believe that it is communication that forms organisations because this whole idea seats communication central to organisational discipline. Thus, his view is that the usefulness of the CCO theory to scholars outside the communication realm is reduced. In order for CCO to be taken seriously, there is need not only to focus “on meetings, activities or informal conversations but any talk, discourse, artefact, metaphors, architectural element, body, text or narratives” (Cooren *et al.* 2011: 6). The scope of the CCO is limited, hence the need to expand it and look at everything that express meaning.

The CCO approach in McPhee and Zaug’s four flows model perspective has a weakness in that it fails to recognise non-human agency (McDonald 2010:10). An organisation is constituted by a crossbreed of human and non-human actors (Cooren 2004:388). Although human beings are important in communication or in organising, non-human elements such as computers ought to be credited for the role they play. Material and space also influence the opportunity for interaction (McDonald 2010:11). In this perspective, McDonald feels the need to recognise and credit material entities, not only focus the attention on humans.

Organisations are complex and have varied defining facets, so that no one grammatical or communicative form is sufficient to constitute them. On the other hand, they are so varied in size, origin, and ‘member’ status, and thrive so persistently through changes of membership and structure, that a theory of constitution must be highly general, allowing organisations to occur in a variety of ways (McPhee and Zaug 2000:30).

The CCO scholarship chooses not, between looking at how people get organised and how organisations come to be restructured and replicated (Cooren *et al.* 2011:10). In the same vein, Koschmann (2013) assesses that the CCO rejects the container approach of organisations, hence it is rather incomplete. Scholars who reject the organisational container approach view these interactions as “homeless organisations” also put forward as “uncontained collaborations” by many scholars. Contained organisations cannot be totally discarded. McPhee and Zaug (2000) see the CCO approach as too general hence the need to coin the four flows model. In spite of the extensive and the multidisciplinary nature of organisational communication literature, scholars have not adequately clarified the claim of how communication is constitutive of organising (Putnam and Nicotera 2009).

2.10.3 Shortfalls of the four flows model

Although the four flows came into being because of the short falls of the CCO model, some scholars have identified the shortfalls of these too. McDonald (2010 10), imagines that:

Not all flows have to be present in order for an organisation to become constituted but the presence of one flow does not by itself constitute organisations. Instead an organisation is constituted when communication pertains to several flows.

Communication still constitutes organisation even at the absence of institutional positioning. So it is possible that at some point, some of the flows might not be relevant. Since the flows influence each other, there is a possibility that problems from one flow may overlap to the other as a result causing a cycle of problems. Lutgen-Sandvik andand McDermott (2008:311) concur, they argue that discourse from one flow can perpetuate, shape, and influence messages in other flows in an unintended way. Problems of membership negotiation may definitely overlap with institutional position, once the problem overlap, it might be difficult to trace how it began.

McPhee and Zaug (2000) discuss the institutional positioning of an organisation without elucidating anything about the case of an organisation not as an institution, but just the process of organising. A programme, for instance cannot be equated to an organisation as an entity although organising is the common element. A programme cannot be seen as a container compared to the organisation which is originally a tangible entity. Hence the term 'institutional' becomes questionable where a programme is concerned. Some scholars see institutional positioning as a capital acquisition endeavour by virtue of its name which sounds more like a business terminology.

Lutgen-Sandvik andand McDermott (2008:311) allude that each flow can either contribute to constructive or destructive organising. An example would be a wrong and un-calculated message sent to external publics that could ultimately ruin the image of the organisation instead of building it, hence affecting institutional positioning. Membership negotiation might also comprise messages that either attract or ward off possible members. This stretches from the position advert itself, adverts usually require impossible requirements. Some interviews are hostile, therefore being a boundary to potential candidates. Not all membership negotiation is rosy (Lutgen-Sandvik andand McDermott 2008:313).

Lutgen-Sandvik andand McDermott (2008:311) highlight that organisational self-structuring can also be abusive as formal documents usually display organisational rights, favouring its managerial representatives. In most cases these documents ignore employees' agency yet focus mainly on structure, activity coordination can also have an abusive nature to employees. "In activity coordination, there are some messages that could be abusive to employees, abusive supervision, and abusive co-worker communication" (Lutgen-Sandvik andand McDermott 2008:314).

Putnam and Nicotera (2009:52) argue that McPhee and Zaug (2000) based their conceptual argument on the assumption of Giddens theory of structuration which is itself notoriously brief and appears rather incomplete in discussing organisational communication issues. In as much as the four flows are said to be interactive episodes, McPhee and Zaug do not properly explain how talk conceives organisation, and hence the model is still inadequate. The argument is that the properties of these flows do not entirely explain the genesis of organisation, therefore there is still a gap that is void. Institutional positioning, if not properly calculated can make organisations struggle with identity crisis, trying to emulate what other organisations do especially in the case of a programme.

Another weakness of McPhee and Zaug's four flows model is that, in their explanation, they are unsuccessful in scaling up internal interaction (*micro*) and external interaction (*macro*). They neither draw a boundary between the two nor do they explain the smooth shift from the micro to macro interactions (Cooren and Fairhurst in Putnam andand Nicotera 2009:119). Girginova (2013:30) argues that the four flows model does not give much attention to the role of text and language, rather it focuses mostly on human beings. Although Taylor (2009) agrees with McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model, he feels that the model is too broad hence needs supplementation by a narrower precise communication model. While said to be interdependent, the flows are distinct and appear very broad to be practically analysed in an organisation setup.

2.11 Conclusion

The genesis of the four flows model can be traced back to the CCO model which came into being because of the shortfalls of Giddens' structuration theory, which was in the first place influenced by the determinism model. The structuration theory has been discredited by most researchers as being too broad. Scholars such as Archer

(1992) and Gesler (2013) contend that Giddens failed to anchor a solution of the dilemma of structure and agency; hence the structuration theory has been seen as being rather a half-finished piecemeal. Therefore it is the weaknesses of the structuration theory that later led to the formation of the CCO model which postulate that communication constitutes organising. The CCO model puts large emphasis on the importance of human beings in the formation of organisation. The CCO model had weaknesses too in the sense that it overlooked other occupations yet spicing up the communication occupation in organising. Most organisational communication scholars argue that the CCO scope is too narrow as it recognise not non-human agency such as talk, discourse and metaphors. It was the weaknesses of the CCO model that later led to the formation of the four flows model by McPhee and Zaug (2000). The purpose of this study is therefore to prove the validity of the four flows model in organising the Grounding Programme in spite of its weaknesses.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and substantiates the research methods used in this study. These are the research design, methods of collecting data, population, sampling methods and data analysis procedures. While the methods used are considered ideal to meet the nature and objectives of a research such as this study, it is the research goal that drove the choice of the chosen methods. The problems associated with these methods are also highlighted including solutions to the problems where necessary.

This research was done qualitatively, and corpus collected by means of ethnography/participant observation, in-depth unstructured interviews and document examination. A case study approach was employed as it would better explicate the communication flows and the application of McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model to explain the communicative organisation of the Grounding Programme.

3.2 Qualitative Research

The researcher employs a qualitative research paradigm which is interpretive and exploratory in nature (Hancock 1998). Qualitative research is based on regulations that the researcher observes in the environment and pays particular attention to the meanings people construct and how they understand their world (Merriam 2009:13). The role of qualitative research is therefore to conduct an in-depth investigation of people and their milieu (Bryman 2005:19). Hence the nature of qualitative research accommodates the use of the four flows model as a frame to identify communication patterns identified in organising the Grounding Programme. Qualitative research tells the whole story about the study (Borman *et al.* 1986), its descriptive nature allows it to reveal all the possible findings which evoke imagination as it is vividly explanatory. Borman *et al.* (1986:55) argue that when well done, qualitative research is “personally and emotionally satisfying to practitioners”. The researcher feels a sense of fulfilment and is usually thrilled by his or her ability to interpret corpus into findings which takes a lot of critical analysis, hence the nature of this research appeals to qualitative research than to quantitative.

3.3 The case study approach

The sole reason for using a case study is to comprehend something distinct to that particular case. Jorgensen (1989:18) assesses that “case studies stress the holistic examination of a phenomenon and they seek to avoid the separation of components from the larger context to which these matters may be related”. The case study is the compulsory first year Grounding Programme and the research seeks to find out how the organisational communication model, the four flows mutually influence or constrain fruitful communication in the organisation of the programme. The researcher studies communication patterns in the Grounding Programme as an ethnographer and participant observer. Knowledge from this particular case will then be applied to other similar contexts hence adding to the available literature. Hancock (1998) states that “... case studies can identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation. It is a highly versatile method that employs any/all methods of data collection”. The case study approach suited this research firstly because the study looks at organising (the act of doing) not an organisation as an entity, hence, this programme becomes an ideal case study. Secondly, it is easy to analyse the flows linking them to the programme because of its size, it has few recognisable staff (72 in total). Lastly, all the flows are generalisable in the programme: they make sense considering the activities and purpose of the programme.

3.3.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is used as a method of collecting data. The observer's method of collecting data is to live among those who are the data, taking the participatory role in the scene (Rosen 1991:5). This occurs when the researcher avails himself among the people to be studied or the existing information (Whitehead 2005:3). This means interacting with the observed frequently, getting first-hand knowledge, analysing how they interact and how they react to what they hear. The researcher gets to see the research environment through the eyes and the actions of the researched.

Research scholars such as Bryman (2005:118) and Whitehead (2005:11) argue that participant observation is rooted in ethnographic studies; both field studies entail the researcher spending time with the researched in their world. Although Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) claim that all social research is predominantly

participant because one cannot study human beings without being part of them, in this case the researcher is involved in almost all the day-to-day running of the Grounding Programme. The researcher is part of the staff, hence access to the organising practices pose no problem. Being part of the programme team breaks the hierarchical boundary that is often felt by researchers who research a new subject. In this case the research method begins to resemble auto-ethnography, exploring the researcher's experience in the programme.

In participant observation, the researcher is predominantly the research tool, writing notes and tape recording information (Wolcott 1975). Eberle and Maeder (2003: 55) state that an participant observer awakens all his senses as he/she enters the field; "takes into account the architecture, the furniture, the spatial arrangements, the ways people work and interact, the documents they produce and use, the contents of their communication and the time frame of social processes." This means that the environment where the observed operate is also observed. The role played by the participant observer is as equally important as that of the observed, the observer has the ability to spoil the purpose of the research or properly guide it for the purpose of the research.

Participant observation can be done overtly or covertly, revealing or not revealing the purpose of the research or the researcher's identity (Li 2008:101). When conducting participant observation research, the dilemma of being an overt or covert observer comes into place. Being a covert observer makes the observed appear to behave more naturally because they are unaware that they are being studied. Covert observation is advantageous in that it does not destroy normal behaviours and activities. The covert approach helps unveil reality without altering it (Li 2008:111). In this study, covert observation was employed for some time during participant observation then the researcher openly disclosed the research when in-depth interviews are being conducted.

Overt observation sometimes leads to reactive effects and has the ability to disturb normal behaviour. We behave differently knowing that we are being observed. The initial essence of participant observation is for people to behave the same as they would if you were not there. Therefore the researcher firstly adopted covert observation to avoid the disruption of natural behaviour then the research became overt during open ended interviews.

3.3.1.1 Strengths of participant observation

In participant observation there is both personal and social proximity between the observer and the observed. There is an element of attachment to the researched and also first-hand experience of the behaviours and interactions of those being studied. One gets to understand why people act the way they do, hence one is able to interpret their interview responses more easily from the emic view. Participant observation is justified by scholars because the observed are being studied in their normal day to day activities, the information gained is more authentic than any gained from devices such as questionnaires. This is not to repudiate the value of quantitative questionnaires in anyway. While participant observation gives a close-up view, this detail is gained at the expense of the scope of a population being studied. Questionnaires become more viable where the researcher's view contains a considerably wider scope of the population, and almost always does so at the expense of the fewer detail. For these reasons, at least, information gained from quantitative data analysis may be more vividly generalised to the population than information gained through qualitative analysis. An exception to this rule occurs when the population is small, as in the case of this study.

The unstructured nature of participant observation avails the research to unforeseen circumstances. As a result, the researcher may obtain other crucial findings that he/she had not anticipated. However, the researcher was not only a participant observer, but also a full member of the Grounding Programme. Getting first hand observation of the phenomena under study in a natural context and ones' ability to participate solidifies the findings and puts ethnography at an advantage over other inflexible forms of data collection (Merriam 2009). Participant observation is a powerful method in social sciences in particular, as it endeavours to comprehend human behaviour in certain circumstances and different contexts at the same time it enables the researcher to get a rich comprehension of behaviours of the subjects under study. Li (2008:101) argues that participant observation has the ability to empower and transform people being observed as the findings will not only tell a story about them, but also tell their own story.

In spite of all its strengths, participant observation also has weaknesses that need to be analysed in research practice. Eberle and Maeder (2003: 65) mention that in participant observation and ethnographic studies, there is the risk of producing

heaps of useless data yet missing the essential material to be analysed and interpreted. The solution to this plight would be to constantly go back to the statement of the problem and the research questions that guide the inquiry. In as much as there is unanticipated and emerging information, the researcher has to constantly be aware of the main objectives of the study (Silverman 2003). Like any other research method, participant observation is not without its weaknesses, these include the fact that findings may not be generalizable to a different group, human nature is dynamic and not consistent and hence generalising the findings costs a lot of patience. Lastly there is a temptation to expect the observed to behave in a certain way.

3.3.1.3 What is to be observed in this study?

One technique to guard against infallibility is to know what one is looking for. Usually this comes with the ethnographic experience of having conducted previous studies that form a kind of index for later studies. In the absence of ethnographic experience, the researcher needs a different device or frame not dissimilar to pre-set questions of a structured interview. The four flows model provides a frame through which to observe one's subjects. The structure of what to be observed is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

3.3.2 Document examination

Cooren (1999:295) argues in her outline of a socio-semiotic model of organisational communication that "organisational structure can never be used as a device that would enable us to explain mode of behaviour". In other words, a concrete organisation does not exist prior to the organising activity that constitutes it. This view sits squarely within the communicative constitution of organisation paradigm. However, Cooren states a second principle that as organisational structure always has a temporal notion, such entities are best understood "as a narrative" (*ibid*). This differs from Boje's (2001) epistemological notion of narrative methods for organisational research. Cooren's conception is more ontological, though both scholars operate within an interpretative frame. The difference is that while Boje's model tends to reduce any facticity of an organisation to the discursive structuring members receive and re-articulate, Cooren's model allows for a non-discursive facticity unlike the functionalist view that never express anything prior to their symbolic articulation.

Different flows of the four flows model

Membership negotiation	Organisational self-structuring	Activity Co-ordination	Institutional positioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who initiates conversation? Who are the silent individuals and why? What language is the medium of exchange? Is information horizontal or vertical? What structures are likely to promote or limit openness? How do old staffs welcome new employees? To what extent is the boundary of ignorance broken during induction? What informal activities are done to break the boundary of disconnection? What message do the job adverts convey to applicants and potential ones? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the roles and responsibilities clear? What are the rules and policies of the Programme? Do new facilitators seek help from fellow facilitators or authorities? Is there platform for informal talk? Who speaks to whom for how long? Is there room for creativity given to employees as they do their jobs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is likely to suffer information overload? Are there activities co-ordinated that are harmful to the programme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who communicates with external stakeholders? What external institutions are communicated with and why? To what extent does the programme incorporate or borrow other institutions' ideas?

Figure 2. Participant observation framework

A documentary examination of organisation adheres to the primacy that both Boje (2001) and Cooren's (1999) give to the symbolic dynamism of organisation.

Examination of documents is probably the most crucial part of qualitative research because it is where most information is stored (Bryman 2005:124). Corman

(2002:163) states that in order to comprehend the relationship between organisation and communication, there is need to access words people speak and write. "A wide range of written materials can produce qualitative information, they can be particularly useful in trying to understand the philosophy of an organisation as may be required in case studies" (Hancock 1998:13). Therefore the researcher examines meeting agendas, minutes, reports, and the organogram in three months of the first semester in 2014. The Grounding Programme is mostly student-run, so as an informal and quick method of communication, a group *whats App* (social network forum) was created, so these messages were also analysed in greater detail to tell mainly the coherence of the deduced messages versus the intended message. In the Grounding Programme there is an organogram, a book written the roles and responsibilities. It is meant to clarify who does what? Therefore, an analysis on the document was done to check if the document is clear enough to every employee and if the roles and responsibilities are not clashing.

3.3.3 In-depth unstructured interviews

The study will also make use of in-depth unstructured interviews which are very flexible in nature. Unstructured interviews can work hand in glove with participant observation. Patton (2002) concurs and label unstructured interviews as a continuation of participant observation as they take place as part of an on-going participant observation information-gathering. These two (unstructured interviews and participant observation) are probably the core methods in qualitative research. There is some behaviour that is not observable through participant observation, it only become unfolded through unstructured interviews that are probing in nature. Unstructured interviews enable interviewees to unleash whatever they think pertaining the subject asked since they are exploratory in nature. Fahad (2013:21) highlights that "given more time to talk, people eventually become more comfortable and let their feelings out".

Unstructured interviews have very limited structure hence they enable the researcher to be able to probe more responses and get more detailed information even than anticipated. With interviews, not only the said is important, the absence of an expression is as equally important as the presence of one, therefore interviews take an interviewer who is sensitive to people's emotions and reactions. With unstructured interviews, both the question and the answer categories are not

predetermined (Minichiello *et al.* 1990). The interviewer approaches the interview with an intention of discussing very few topics, the questions are mostly framed in relation to the interviewee's preceding response (Hancock 1998:10). However, an unstructured interviewer should always expect unanticipated responses due to limited guidance of the interview. In as much as the purpose of unstructured interview is to explore and probe, it is the role of the interviewer to guide the conversation such that it is continuously in line with the research purpose. It is the interviewer's duty to adjust, monitor and control the flow of the conversation to suit the purpose of the research. Usually an interview guide is used to avoid the researcher asking irrelevant questions. Minichiello *et al.* (1990:93) states that "an unstructured interview is a controlled conversation, which is geared to the interviewer's interest". When interviewed, the interviewee might end up unfolding what he or she had not intended to say, depending on how intense the talk is. The more the talk, the more the interviewee gains trust and confidence with the interviewer, somewhat intimacy is created by the length of the talk.

In-depth interviews are more advantageous as they provide detailed information than any other form of data collection. They enhance a relaxed atmosphere too because of their informal nature: a conversation makes respondents free than when they are completing a questionnaire for instance (Boyce and Neale 2006).

Unstructured interviews play an exploratory role to the respondent's perceptions and encounters in relation to the subject under question. In this study, they would help explore the Grounding Programme: how it is structured and its communication flows from as early as a member joins the organisation to the time when they are fully assimilated into the programme. In as much as asking questions and probing is important for in-depth interviewers, documenting responses and systematically audio voice recording responses is vitally important. However most in-depth interviewees feel uncomfortable with being electronically recorded, hence emphasis on anonymity is important when conducting such a research.

3.4 Population

Population can be defined as all the available elements of analysis (Du Plooy 2004:100). In this case, the population is the Grounding Programme staff. These total to 72 employees, namely 58 facilitators, 8 interns, 3 administrators, 2 co-ordinators and the Director.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the procedure of choosing a certain number of units of analysis from the available population of the study. The sample chosen has to be representative of the population to get real results. The population under study is a homogenous one as they share common characteristics. This therefore makes the sample to be a bit small. The researcher used non-probability sampling because of the nature of the programme's structure.

3.5.1 Non-probability sampling

Non probability sampling entails that all the population units do not have an equivalent chance of being selected during sampling. The type of non-probability sampling used in this research is purposive sampling.

3.5.1.1 Purposive Sampling

The researcher uses personal judgement to select the sample. Du Plooy (2004:114) states that previous knowledge of the population makes the researcher use personal knowledge to select the sample. Purposive sampling was only employed for the purpose of the interviews but not on participant observation. However, with participant observation, all the employees were observed. Therefore the sample size for interviews is forty employees, 15 are facilitators who have been in the Programme for more than a year, 15 are new facilitators enrolled in 2014 and 2 new interns and 2 old ones and all the 3 administrators, 2 co-ordinators and the Director. The main reason why facilitators and interns had to be separated according to their length of time in the Programme is to analyse the membership negotiation of the four flows model. All the administrators, co-ordinators and the Director are definitely part of the sample because they are much more involved in the organising of the programme, they meet regularly, and any information related to the programme cannot by pass them. In this case the quantity of the sample size matters not, what matters is the quality and depth of information obtained. Albeit Einstein once said, "*not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted*". Therefore the quantity of the sample can be useless; credit is given to quality which is more valuable.

3.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis entails narrowing and transforming data into findings, this entails reducing the bulk of raw information and sifting important and relevant findings from the rest. The main objective of qualitative research is to understand phenomena from participants' different viewpoints, hence the use of participant observation, document examination and open ended interviews as data collection tools. Since qualitative research method was used in this study, the researcher employed an ethnographic interpretative study as a corpus analysis method. Data was analysed in terms of its emerging themes and sub-themes derived from the McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four flows model. Therefore, data from documents examined, participant observation and interviews used were grouped and separated in order of similarities. Data was then analysed and explained under certain themes to find out how the four flows explains organising.

3.7 Shortfalls of the case study approach

One of the most common weaknesses of the case study approach is that the study might not necessarily represent other cases. In fact, the research might not be replicable to find the exact findings. For instance there is likelihood that the use of the Grounding Programme as a case could not be relevant to most organisations because the researcher does not look at the programme as an entity like most organisations but views it as a process. It is an organisation mainly because it contains a group of people who work together towards a common goal, different from most organisational researches which are done on organisations as 'entities' not as actions or processes (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004). However the inability to replicate most qualitative research is justifiable because it studies human behaviour which does not remain constant, it changes, and thus it is possible to attain different results when the study is repeated.

3.8 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study employs a qualitative research paradigm which is exploratory and inquisitive in nature. A case study of the Grounding Programme was used to understand the communication flow and organising in a close knit environment. In this case study, covert participant observation was employed to analyse behaviour in an unnoticed way so that the natural setting and behaviour

cannot be destructed, then overt observation was employed during open ended interviews. To further deepen the enquiry, unstructured interviews were also considered as there are some phenomena that cannot be observed with natural eyes, they needed further probing through the act of interviews. A sampling method used was purposive sampling to suit the objective of the study. Purposive sampling was chosen because of the knowledge the researcher has about the population of the study and also due to the main purpose of the research. Since the research employs a qualitative paradigm, the researcher saw it fit to use ethnography interpretative study as a data analysis method. It paves way for the formation of themes which later unfold into theories to explain phenomena.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an answer to the research questions and objectives of the study as the four flows model and the Grounding Programme were intersected. The chapter is an analysis of observations, interviews and documents collected from this study. The collected material is illustrated with the aid of figures and tables which summarise and clarify important features of the research.

4.2 The four flows model and the Grounding Programme: An intersection

Each flow of the four flows model is intersected to explore the model's validity. This intersection brings out the extent of the relevancy of the four flows model in solving organising problems. In the process of doing this, the shortfalls of each flow are also revealed.

4.2.1 Membership negotiation and the Grounding Programme

Membership negotiation involves the relationship of organisational employees at entry level of the organisation, that is, how they are enrolled, associated, oriented and assimilated into the organisation. Membership negotiation is what McPhee and Zaig (2000) liken to 'courtship' of new members; this explains the anxiety felt by employees as they enter the organisation. The assimilation of new members is often accompanied by communication problems, thus, Putnam and Nicotera (2009:64) highlight that there are three boundaries as a new member becomes part of the organisation. These are the boundary of 'ignorance', 'illegitimacy' and 'disconnection'. The above mentioned boundaries limit new employees' agency as they enter the organisation and they can only be solved by properly calculated communication by the management.

In case of membership negotiation of the Grounding Programme, training and induction takes place every six months (per university semester) to assimilate new facilitators into the programme. During induction, most old employees always pose as 'knowing best', knowing everything about the programme's trends. This behaviour gives anxiety to new members who have 'boundaries' limiting their absolute assimilation into the programme. In spite of all this, trainings are meant to break the boundaries felt by new employees as they enter the organisation. The boundary of ignorance is broken as the rituals of the programme are explained; this leaves every

employee aware of the programme rituals. The boundaries of 'illegitimacy' and 'disconnection' are broken as the induction process leaves every member connected to the programme, feeling as part of the team. Although induction is highly crucial, it is only the facilitators and the interns who are inducted, the rest of the employees do not form part of the induction, so this leaves an information gap existing since not all employees are aware of what is happening in the programme. The absence of some employees at the induction and trainings makes them unable to answer to student queries and other major programme concerns, thus this becomes a knowledge gap problem in the Grounding Programme.

Membership negotiation will never be absolute on the first days as employees have different understanding abilities, some are slow yet some have average abilities to understand. During the induction process, there are high chances that not everything is said, some crucial information might be forgotten and go untold. The minor things overlooked during the induction eventually perpetuate into organisational problems and malfunctioning. Thus, the genesis of most organisational problems emanate at membership negotiation level. Although membership negotiation's role is to harness all the employees together within the programme, it is in this same stage where some members feel that they cannot fit in, feeling alienated.

Every semester when new facilitators are employed, induction and training occurs for both new facilitators and returning ones. Upon interviewing new facilitators, it came to light that they felt belittled and intimidated during trainings. They felt a wide knowledge gap between them and the returning facilitators. One can conclusively argue that it is common for one to feel intimidated in a new environment, where knowledge gap exists, uncertainty is normal. In spite of all this, there is need for management to invest in planning of trainings that are accommodative to all employees at different hierarchal levels.

Usually not everything about the organisation can be explained during the induction, even if it is said, it cannot be understood at once. Thus most new facilitators understood the programme's rituals after a while. Some returning facilitators did not open their minds to new knowledge during training as they felt content with what they knew. The programme is designed in such a way that it is constantly organised and re-organised, so per training session, there are always new

ideas, no matter how long one has served in the programme, they always have something new to learn or a new challenge to engage their minds on. However, because of old employees' resistance to learn in some instances, new employees out-stand the returning employees because they are keen to learn, anxious about the programme and eager to impress. To break the boundary of disconnection of new employees, most interview respondents felt that informal activities would do justice. These would include activities such as outings and ball games. These activities have the ability to give a sense of union to employees, allowing them to be open around fellow colleagues and gain trust of one another.

4.2.1.1 Discrepancies of membership negotiation in the Grounding Programme

Membership negotiation focuses on induction of new members but does not clearly specify the role of old members. Old employees play a crucial role which can be either fruitful or damaging to the organisation when it comes to welcoming and relating to new employees. They could intimidate new employees, taking advantage of the three boundaries of 'disconnection', 'ignorance' and 'illegitimacy'. Issues of seniority can also cause tension when long serving employees feel they are not given adequate respect, at the same time new employees feel intimidated and looked down upon. Therefore membership negotiation needs clarity in that.

With the increase in global educational standards, it is evident that in most instances new employees are more learned and qualified academically as compared to long serving organisational employees. Usually they are fresh from college and Universities. Therefore, no matter how much the organisation tries to unite its employees, tensions are bound to be inevitable. Most long serving employees are promoted to high positions, as a result new employees, although holding several degrees might start at the lower level in an organisation. Therefore the academic gap creates tensions as most old employees feel threatened by the vibrant, energetic and educated new employees. Solutions to this plight could be creating a family approach in the organisation, cultivating the spirit of oneness through organisational informal activities. Most interview respondents at entrance level in the programme felt that 'organisations have become too formal'. Hence there is need to break the scary atmosphere prevailing in most organisations. There is absolutely nothing wrong with breaking a formal wear barrier and a protocol barrier by having

organisational fun outings and playing of games. This eases tension and unites employees in an amazing way.

Membership negotiation is inclusive of messages that have the potential to either attract or repel prospective members. The job-advert itself is somewhat discriminatory. The requirements outlined in most job adverts are almost impractical to meet and scares prospective employees away. It takes only the determined prospects to apply for a post where they know they do not meet the mentioned requirements. Appendix 1 attached to this thesis shows the Grounding Programme facilitator advert. Like many other adverts, it has words or phrases that are somewhat intimidating and scares away potential candidates. At the same time, one could argue that it is an ideal method of sieving determined and outstanding candidates from the rest. The italicised words or phrases have a potential of scaring off potential facilitators. The statement that reads '*suitably qualified and experienced UFH postgraduates*' is not clear enough. The kind of experience required is unclear, those who do not have experience whatsoever are likely to set back, yet in fact when interviews are being conducted in reality, the panel does not look at previous experience. The statement '*IT literacy*' has a discriminatory role too. What is meant by IT literacy is unclear: it could mean basic knowledge of IT or a student who studied IT. Therefore one could conclusively say that the choice of words we use when communicating could have a different meaning to the next person and affect the choices they make. It is these finer statements that send the wrong intention to different people with different decoding abilities.

When new facilitators are inducted into the programme, they are paired with returning members to cultivate the mutual bond and break the boundary of 'disconnection'. The atmosphere itself is conducive for interaction and members get to know each other pretty well and become comfortable with each other. However, the general feeling from interview respondents is that, that alone is not enough, there is need to do other team building activities to promote a sense of connection and oneness.

At the induction phase, communication largely flows in a conduit form, which is the transmission style. Although dialogical talk is mostly recommended, it is sometimes impossible to avoid transmission of information. When people apply for a certain position in an organisation, they obviously research about the organisation, but

definitely the information that they get is not exhaustive, hence they need a deep briefing about the organisation at their entry stage in the organisation. Thus information usually comes in a conduit form.

4.2.2 Organisational self-structuring and the Grounding Programme

Clarity of roles and responsibilities, workers' respect and trust for one another in an organisation paves way to organisational self-structuring and create organisational progress. When organisational members know what to do, sustainability of the organisation is enhanced. Self-structuring is when organisational members commune with one another towards a common goal at the same time being guided by organisational 'policies' and 'procedures' usually in the form of documents.

Corman *et al.* (2002:165) state that "documents form an important corpus of discursive that must be analysed in order to understand complex organisational phenomena". Like any other organisation, the Grounding Programme's roles and responsibilities are documented in the organogram, a book that summarises each employee's accountabilities. However, the organogram has duplication of roles among different employees as illustrated in figure two. Documented information should be clear enough to all the employees: they should clarify who does what and the difference between employees' roles. Text is very important and needs extra care so ambiguous words causing war over roles should be avoided against all odds. The organogram's initial purpose is to make the programme self-structural by indicating who does what yet loopholes emanate from that. This research unveiled that the organogram ironically paves way for conflicts, sometimes organisations find a weapon to defeat a problem, yet that weapon becomes a poisoned arrow breeding other problems. The question at the moment is to unveil if the organogram is not clear enough or the content seeks further explanation?

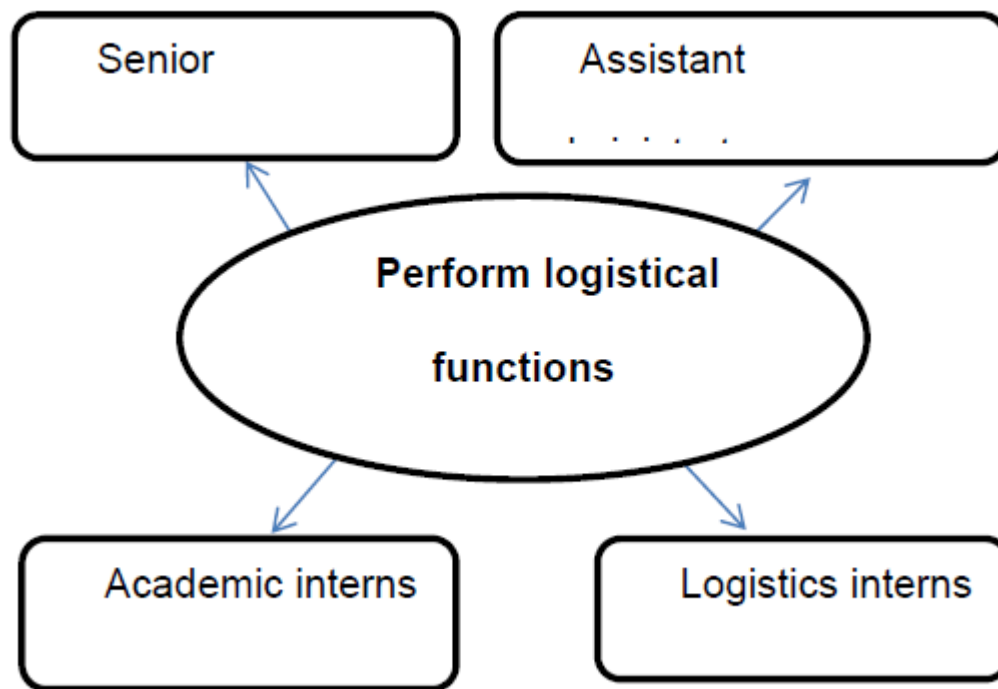


Figure 3. Duplication of roles and responsibilities

When roles and responsibilities are written down, there is bound to be duplication especially in a scenario where there are a number of employees whose duties are similar. Written down information can be understood in different contexts and there are differences in interpretation of text by different people. The above illustration demonstrates the duplication of the role of performing logistical functions among the senior administrator, two administrative assistants, logistical interns and academic interns. In a scenario like this, role conflicts are inevitable. The word 'logistics' itself is ambiguous, it means different things and needs to be broken down by further explanation. In a situation where there are two or more people sharing the same title such as administrative assistants or logistics interns, there is bound to be conflicts too because there is no boundary of who does what between the two people or more. It is crucial to take note that individuals have different abilities to do work, hence when responsibilities are not too clear, employees are bound to fight over roles.

People assume that what they convey in writing is clear enough. Text has the ability to convey different messages other than the intended by the conveyer. However when it comes to written down information, it is crucial to note that interpretation of a statement differs with people, often a times we deduce or

comprehend something to suit our own interests. So the blame cannot be on the writer, no one can ever write an unclear organogram purposely. All communicators want to be understood, the problem is the friction between the intended messages by the writer versus the deduced messages by the reader

Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott (2008:311) mention that written down organisational documents are somewhat abusive as they lay out the rights of the organisation in favour of its managerial representatives. The written down documents ignore employees' agency, their desire to act independently. There is nowhere in the organogram where the rights of the employees are mentioned but only that which is expected from the employees.

In most organisations, roles overlap, especially when there is a hierarchical structure. Most respondents, to the interviews particularly the facilitators, felt that there is not a clear boundary between what they do and what the interns do, in other words, the roles overlap. However one may arguably say that the overlap of roles and responsibilities is not after all too bad, where there is a common goal, it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that it is attained. Where there is a deficiency, definitely one has to fit in, to close the gap.

4.2.3 Activity co-ordination and the Grounding Programme

Workers are united or co-ordinated by the work they do, they work collectively and all this is possible through communication. Challenges are overcome by people working together. In activity coordination, participants communicate about their goals and how they are working towards them, contrasting to formal structure which dictates how work ought to be done (Rausch 2012:37). Therefore, it is through informal communication that most activity is co-ordinated.

Some interview respondents felt that in as much as the programme has a common goal, people are not entirely working together, there is a sense of disunity among employees because of personal issues that people have towards each other. The other problem is that the common goal is not mutual to all employees; some define the common goal in regards to what they individually do. When the common goal is not central or known by all employees, there is bound to be organisational problems. In relation to organisational self-structuring, open ended interviews unveiled that not all employees relate with the programme's common goal. Some

employees thought that what they individually do is the organisational common goal.

The following are some responses to the question:

1. To unite students to think out of the box
2. Sharing ideas
3. Interaction and discussing societal issues
4. Trans-disciplinarily
5. Ensuring students are registered for the course
6. Ensuring that students pass

The failure of employees to understand the organisational common goal is a problem to organisational progress and prosperity. Some employees believe that what they do is the umbrella goal of the organisation. There is failure to distinguish the job title's common goal and the organisational common goal. The solution to the predicament is to do a corporate induction to ensure that all the employees are knowledgeable of the organisational common goal.

4.2.3.1 Discrepancies of activity co-ordination in the Grounding Programme

Central to activity co-ordination is communication. In most cases, communication is the cause of most organisational problems yet it is said to be the answer. Organisational problems usually arise when the intended communicated message is not clear enough, when there is inadequate communication, too much communication or when the wrong channel is being used to communicate. Therefore there is need for activity co-ordination to address proper communication methods ideal for activities to be co-ordinated in an organisation.

To break the barriers of the so called 'too formal' organisation in the Grounding Programme, a group social network chat *whatsApp* was created for all the interns and facilitators to make-easy communication since everyone is always on their phone. The method was worth celebrating at first as it was a faster way of information circulation where people have a platform to respond. In spite of the great attempt, the method resulted in employees exiting or muting the group chat or simply not reading the message because of information overload and boredom caused by those asking senseless questions on the platform. Thus, the 'grand informal' communication method was not as successful as was imagined.

One of the many communication methods that most organisations use is the electronic mail (e-mail). E-mails are very crucial especially in an organisational setup

but because of the information era the world currently exists in, information overload is inevitable. An employee these days has an average of two or more email addresses. Each of these are overloaded by emails each day, as a result most of these go unread or unnoticed. Most employees in the Grounding Programme admitted of either not reading some emails, not opening them at all or just reading the subject. Since most employees are students whose student emails have limited space, they sometimes do not empty their mail boxes, so most sent emails would bounce back to the sender. Therefore, communication channels to be adopted by any organisation need to be properly scrutinised and planned to bridge the discrepancy gap that exist in most organisations. Not one method is adequate; at least various methods would complement each other.

The Grounding Programme is functional on two of Fort Hare's campuses, Alice and East London. Competition is almost inevitable since each campus has its own employees. Although efforts are made to unify activities, environmental location of each campus inevitably compel employees to do things differently, hence the clashes. It is not easy co-ordinating the same organisation in different branches, thus competition and conflicts are inevitable. However, one can argue that conflicts are normal in an organisational set up, but if left unsolved, they could grow to become poison to an organisation. At the same time, organisational competition makes organisational progress, as employees compete to excel.

Bisel (2009:127) mentions that not all activities co-ordinated are fruitful for the organisation. In the name of activity co-ordination can also be negative activity organisation like strikes which are harmful to the organisation. In spite of scholarly criticism of activity co-ordination, McPhee and Zaug deserve credit for their explanatory effort. Anti-organisational activities co-ordinated are also communicative, they express employees agency.

4.2.4 Institutional positioning and the Grounding Programme

Institutional positioning entails how an organisation relates to external stakeholders inclusive of other organisations and the media. An organisation does not exist in a vacuum; hence there is need for environmental exploration. Organisations draw a lot of resources from one another, they co-exist, aiding one another, in fact they need one another for survival as they share resources.

The Grounding Programme featured in this research as a case study works hand in glove with other similar trans-disciplinary programmes from other Universities mostly in exchange forums. Trans-disciplinarity has recently gained momentum in academic institutions who do exchange forums endeavouring to co-ordinate their institutions likewise. The programme has only seen few years of existence so it is still marketed for stability purposes. By virtue of the programme working hand in glove with other institutions, it means that the programme seeks to better itself for the benefit of students. The sharing of ideas is a very fruitful approach of enhancing pedagogical ways of learning.

The Grounding Programme borrows ideas from collaborators such as Mapungubwe Institute of Technology and the Nelson Mandela Champions Within. Since the Grounding Programme is still new in the Fort Hare curricular, institutional positioning is there to enhance its establishment and sustain its survival. Although the Grounding Programme collaborates with other institutions, the question is, do all employees feel the impact and reasons for the collaboration? Unstructured interviews with the facilitators of the Grounding Programme unveiled that they did not understand the collaboration with other similar institutions, the reasons why it happens and the process itself. Facilitators are far from the whole process of institutional positioning yet they are the face of the programme, dealing with students on a personal basis. Facilitators feel alienated from institutional positioning. In this day and age in the workplace, all employees need to be knowledgeable about all the on goings of the organisation, even the corridor cleaners need to know what the organisation is doing.

It is important to highlight that in some instances, institutional positioning may not be applicable in organising a programme. A programme might not be categorised as an organisation, yet it is organised. A programme could be seen as a process because it is continuously organised, thus in this case it might not have to do institutional positioning of any sort. On the other hand there is a temptation to duplicate ideas from other institutions when employing institutional positioning. In as much as ideas are shared, the programme has to identify where it stands, what it seeks to achieve and draw the lines of the differences between diverse organisations and programmes.

In a nutshell, the four flows is a valid model of organisational communication to a larger extent. It is important to note that 'organisation' is a broad term that could mean various things in various contexts and the four flows model itself cannot totally fit in and be proven valid to all various views of organisations. Despite its weaknesses, McPhee and Zaug (2000) ought to be credited for their grand model. Although some of the flows fit in so well to organisation, not all of them are relevant to make an organisation constitutive.

4.3 Information overload in the Grounding Programme

Information overload is a new disease that most companies are faced with. Berner (2001) defines information overload as:

Information received at such a rapid rate that it cannot be assimilated, an excess can lead to information saturation. When it occurs, less attention is paid to each message and thus less information is received. It is a problem experienced by only those lucky enough to have jobs, technology and communication access.

Organisations produce large quantities of information, a single organisational member is exposed to large quantities of information more than they can bear whether or not they actively seek it (Edmunds and Morris 2000:17). Corman *et al.* (2002:165) concur, they point out that "...indications are that organisations of even modest size produce scary quantities of messages". Technological advancements have been seen as largely precipitating information overload, the increase in technology facilitates the downsizing of employees and the increase of information exposed to each employee. The digitalisation of information augmented the production of large quantities of documents as well as electronic emails circulation. Thus, technological advancement facilitates employee information flooding.

In an attempt to quantify the amount of information that the Alice Campus Grounding Programme Co-ordinator is exposed to, a one week paper recording and note-taking was done, from Monday to Friday. All the one-on-one contacts, incoming telephone calls, incoming emails and outgoing emails that are work-related were recorded per day. This was inclusive of the mini-staff meetings held on that particular week. The Co-ordinator is the central figure who gets to liaise on a daily basis with all Grounding Programme staff, students and all stakeholders in general. Thus, there is likelihood that information cannot bypass her. Outgoing telephone calls were not counted because the assumption is that the research would have a bearing on the number of calls that the co-ordinator makes since she knew the research was going

on. So to avoid bias, they were excluded. The incoming and on-going emails counted were only those from the Co-ordinator's staff e-mail address, her personal email addresses were not counted as well as personal cell phone calls were not counted.

	Days in one week 17-21 February 2014					
Contacts	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Total per week
One on one contacts	42	37	39	24	29	171
In coming telephone calls	19	14	17	13	5	68
Incoming emails	49	41	53	37	25	205
Outgoing emails	18	7	15	13	6	59
Staff meetings	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total contacts per day. (Estimation)	129	99	110	87	65	490

Figure 4. Alice co-ordinator contacts.

Information is very difficult to quantify, however the little that could be done was to count the number of contacts the Co-ordinator made, not the length of words conversed. With the number of contacts per day that the co-ordinator is exposed to, one can conclusively say that there is a high likelihood of her suffering from information overload which causes fatigue. If she is exposed to 129 contacts on a Monday alone, without counting the length of conversation of each call or the length of each email, and also without counting personal e-mails from mail boxes such as yahoo or g-mail, it simply means she spends most of her time consulting people, which is in fact not her job description as per organogram. The analysis of table two shows that people also prefer one-on-one contacts.

In spite of internal emails sent, people still flock to offices to ask the very same things that sent emails would have addressed. The question now is, are people not reading emails or they do not understand the message communicated or they simply need face to face emphasis? This goes back to the importance of traditional face to face communication that technology will never totally replace. Open ended interview

disclosed that emails and phone calls do not have too much impact compared to one on one or face to face communication, mainly because of their lack of emphasis and their lack of non-verbal cues. It is also crucial to note that when there is conflict, emails are mostly incapable of resolving them, and it is mainly face to face that solves issues.

It is important to highlight that these emails are only from the work email address, (Fort Hare webmail) so the personal email addresses, personal cell phone conversations and personal one on one contacts outside the office were not counted, which therefore means that the number is definitely twice the one on table 2. The length of each email, one on one conversation, and telephone conversation were not calculated but from the findings, it is clear that the information exposed to an individual is really a cause for concern.

When one receives an email for an example, one takes some few minutes to recall the previous conversations and perhaps spend few minutes trying to figure out how to respond. All this is time consumed hence information overload becomes inevitable. "It's not easy to quantify the costs of the consequences of information overload" (Hemp 2009:8). Hence this has a bearing in one's productivity in an organisation.

Edmunds and Morris (2000:20) postulate that "the single largest use made of the internet is for electronic mail. The sheer quantity of emails received is one factor cited by many people as a cause of overload." Most people are flooded by emails and they end up having quantities of unopened emails in their email boxes. Most of the Grounding Programme employees have hundreds of unopened emails. The highest having 1288 unopened emails. Having unopened emails does not really mean that all of the emails are not important; it simply means there is too much of them to bear. Open ended interviews on the impact of the electronic mail showed that emails are easily ignored, not opened, and do not provoke a sense of urgency as compared to face to face briefing. Edmunds and Morris (2000:22) argue that "although there is abundance of information, it is often difficult to obtain useful and relevant information amongst the vast volumes of information, which at the very least, need to be scanned through to find the nuggets."

Information overload can really cost a company a fortune as it equals to less productivity. "Productive time is lost as employees deal with information of limited

value” (Hemp 2009:4). This has an impact on McPhee and Zaug’s activity co-ordination, as employees suffer from information overload, it becomes difficult for them to be co-ordinated by the work they do. In such a scenario it is possible for employees to co-ordinate activities that are harmful to the organisation since it is sometimes difficult for employees to differentiate between information overload and work overload. Employees mostly associate information overload with work overload which might in-turn cause work related frustrations. When one central person is overloaded with information it affects the entire activity co-ordination. Summarily, information overload causes stress, less job satisfaction, ill-health and this later affects decision making (Lewis 1996). In order for McPhee and Zaug (2000)’s model to be taken seriously, it has to take into consideration the possible organisational problems such as information overload which might affect the constitutional role of communication.

4.4 The Grounding Programme in the absence of a formal organisation

‘Organisation’ exists even if it is unseen, as a process. Organisations can be understood in three different approaches; organisations as objects, organisations as perpetual state of becoming and organisations as grounded in action (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004). ‘Containerised organisations’ are slowly but surely becoming outdated, they are being replaced by the ‘unseen organisations’ similar to the Grounding Programme. Organisations come into existence, not only because they are buildings, but called into being by membership interactions inclusive of both internal and external stakeholders. Instead of seeing organisation as a product, it should be seen as a process, an on-going procedure (Woffinden 2009:4). Therefore, the traditional container approach to organisation alone can be seen as inadequately explaining organisation. The four flows model does not side-line the unseen organisations in anyway, the model equally addresses them successfully. The digitalization of resources gradually paves way for the process approach. Now that resources are kept online, the reason for tangible organisations becomes reduced. Thus, one can argue that the advent and improvement of technology paves way for a gradual decay of the container metaphor. The internet services promotes homeless organisations where members communicate electronically no matter how dispersed they are.

4.5 Information transmission versus dialogue

Dialogue and transmission are not complementary but work hand in glove as communication methods that are mostly used in organisation. In a meeting scenario, definitely an element of transmission cannot be eliminated as the chairperson has to break the ice with the meeting agenda or introductions. It is only with time that dialogue begins to occur when the platform for openness and debate is given. Dialogue paves way for fruitful co-ordination of activities.

4.5.1 Membership negotiation: transmission and dialogue

Upon observing interactions in the Grounding Programme, it is clear that membership negotiation is largely accompanied by information transmission. When members are new, they know less about the organisation hence wait to be briefed about the organisation. Interaction usually starts from the top management and flow in a conduit form. It is at this stage that most new members are likely to be inquisitive, which some become, yet others have their voices suppressed by the personal fear of self-expression. The hierarchal structure of the organisation or programme determines its use of information transmission or dialogue. Most top management leaders prefer being initiators of ideas yet this silences the voices of those at the lower level of the hierarchy. In as much as transmission cannot be limited in the Grounding Programme, dialogue creates conducive environment for employees to collectively add value to the programme and have their values taken into consideration.

4.5.2 Activity co-ordination and dialogue

In order for people to work together perfectly, dialogue cannot be eliminated. People communicate with one another, exchanging views, listening to one another, compromising their beliefs through dialogue. Dialogue gives a sense of collectivism; people feel that they are appreciated and that their views are heard. Activity co-ordination intersects well with dialogue because one leads to the other. Dialogue is usually informal, and it is crucial to note that communication that takes place in organisations is mostly informal. Workers co-ordinate the work they do through dialogue. Organisational challenges are overcome by employees communing together and suggesting possible solutions. However, for dialogue to resume there

has to be transmission of some sort as an initiation, hence it can be argued that dialogue and transmission work hand in glove.

4.5.3 Organisational self-structuring and transmission

Organisational self-structuring is mainly in transmission form. The outline of roles and responsibilities are usually done by the top management or leaders and these are not compromised anyhow. They are not usually open for debate as they are already solid. People know what they have to do simply because they were told, not negotiated with. Organisational policies and procedures are written down. Organisational policies and procedures are usually documented and these documents are a form of transmission because their content is non-negotiable. Upon doing unstructured interviews, most administrators felt that they were unable to differentiate between what each one of them does and this perpetuated to role conflict in the long run. This is mainly caused by documented methods of communication.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlines an intersection of the four flows model and the Grounding Programme. It is imperative to note that the four flows model by McPhee and Zaug (2000) does not conclusively explain all organisational scenarios or environments. Organisations are viewed differently, as containers, as the state of becoming and as grounded in action (Putnam and Fairhurst 2004). By virtue of organisations differing in structure, the four flows model may not be adequate for each kind of an organisation. McPhee and Zaug mention that clarity of roles and responsibilities pave way for organisational self-structuring, but they mention this in passing without concentrating how it does. Lyons (1971:100) highlights that the issue of role clarity is “over-discussed yet under-researched”. The concept of clarity of roles and responsibilities is easy to mention but it is usually left un-attended, hence the vagueness of the four flows model in some areas. Information overload is also an organisational problem that causes tension and stress in organisations. In a nutshell, Mc Phee and Zaug ought to be credited for conceiving distinct flows to further explain the CCO.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The CCO model endeavoured to bridge the gap uncovered by the structuration theory and the four flows model was coined to fill the gap that the CCO model could not cover. This makes the models not comprehensive enough because they are a sort of continuation. It is difficult to make use of each model independently, that is, the four flows model for instance without referring to the CCO model as well as Giddens's structuration theory. However, McPhee and Zaug deserve credit for endeavouring against all odds to narrow down the previous model into specific communicative flows which form the four flows model. The main aim of this study was to find out the applicability of McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s four flows model in organisation using the Grounding Programme as a case study. The research looked at 'organisation' not as an entity but as a process, a state of becoming.

5.2 Findings

In as much as each model endeavours to fill the gap of the previous theory, there are high possibilities that the weaknesses of the structuration theory perpetuates to the CCO model and to the four flows model as well. Archer (1982) argues that Giddens only highlights but does not solve the conflict between structure and agency, hence the structuration theory appears very incomplete. Archer (1982) says that it has been difficult for Giddens' 'grand theory' to be taken too seriously because Giddens himself did not support his argument to give it substance. Therefore the unsolved issues of the structuration theory have definitely overlapped to the CCO model, as the model does not give a concrete solution to the dilemma of structure and agency.

Since the four flows model is made of distinct flows, it is crucial to note that not all the flows could be relevant for organising purposes. For instance a Programme may not have to institutionally position itself but it is still something that ought to be organised. The first three micro interaction flows are related and mostly relevant in all organising scenarios, but institutional positioning which is viewed as a macro interaction has its application depending on the type of organisation under study. Communication can still constitute organisation even in the absence of institutional

positioning. The fourth flow, institutional positioning is not really interdependent with the other flows, it somehow branches from the rest and surely an organisation or programme can do without it.

McPhee and Zaug (2000) did not pay attention to role conflict that takes place in most organisations. Organisational self-structuring talks of clarity of roles and responsibilities yet most organisational problems arise because of role conflict. The issue of role conflict is mentioned in the four flows model but it is not clearly explicated although it can have a negative constitution. Membership negotiation also includes messages that have the potential to either attract or drive back potential members. The job-advert itself for instance is sort of discriminatory in a way. Most advertised jobs have requirements that are almost impractical to meet and they scare potential applicants away. It takes only the determined applicants to apply for a post where they know they do not meet the mentioned requirements. Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott (2008:311) argue that organisational self-structuring could also be abusive because formal documents usually lay out the rights of the organisation, favouring its managerial representatives. In most cases these documents ignore employees' agency yet focus mainly on the organisational structure. No document in the Grounding Programme mentions the rights of the employees but only that which is expected from the employees.

It is also noteworthy that membership negotiation somewhat constrains communication in that most of the times when members enter the organisation they will be having anxieties, not knowing what to expect, so they hardly express themselves. Usually the information flows top-down in a conduit form which is not dialogical. Therefore instead of playing its constitutive role, communication can be a hindrance. McPhee and Zaug (2000)'s membership negotiation does not clearly articulate the role played by old organisational employees as the new employees are assimilated into the organisation. At this stage, it is where most tension begin as old employees fear for their positions since new employees are usually energetic, enthusiastic and more learned. Thus there is need for membership negotiation to narrow down its focus even to the role of old employees.

5.3 Recommendations

In the Grounding Programme, there is usually that central person who is likely to suffer from information overload; hence he/she could perhaps be exempted from

answering one-on-one questions from students and perhaps delegate the task to other employees that is, interns and administrators. When it comes to information overload, it is best to scale information from the level of importance to the least important. Instead of letting the co-ordinator do the students consultancy, the job could be delegated to interns, facilitators and administrators. If really all the employees are at par with what is happening they would definitely be able to answer to students enquiries.

Role conflict is one of the major causes of conflicts in the Grounding Programme. The solution to the plight could be revising the organogram such that it also outlines the rights of the employees. Employees are an asset of an organisation, research has it that when they feel appreciated they perform to their full potential. Therefore, if from the onset they are made aware of the rights they are entitled to, they feel the need to perform perfectly and feel satisfied at the same time.

The information era that we have gradually found ourselves existing in, has caused so much turmoil in the workplace as employees are overloaded with information which they are idealess on which one to attend to first. This affects performance as employees have mail boxes are filled with e-mails that flock in every second. Because of this plight, not all employees know how to handle such situations. The solution to the predicament is to hold organisational workshops particularly on handling information overload, perhaps inviting a specialist to chair the workshop.

5.3.1 Membership negotiation

In order for McPhee and Zaug's membership negotiation to be fully grounded in the Grounding Programme, all employees have to be present during training or induction for uniformity of doing work. In the past, only the facilitators, interns and co-ordinators attend the training, yet the administrators do not attend. Therefore if other employees do not attend training, it means employees may not have a common understanding of the Programme's common goal and may not be at par with the organisational current trends.

It has come to light that informal activities break the boundary of disconnection in an organisation. As soon as members enter into an organisation, they need informal activities that will help them fit in. To break organisational boundaries faced by new employees as they enter the organisation, teambuilding activities should be

employed to bond employees, both the newly appointed and the old organisational members. Most organisations overlook the importance of informal activities yet they have the potential of increasing organisational morale which in the long run increases job performance. Outings, ball games, and touring have a fine way of bonding employees and precipitates a good working environment, as employees feel free to express themselves. All the anxieties that new employees feel soon disappear when informal activities are employed.

5.3.2 Organisational self-structuring

The Grounding Programme has to guard against duplication of roles. Other than the use of the organogram, where roles and responsibilities are written down, word of mouth explanatory of roles and responsibilities is highly recommended. This could be ideally done in a meeting setup where all the Programme employees are present and they are able to seek clarity between their roles and those of their co-employees.

5.3.3 Activity co-ordination

Upon doing open ended interviews, it was brought to light that in as much as employees are co-ordinated by the work that they do, activity co-ordination is jeopardised when employees do not know the Programme's common goal. There is a temptation of employees to think that what each one of them does is the central organisational goal, yet brushing aside what others do. Therefore, when there is a central induction for both campuses, where all employees attend, definitely the central goal will be put into light and made clear.

5.3.4 Institutional positioning

Not all Grounding Programme's employees are aware of the impacts of the collaborations with other institutions. Facilitators for instance are the face of the Programme hence they have to be made aware of all institutional developments. In the case of the Grounding Programme, where students are one of the important stakeholders, all employees have to work together in spite of hierarchy for the betterment of the programme's curricular.

5.4 Limitations

One major limitation of this study is that it is not too easy to fit in a theory/model that has more than one distinct flow into a case study especially when finding its

validity. The model under study has four analytically distinct flows that needed to be equally fit into the Grounding Programme to prove if the model is a valid model to explain organisation. Thus one can conclusively say that, it was not an easy task. In any instance when a research is done especially when a case study is used, the expectation is that it should be applicable to related cases. However, the case study approach has a weakness in that the cased study might not necessarily represent other cases. In other words, the research might not be replicable to other organisations to find the exact findings. Findings in organisations are always dependent on how each organisation functions.

5.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, it is clear that although McPhee and Zaug's four flows model is an ideal model for the Grounding Programme, it is accompanied by its own set of weaknesses which do not match the functioning of the Programme. Of all the four flows, membership negotiation needs to be given full attention in an organisation. There is a high likelihood that tensions will emerge at this stage where old employees might feel threatened by the entrance of the highly qualified and enthusiastic new employees. At the same time new employees might feel side-lined by the boundaries of 'ignorance', 'disconnection' and 'illegitimacy' that automatically exist as they enter the organisation. Nevertheless, the four flows model can be seen as a round model that cannot reach all the corners of the concept of organising. Therefore, in spite of all the short flows of the four flows model, McPhee and Zaug ought to be crediting for narrowing down the wide CCO model which is almost difficult to put into practice in an organising scenario.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Grounding Programme Advert

CENTRE FOR TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(LKA GROUNDING PROGRAMME)

ADVERT

POST-GRADUATE STUDENT

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THEIR THIRD YEAR OF STUDY

Applications are hereby invited from registered, suitably qualified and experienced UFH post-graduate and third year students to fill the post of facilitators in the **Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies (LKA Programme)** at both the Alice and East London Campus for the academic year **2014**.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Plan for and facilitate Ikhaya group discussion sessions with students.
- Participate in all rituals such as Movies, Lecturers, Umzi and Ikhaya group sessions to ensure the smooth running of these sessions.
- Ensure that all students in your assigned Ikhaya group are registered and are actively engaged in all rituals.
- Responsible for providing feedback to students on their assignments.
- Responsible for recording all students' participation points and assignment marks.
- Compiling of reports, manage information and assist in keeping accurate records of students.
- Motivate and provide ongoing support to your students through your Ikhaya sessions as well as through individual consultations to perform well in the programme.
- Be an ambassador of the LKA Programme.

STRENGTHS REQUIRED

- Planning, organising and problem solving
- Computer and IT literacy
- Good interpersonal relations, verbal and written communication skills
- Time Management Skills
- Good Facilitation Skills
- An excellent team player

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- 4 Months Renewable Contract, based on performance.

- Working within a maximum of 10 hours per month

APPLICATIONS

Submit a letter of *motivation*, *CV*, *ID* and certified copy of *academic record* by the **11 October 2013 to:-**

If you are based in Alice:-

- **Ms N Mnonopi**, Senior Administrator, Law Building (R10).

If you are based in East London:-

- **Ms Khayakazi Mndi**, Administrative Assistant, LKA Office, 2nd Floor, Gusso Centre.
(Chris Hani Building)

Appendix 2 Informed consent



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Communication department

Research title: The Influence of the Four Flows Model in organising: A case study of the Grounding Programme at the University Of Fort Hare.

Informed consent form

I am Nomzamo Dube, a Masters student in the Communication department at the University of Fort Hare. I am doing a research project exploring the applicability of the Four Flows model to the Grounding Programme. The Four Flows model is an organisational communication model that has been celebrated by recent organisational communication researchers as an ideal model for organisation. Therefore this research will play a vital role in verifying its relevancy. Hence the research will improve organising of the Grounding Programme and similar organisations as well as substantiating the four flows model.

Confidentiality of participants will be prioritised in this research except where there is agreement to do otherwise between the researcher and the respondent. Some interview questions may appear senseless to you because the research is based on a theoretical perspective, but all the same we appreciate participation in advance.

Thank you

Appendix 3 Declaration of interview participants



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Communication department

Research title: The Influence of the Four Flows Model in organising: A case study of the Grounding Programme at the University Of Fort Hare.

Declaration of interview participants

Name of the participant:.....

Researcher: Nomzamo Dube

Supervisor: Prof M Caldwell

It is my declaration that my participation is voluntary and I am convinced that the information I share will be used for this research project only. I will provide my honest opinions against all odds. I am eligible to withdraw from the interview at any time because my participation is on a voluntary basis.

Date-----

Participant Signature-----

Researcher Signature-----

Appendix 4 Interview participants



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Communication department

Research title: The Influence of the Four Flows Model in organising: A case study of the Grounding Programme at the University Of Fort Hare.

Interview participants

PARTICIPANTS OCCUPATIONS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Facilitators	15 newly appointed facilitators 15 returning facilitators
Administrators	2 returning administrators 1 newly appointed administrator
Interns	5 returning interns 3 newly appointed interns
Academic Co-ordinators	1 Alice Campus co-ordinator 1 East London Campus co-ordinator

Appendix 5 Interview guide



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Communication department

Research title: The Influence of the Four Flows Model in organising: A case study of the Grounding Programme at the University Of Fort Hare.

Interview guide

Facilitators	1. Is information transmission dialogical, top-down or bottom up?
	2. To what extent is the platform for informal talk given?
	3. What structures are likely to promote or limit openness?
	4. Of all the Programme employees, who is likely to suffer from information overload and why?
	5. How does old staff welcome new staff?
	6. To what extent is the boundary of ignorance broken during the first induction?
	7. What informal activities are done to break the boundary of disconnection?
	8. To what extent are the roles and responsibilities clear?
	9. What is the common goal of the Programme?
	10. When faced with a problem, who is the first contact person?
	11. What are the Grounding Programme stakeholders that you are aware of? If any, what is their role?

Administrators	1. Are you able to differentiate between what you do and what other administrators do?
	2. Is there a clear boundary between what the interns do and what you do?
	3. Do you feel that your views are heard in the Programme?
	4. How were you first oriented into the Programme when you first came in?
	5. Do you know your job description?
	6. What is the Program's common goal?
	7. Is there teamwork in the Programme?

Interns	1. Are you able to differentiate between what you do and what administrators do?
	2. Is there a clear boundary between what you do and what facilitators do?
	3. Do you feel that your views are heard in the Programme?
	4. How were you first oriented when you first came in as an intern?
	5. Are you aware of your job description?
	6. What is the Programme's common goal?
	7. Do you feel a sense of teamwork in the Programme?

Appendix 6 Participant observation guide



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Communication department

Research title: The Influence of the Four Flows Model in organising: A case study of the Grounding Programme at the University Of Fort Hare.

Participant observation

What is to be observed?

1. In meetings, who initiate conversations and what positions do they hold?
2. What role does the group WhatsApp play to co-ordinate employees? (informal communication)
3. How effective is the communication via emails?
4. Who is likely to suffer from information overload?
5. How friendly are the Programme job adverts?
6. How much knowledge gap still exists after the training between the returning and newly appointed employees?
7. Do all employees know what they are supposed to do at a given time?
8. Who communicates with external stakeholders and what impact do external stakeholders have to the programme?

NB/ The above questions are a rough sketch which is not conclusive, participant observation cannot be narrowed down by mere guidelines.

Appendix 7 Ethical clearance



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **REC-270710-028-RA Level 01**

Certificate Reference Number: CAL011SDUB01

Project title: **The four flows model and organizing: A case study of the grounding program at the University of Fort Hare**

Nature of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: Nomzamo Dube

Supervisor: Prof M Caldwell

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

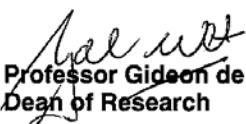
Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely


Professor Gideon de Wet
Dean of Research

24 July 2014