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STORYTELLING AND MANAGEMENT

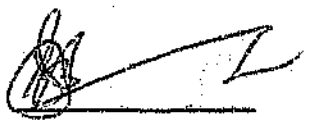
Nkosenhle H. Zungu

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Degree of Master of Management.

1995

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Management in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.



Nkosenhle H. Zungu

On this 13th day of JANUARY 1995.

ABSTRACT

The concept of storytelling and management / organisation throughout the world has been intensively researched in recent years. For instance, Blunt and Jones, 1991; Lessem, 1989, 1993, 1994; Christie, 1993; Chown, 1994; Mbigi, 1993; Zemke, 1990; O'Reilly, 1985; Wilkins, 1984 and many more, have made a significant contribution towards storytelling and management.

This report was aimed at providing a partial answer to the following question:

> *"At the level of management style or in their technique, are South African managers inspired storytellers or detached analysts?"*

The fundamental aim was to establish whether storytelling forms an important part of the South African manager's leadership repertoire. In conjunction with this aim, the proposition made by Lessem (1994) that storytelling competence is an important subset of communal management, was tested.

Propositions for this research were as follows:

- **Storytelling is an important competency for South African managers.**
- **Storytelling is used consciously by South African managers to achieve specific aims.**
- **South African managers can identify the characteristics of good, healthy stories and good storytellers in organisations.**
- **South African managers can identify specific examples of stories used in their own organisations.**
- **South African managers can identify other managers who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire.**

The research was confined to organisations operating within the PWV boundaries. The method of "snowball" sampling was utilised to collect the data, whereby telephonic contact was made with individual members of executive teams in organisations. These individual managers were asked if they could identify any persons within the executive team whom they would characterise as using stories as part of their leadership repertoire.

Those individual managers identified as storytellers were then interviewed in a face to face situation using standardised questions contained in the interview guide.

In examining related literature on the subject of storytelling and management, significant theoretical similarities were found in both local and overseas publications on storytelling as an important aspect of management in any organisation world-wide.

This study followed a content / thematic analysis of data. Analysis of the data was organised into tables to elucidate the fact that leaders do use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire in South Africa. These results are directly supported by both local and overseas literature.

The results of the research indicate that storytelling is extensively used by managers to achieve specific aims; storytelling forms part of African management. These results were further confirmed by the fact that successful and influential South African leaders are perceived to be strong users of storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire.

The implication of this research results is that South African mangers should be aware of the highlights elucidated by this study. These are:

- **Storytelling forms part of South African management.**
- **The use of storytelling is used on the assumption that the workforce of South African organisations seems to relate well to it.**
- **Storytelling, if used properly eliminates the problem of language diversity characterising South African organisations.**
- **Even though storytelling is being used in South African organisations, there is still less official promotion of the technique in terms of training of mangers to use it.**

Unfortunately, the research was unable to establish whether leaders using storytelling follow a similar processes or not - this was owing to the structure of the storytelling interview guide which lacked the probing and in-depth questions necessary for analytical results e.g. the issue of language and comprehension was not raised.

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- My family, friends and colleagues for their support throughout.

- Vicky Goldstein for her dedication whilst typing this report.

DEDICATION

To my mom, Ester and my daughter Cindy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Business communities across the globe are confronted with turbulent internal and external environments, and changes in business in South Africa have probably been greater in magnitude, more varied and numerous, and have occured more quickly in recent history, than anywhere in the world (Enedell, 1993). This is possibly due to drastic changes in the political arena. The 27th of April 1994 saw a major turning point for this country, even though changes in business occured long before this date due to pressure from external sources. Indeed it is clear that the country as a whole faces a situation that is economically, socially and politically volatile (Adonisi, 1993). Violence, demonstrations, strikes and crime have become the order of the day.

For business organisations to remain effective in any country in which they operate, they must take cognisance of changing realities, and new styles of management in these countries. A specifically African management perspective has to evolve in South Africa.

Such a perspective must reflect the uniqueness of this country e.g. diversity of the workforce, historical circumstances surrounding the nation generally, cultural heritage, and specifically, the peculiar circumstances of its managers.

This management perspective needs to be aimed at enhancing the country's ability to compete globally, as it is obvious that South Africa cannot sustain a viable economy without linkages with the outside world (Adonisi, 1993; Binedell, 1993).

Binedell (1993) argues that what is needed in South Africa is a South African orientation to the development of business management. Binedell's argument is based on the fact that business orientation adopted from other countries, especially European, has proved to be less effective due to the unique circumstances experienced in South Africa.

Mbigi (1993) in support of Binedell, points out that effective management and polarity synthesis can only occur if managers have the courage, vision and leadership to undertake the huge task of transformation of management in South Africa. Mbigi goes further to say that for this to happen there is a need for South African organisations operating within South Africa to uncover the dominant spirit of both their society and organisations. Even though such practices can be applied in other African countries, in this study, the focus is on South Africa. In the process of transformation currently under way, the business captains of South Africa will also need to change their management practices, processes, management styles and techniques.

Practices will require not only a firm theoretical base, and firm philosophical base, also firm and directed strategies for application. A practice which is the focus of study, is that of storytelling. Storytelling already does, and should, as recommend this research, play an increasingly important role in determining management style effectiveness in South Africa.

1.2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The notion of contextual management has recently been receiving attention by management practitioners and scholars alike, particularly as a result of the success international examples of Japan and Germany, and of other Pacific Rim countries which have demonstrated the importance of transforming management practices to suit their particular circumstances (Christie, Lessem and Mbigi, 1993).

Contextual management refers to the process of managing people that takes relevant circumstances into consideration i.e. in this case, the South African environment.

The enormous success of the Japanese in the post second world war era, in which they have risen from a defeated nation to the second most powerful economy in the world, has been largely attributed to the use of management structures and to styles that have taken the Japanese culture into consideration (Binedell, 1993).

Due to the presence of Americans in Japan after the war, American management methods were absorbed into Japanese business culture. The most important feature of this absorption process was that Japanese organisations, culture and systems, while influenced by American management methods, maintained their Japanese orientation by incorporating traditional and long standing community and organisational concepts that have been dominant in Japan for centuries. Therefore, Japan's success is largely as a consequence of its being able to lever foreign ideas into Japanese culture and use the context to full effect (Binedell, 1993).

Turning to the South African context, it is clear that though South African management practices have been powerfully influenced by it's British colonial heritage, and by American thinking which has a global influence, it is time to establish its own orientation, just as Japan has done. The strong need of such an orientation has led to a group of South African managers and scholars coming together in the process called "South African Management Project" to investigate this subject further.

This research report forms part of the South African Management Project, a research initiative currently being undertaken by the Wits Business School (WBS, 1994) under the leadership of Dr Binedell.

The South African Management Project addresses the question of whether management is a monolithic, universal science whose principles apply irrespective of the context in which they are practiced. The project argues that although the so-called "what" of management may indeed be universal, the "how" of management is dependent on the contextual and cultural realities within which specific management activities occur.

The specific subject of this research report, which is storytelling and management, is considered to be important, given its longstanding under-utilisation (Mbigi, 1993), and the past history of preoccupation of management practitioners in South Africa with management practices and methods developed elsewhere, such as in North America and Europe. Though such primal and rational management practices are successful in these countries, they have proved to be less successful in South Africa due to the unique circumstances facing this country (Mbigi, 1993).

Yet, despite the introduction of numerous initiatives in the areas of inter alia, total quality management, customer care, participative management, employee involvement, and business process engineering, specific problems continue to beset South African organisations, including low profitability and productivity, low levels of motivation and commitment, and adversarial relationships between management and organised labour.

The aim of the South African Management Project is an attempt to answer the broad question of whether managers in a South African context manage differently from their counterparts elsewhere, and if so, what specific practices constitute a South African approach to management (WBS, 1994). Within this management project, storytelling became one of the major themes that needed a further investigation, especially in South Africa. The South African Management Project is focused on, inter-alia, the following questions :

- **at the philosophical level, do South African managers believe in collectivism or individualism?**

- **at the conceptual level, are South African managers more inspired by the concept of comradeship or teamwork?**

- **at the level of management style or in their technique, are South African managers inspired storytellers or detached analysts?**

This research was aimed at providing a partial answer to the last of the above questions, especially in so far as establishing whether storytelling forms an important part of South African manager's leadership repertoire. The recent proposition made by Lessem (1994) that storytelling competence is an important subset of communal or South African management was tested in the research, because of being the main focus of this study.

If distinct South African management practices exist, then practices based on conceptions of management developed elsewhere on the globe may at best be inappropriate and at worst, ineffective. The appropriateness and effectiveness needs to be understood within the context of this research because this statement does not necessarily mean that foreign management practices are a complete failure; in fact, in some companies they are extremely successful, especially in foreign companies operating in South Africa. Again, the rapid change which is currently taking place in South Africa, makes such foreign management practices extremely difficult to apply effectively (Mbigi, 1993). Furthermore, the incorporation of black managers into management ranks will be all the more successful if management education and development initiatives, affirmative action projects and the like are based on a model of management to which aspirant can more closely relate because of their cultural background (WBS, 1994). Some black managers will still aspire to Western ways, and methods, especially those working for organisations that are predominately Western in their management style. The fundamental proposition is that, in the long run, companies with a uniquely African orientation will be the most successful ones. This will have a direct impact on the economy because of improved productivity (WBS, 1994).

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Though the above discussion has been more general in nature, the objectives of this research were to focus on storytelling because of its central position in this research.

The specific objectives were :

*** to conduct a literature survey to determine the various theories of storytelling in management, locally and overseas.**

*** to determine what storytelling and methods are being applied in practice, given rapid changes in management structures and procedures in South Africa, with more emphasis given to general aims as expressed by those who use storytelling.**

*** to determine storytelling within the management culture of businesses in South Africa, taking the growing workforce diversity into account.**

*** to analyse the benefits experienced by management practitioners of storytelling as a tool applied within business, which would result in certain conclusions in this research.**

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The literature review, Chapter 2 of this report, reviews theories of storytelling in management and organisations, focussing on three theoretical frameworks proposed for South Africa by Martin *et al.* (1983), Breneman and Breneman (1983) and Lessem (1993). All these frameworks were used to test the five fundamental propositions set out in Chapter 2, relating to storytelling as it contributes to effective management in South Africa.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology within the context and importance of the South African Management Project includes the questionnaire and the discription of the body of managers who participated in this study. The sampling method is also described, as well as the basis of choice of the subjects from within the sample. The limitations of the research is elucidated, and finally, the method of analysis of responses to the questionnaire is detailed.

In Chapter 4, the results of the research questionnaire is described using 3 theoretical frameworks i.e. Martin *et al* (1993); Breneman and Breneman (1983) and Lessem (1993). In addition to the de tion of the results a short explanation of the results is given.

In Chapter 5, the results of the research described in Chapter 4 is analysed and discussed, and the research questions answered. The analysis of the research results is then related to the literature review, to prove whether the theories hold true.

In Chapter 6, which is the final chapter of the report, conclusions are drawn, recommendations for future research are outlined, and the relevance of this research to business is explained .

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses various theories of storytelling and management in general and also theories of contextual management, more specifically, relating to the South African context.

2.2. SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The notion of contextual management within the South African context has been intensively researched in recent years (for instance, Christie et al, 1993; Blunt and Jones, 1991; Lessem, 1989, 1993, 1994). In the broader African context, contextual management has been outlined from a theoretical perspective chiefly in three specific texts, as follows:

- *Transcultural Management by Albert Koopman, published in 1991;*
- *Managing Organisations in Africa by Peter Blunt and Merrick Jones, 1992;*
- *African Management edited by Peter Christie, Ronnie Lessem and Lovemore Mbigi, 1993.*

In all three texts mentioned above, preeminence is given to the notion of communality as an important cultural dynamic in the African context, especially in relation to management practices and methods.

Whilst Koopman (1993) articulates the concept of pragmatic humanism, Blunt and Jones (1993) and Lessem (1994) conceptualise communalism more broadly.

Lessem's contribution was considered in more detail as it is his particular theory which most strongly addresses the management practice of storytelling, the specific subject of this research.

Lessem (1994) outlines the concept of the businessphere, in which four particular philosophies are preeminent. These four philosophies are called four "worlds" and they are inclusive of "Southern" philosophy which dominates the South African businessphere. Lessem (1994) argues that these four "worlds" are apparent throughout the global management domain, although different emphasis is given to each in different countries. These domains are as follows :

- *a "western", primal management domain based on the philosophy of pragmatism, which dominates Anglo-Saxon countries;*

- *a "northern", rational domain based on the philosophy of rationalism, which dominates European countries;*

- *an "eastern", development domain based on the philosophy of idealism, which dominates Japan; and*

- *a "southern", communal domain based on the philosophy of humanism, which dominates Africa.*

Within the African context, Lessem (1994) argues that business enterprise and management in South Africa has not emerged in a vacuum. On the contrary, it has evolved out of one particular cultural heritage, the British one, due to colonialism which duly ignored the indigenous cultures. More specifically, it has drawn most strongly on its competitive and personalised "primal" (British) heritage, and to a somewhat lesser extent on its coordinated, impersonalised "rational" (American) heritage, whilst almost completely ignoring its cooperative, "developmental" (Japanese) heritage and humanistic, "communal" (South African) heritage. Lessem's argument does hold because South African management philosophies and principles are based on the above-mentioned theories of management, as outlined above.

In his argument, Lessem (1993, p. 31) draws attention to the South African, communal domain so as to strengthen the following assertion: "South Africa's full cultural heritage is bestowed not only with the modern fruits of American and European science and technology - strongly connected with its empirical and rational orientations - but also with its arts, artifacts, stories and mythical beliefs, traditionally represented in the 'humanities'. Whereas in Europe such a humanistic tradition is particularly strong within southern climes, particularly in Italy, in South Africa it is black more than white who is steeped in this communal, convivial way of being. Only in this humanistic way, therefore, will Southern African business and management truly come into its own.". It will of course take time to achieve a marriage of old and new, and much concerted effort and training e.g. storytelling, and broader management practices.

Lessem (1993, p.33) illustrates the extent to which individual consciousness can neutralise collective consciousness by way of a quote from Sir Lourens van der Post; the renowned South African born author:

"The European has discredited the African way of living and dealing with the forces of nature about and within, and then obliged him increasingly to live in a way which rejects the institutions, customs and initiation rites and rituals whereby for centuries he struck a balance with those overwhelming aspects of nature which are incomprehensible to reason and quite beyond rational control and conscious articulation. Having discredited this ancient way of living we have not put an honourable alternative in its place. No human being or society however self sufficient and rational it may appear can live without institutions which deal with those aspects of life which cannot be explained rationally."

In order to come to grips with the visible and invisible aspects of black African Management, Mbigi (1993) argues that one has to have a clear understanding of its cultural heritage.

African management should be about the ability to take and apply that which is culturally relevant and which works, and to change that which does not work. In essence African management, if properly established, must be about visionary or metaphysical management which creates potential where seemingly nothing existed before. This is about freeing the spirit of employees to become productive (Lessem, 1993).

In summarising the works of Harrison Owen, Lessem (1990, p. 108) concludes that, "The metaphysically based culture encompasses the spirit of an organisation, thereby covering its myths and rituals, including those stories of creating and of resurrection through which vision is turned into action, and vice versa. It is represented by :

* the creation of stories and their ritualistic re-enactment

* the creative vision behind the acts of the business foundation

* the technological and cultural soil in which the products and services are deeply imbedded

* the profound art or service underlying the business activity

There is a developing view in South Africa which stipulates that the group needs stoking, nurturing, attention. As a result of this view, it is believed that the African perspective is communal rather than individual. Within the South African context, this phenomenon is more prominent than anywhere else in the world (Lessem, 1993). Therefore Lessem (1994) concludes this argument by stating that in its effort at becoming world class, the fully-fledged South African company will be embodying the spirit of Southern Africa's diverse people in both its products and services, and also in its organisational forms and working environments.

These culturally based factors of production, which prevail in South African organisations and which are encapsulated in Lessem's four worlds, are parts of a Southern Africa whole. In fact, South Africa has been noted for its uniqueness, based purely on its diverse workforce, languages and cultures.

But what is interesting is that the same could not be said for its business and organisational systems, which are within South African context by and large foreign, forged, ineffective and monolithic (Lessem, 1994).

Lessem (1994) argues that the British cultural heritage does make up a part of the Southern African businessphere due partly to colonial rule and that America is an important economic influence here as in the world at large. In order to establish the effect of heritage, one needs to focus on the "four worlds" as identified by Lessem. Therefore, as we move around these "four worlds", one finds that the generic business orientation, both in process and structure, shifts its "factorial" ground, progressively evolving from individual part to communal whole.

In drawing up the differentiation between these worlds, Lessem (1994) points out that :

* Competitive enterprise within a free market thrives upon personally based pragmatic leadership.

* Coordinated organisations in a "dirigiste" (Northern Commercial) economy draw upon institutionally based rational management.

* Collaboratively based industry within the context of a social market is nourished by inter-organisationally focused holism and humanism.

* Finally, what might be termed a communally based socio-economic network draws upon continually oriented humanism.

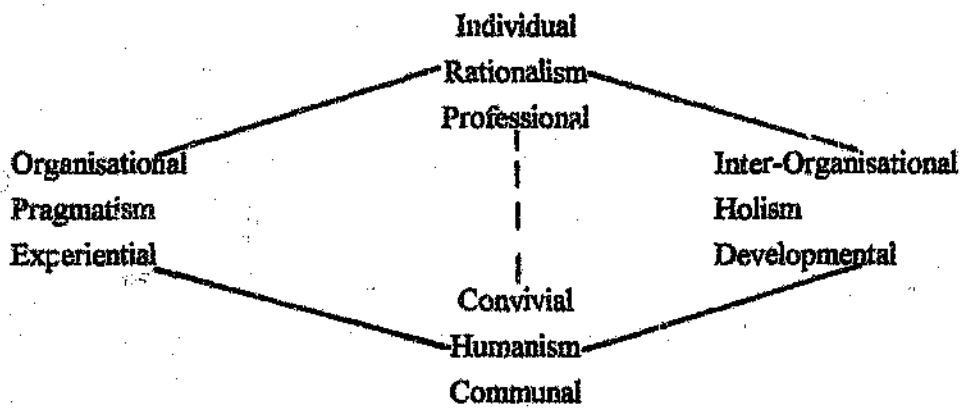
All these four parts (worlds) are derived from underlying European-African cultures and philosophies. Therefore, the field of African management, both in theory and practice, has been the unified sum of varied parts (Lessem, 1994).

Lessem (1994) argues that South African history is now changing. His argument is that South Africa is developing interdependently from within, rather than its constituent parts battling independently, each in a state of apartheid. At the same time work spirit rather than physical labour, human as opposed to financial capital, intangible information rather than tangible resources, culture rather than economy, have become the primary resources.

Lessem (1994) argues that though all culturally based factors of Southern African production as mentioned above are evident, three of them, pragmatism, rationalism and holism are underdeveloped in South Africa primarily because they have not been imbedded within the underlying, humanistic soils by the indigenous people. He points out that not even Smuts's original work has been integrated with the perspectives of systemically oriented work adopted by the Stellenbosch Institute and also, more recently by Don Beck, at Middelburg Steel.

Lessem (1994) added that humanism is strongly rooted in Southern African soils, having distinct European parentage. Humanism has given rise to the convivial manager, operating within a communal context e.g. African Bank, Community Bank; some NGO's etc, all characterised by tightly interconnected socio-economic networks.

THE FORCE FIELD OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN MANAGEMENT



Lessem's Model (1994)

Lessem (1994) argues that communal learning theory and practice of management has been inhibited in South Africa due to a number of internal and external obstacles such as Apartheid, strong external influences, and the manner in which businesses are run. This inhibition has been the case not only in South Africa but in the global business sphere as a whole. The other three perspectives - rationalism, holism and humanism have been much less clearly differentiated, let alone integrated into an overall economic and managerial worldview.

The communal management domain is, according to Lessem (1994), characterised by a set of management practices which include conviviality and storytelling. As part of oral communication, storytelling in particular is an important skill for communally orientated managers in, inter-alia, articulating the important beliefs and values to members of the community, and in inspiring and motivating members of the community which he/she represents.

Lessem's proposition that storytelling is an important competency for managers in Africa is also supported by Mbigi (1993), and Nasser and Vivier (1994). According to Mbigi (1993), the business leadership challenge in South Africa is that of synthesising different tribal, racial, social and cultural values. Storytelling is considered one technique which can assist in this synthesisation process. Nasser and Vivier (1994), on the other hand, focus on the requirement for organisational change in South Africa, and indicate that storytelling can help to facilitate the adoption of new and different sets of values in South African organisations.

2.3 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The proposition that storytelling is an important management practice is not limited to the South African business literature. In many other global contexts (e.g. Anglo- Saxon, European), theorists suggest that storytelling fulfills important managerial functions (for example, Martin, Fedman, Hatch & Sitkin, 1983; O'Reilly, 1985; Wilkins, 1984; Zemke, 1990 etc).

Zemke (1990, p.45) for instance comments that :

"People love stories. They love telling them and they love hearing them. Stories instruct, inform, entertain, warm and warn. In organisations, and in society in general, stories play a dual role. They act as powerful directives for members' behaviour, and they teach important lessons as well. Understanding the frequently told stories of an organisation is one of the keys to understanding the values and workings of that organization's culture".

Zemke (1990) further suggests that stories can be used to enhance communication, stimulate ideas, build warmth and rapport, decrease resistance to change, and inspire and motivate. He suggests that storytelling can also stimulate creativity and imagination, thereby increasing employees' problem- solving abilities and personal productivity, and fulfilling them as human beings.

Wilkins (1984) indicates that new employees joining the organisation need a social map that will point out dangerous as well as safe behaviours within the organisation. He notes that not every piece of so-called "scuttlebutt" that passes around an organisation gives the sort of normative guidance required. To serve as a cultural map, contends Wilkins, a story must do two things. First, it must symbolise the organisation's overarching purpose and philosophy in a way that inspires and teaches. Second, it must provide enough suggestions about how participants must act that, once inspired, they know exactly what to do.

Storytelling has also been given consideration by theorists of organisational culture. Wilkins (1984), for instance, suggests that storytelling is not only used to carry an organisation's culture to successive employees, but also plays a major role in the creation of the corporate culture itself.

Wilkins (1984) indicates that management of any organisation is responsible for articulating a particular philosophy to which the organisation subscribes. But to pass that philosophy on to employees in a way in which they can understand, accept and practice is very difficult. The relevancy of storytelling in the South African context is enormous due to the high level of illiteracy in the workforce. Storytelling is a useful tool in this regard, because statements of philosophy can be passed informally from employee to employee via stories which represent such philosophy.

These stories help employees, who are generally far removed from the executive suites from which such statements emanate, to understand the core philosophy of the organisation. South African organisations by and large have followed the world trend of developing mission statements and values systems without involving employees. As a result of not understanding and identifying with such values, employees tended to reject them, and still do in autocratic companies. However, (in South African economy and society), pressure is on these companies (with new policies of openness) to change their management style.

Wilkins (1984) suggests that managerial philosophy is abstract, whilst stories are concrete. Policies are also rigid, whilst stories are more symbolic and flexible enough that they can be interpreted and changed to suit the situation to which they are applied. Stories thus provide concrete context to abstract philosophy, and suggest specific behaviours without becoming inflexible rules.

Wilkins (1984) sentiments are echoed by Tom Peters' (1993, p.16) statement that: "Policy manuals are no-no today, but anarchy's not in, either. So how do we let people know "what's important around here" without constraining them ? The best answer , as I see it, - stories."

Also in the area of organisational culture, Hansen and Kahnweiler (1993) suggest that one important aspect of culture is its ability or otherwise to influence relationship dynamics. Schein (1985) suggests that stories can be very useful in understanding the role of culture in influencing such relationship dynamics.

O'Reilly (1989) believes that stories act as a cultural code. In corporate contexts, O'Reilly suggest that stories help employees make sense of their work place and their reasons for working.

Creation of stories is explained by Deal and Kennedy (1982) who suggest that stories are derived from shared norms and values or belief systems of any group. Deal and Kennedy (1982) refer to this shared perspective as "the way we do things around here". Deal and Kennedy postulate that belief systems are shared perceptions of what is acceptable, a kind of meaning making and at the same time a kind of constructed reality.

Hansen and Kahnweiler (1993) went further to suggest that stories frequently serve as a means of transmitting behavioural expectations for human relationships. Stories are tribal codes for esteblishing order in all societies. They strongly believe that stories enjoy widespread acceptance as a means of communication in organisations (mainly employees).

In support of the acceptance of stories as a means of communication, Martin & Powers (1983) believe that stories are easy to follow, they are generally entertaining and they are more likely to be remembered than other forms of written or oral communication. In addition to that Barnett (1988) & Martin (1982) believe that stories provide a shortcut for new members to learn about an organisation's culture.

Wilkins (1978), Wilkins and Martin (1979), and Barnett (1988) conducted extensive studies on stories as a cognitive script, that is, an event map which indicates expectations for causality.

They concluded that stories are designed to answer specific questions such as:

* What kind of organisation do we have?

* How does this compare to what we need?

* What kinds of people do we want to attract and retain?

* What are our goals and purpose?

* What past events are we proud of?

* What will we do in the future?

Pacanowsky & O'Donnell - Trujillo (1983) added to previous research by stating that stories typically reflect employees interpretations of individuals, colleagues, organisational ideology and facts of history. Schein (1983) supported this argument by stating that often, stories concern the founder. Normally, the founder plays a major role in shaping the culture of the organisation which reflects the founders perspective and way of thinking. This culture is then instilled to new members joining the organisation and passed on to others.

Wilkins (1983) further suggests that stories can be used to promote the legitimacy of management philosophy. Peters & Waterman (1982), Feldman (1990) and Martin & Powers (1980) strongly believe that stories are used to guide, control and influence employee behaviour and attitude.

Stories are also a powerful means of generating commitment (Martin & Powers, 1983). In the study of organisational culture, Tichy, (1983) suggested that culture is communicated through various mechanisms, including ceremonies, stories and symbols.

Breneman & Breneman (1983) argue that organisational values are often implicit in myths, sagas and stories about the organisation which are used as points of symbolic convergence.

Georges (1967) in his paper titled "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events" argues that intensive studies of story texts from individual societies have revealed that stories can reflect cultural reality or distort it, that they can reinforce the social structure and contribute to social cohesion or weaken the social structure and threaten social cohesion, that they can function as conditioning mechanisms

and instruments of social control or as escape mechanisms and instruments of social criticism. As organisations are social structures, storytelling events could have the same impact on them as well.

Georges (1967) went further to identify a set of postulates for storytelling events. These are:

* **Every storytelling event is a communicative event**

* **Every storytelling event is a social experience**

* **Every storytelling event is unique**

* **Storytelling events exhibit degrees and kinds of similarities.**

Working with these postulates, as premises, one realises the power of storytelling in social structures such as organisations.

Mitroff & Kilmann (1975) argue that if accounting and finance are viewed as the backbone of organisations, then the stories which permeate all organisations of any size must be viewed as their lifeblood. They believe that stories are so central to organisations that not only do organisations depend on them, but stronger still, they couldn't function without them. In actual fact, the story becomes the corporate myth, the basic transcript that establishes and perpetuates corporate traditions. It gives basic meaning to the corporation.

Mitroff & Kilmann (1975) go further to suggest that the corporate myth is the "spirit of the organisation" and as such, it is infused into all levels of policy and decision making.

In their study, Martin *et al.* (1983) explore the role that stories play in demonstrating the unique qualities of organisations. They discovered that organisation members tell stories to other members or outsiders to show how they see their organisation being different from other organisations. Such stories can illustrate both positive and negative qualities of organisations.

In their argument, they suggest that these thematic stories become an integral part of the organisational culture because they help to resolve the dualities that arise from the conflict between individual values and goals and organisational exigencies.

The effectiveness of stories lies in their simplicity when compared with other communication techniques. As Martin and Powers (1983) point out, an organisational story is easier to recall than a set of statistics containing the same information.

Boje (1976) in his article titled "Postlog : Bringing Performance Back In" points out that storytelling is how organisational employees make sense of and influence their unfolding experience. Boje (1982) went further to suggest that even war stories are used by both client and consultant to legitimise the continuance of techniques that worked well for the organisation in the past.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that when organisations change, they seek and install new rituals. Within that process of change, storytelling is used by people to mourn old ways and renegotiate new values and relationships.

Ferris, Chachere and Pondy (1989) argue that the internal context of the organisational settings is a very complex phenomenon. They further state that rational approaches to behaviour and models organisational processes have failed to capture these complexities adequately and therefore have not contributed to the kind of informed understanding required to explain why employees and organisations do what they do. Ferris *et al* (1989) view these settings as very dynamic in nature, and therefore storytelling should be viewed as a key effective tool that could be used to understand the context of the organisational settings.

Wilkins (1984) points out that management of any organisation is fully responsible for developing some philosophy for the organisation. But to pass on that philosophy down to employees to understand, accept and practice could be very difficult if not impossible. Wilkins (1984) suggests that philosophy statements can be passed on informally through storytelling from employee to employee who are, by virtue of their work, far removed from management who write philosophy statements.

Smircich (1985) writes that organisations themselves are very dynamic entities whose norms and values are created through social interaction of its employees. There is, therefore, a strong belief that interactive patterns reveal underlying conditions for work behaviour. These interactive patterns are governed by storytelling as a means of communication.

In evaluating storytelling as a tool for problem-solving in organisations, Mitroff & Kilmann (1975) discovered that the greatest value in sharing organisational stories lies in the fact that it sensitises managers to other realities - to the fact that there are other ways of perceiving and analysing organisational disturbances and problems. In this sense, the value of such an experience extends far beyond the seemingly trivial exercise of storytelling.

The above brief review indicates that much has been written on management and storytelling; yet, not enough empirical research has been undertaken in this area (Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993).

In an empirical study of stories in an organisational setting, Martin *et al* (1983) established that seven common stories effectively guided behaviour in a number of different organisations. These stories were characterised as follows by Martin and her colleagues :

- 'the rule breaking story';

- 'is the big boss human?'

- 'can the little person move to the top?'

- 'will I be moved?'

- 'how will the boss react?'

- 'how will the organisation deal with obstacles?'

In the South African context, Chown (1994) undertook a study to establish the qualities of African business leaders. One such quality identified in his empirical research was indeed storytelling. However, Chown's (1994) research did not explore the notion of storytelling specifically, which is the aim of this research.

But Chown's research discovered that South African managers have a tendency to favour oral communication as opposed to written communication in delivering important and significant pieces of information. Managers view storytelling as a key quality which assists them in communicating important messages, transmit values, create meaning and help align their vision.

Furthermore, Chown discovered that African managers would by virtue of the fact that they are rooted in African tribal and traditional custom feel amore at home with the concept and the practice of storytelling.

The paucity of empirical research in the area of storytelling, as indicated in the review above provides further justification for this research . Within the context of business structure, culture and aims, it is quite obvious that communication plays a crucial role; and to communicate effectively, storytelling is a very strong and effective technique that could be used.

The specific propositions that the research report aimed to test were stated as follows :

- that storytelling is an important competency of South African managers;

- that storytelling is used consciously by South African managers to achieve certain specific aims;

- that South African managers can identify the characteristics of good, healthy stories and of good storytellers in organisations;

- that South African managers can identify specific examples of stories used in their organisations;

- that South African managers can identify other managers who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire.

In view of the literature reviewed above, it has become clear that storytelling is a universal management technique. Researching this subject further, there is a need for appropriate methodology that can bring elicit information which will enable the researcher to test the propositions. Chapter 3 will follow with more emphasis on the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the research propositions, the methods of data collection, the research setting, the justification of the interview guide and method of analysis, the presentation of the research results, the limitations of the research, the sampling approach, the value of the methodology, and the method of interpretation.

The nature of the research is exploratory, aimed at increasing the theoretical and empirical knowledge rather than proving or disproving a particular theoretical belief. The research was aimed at testing the propositions outlined in Chapter 2, and these propositions are:

- **Storytelling is an important competency for South African managers.**
- **Storytelling is used consciously by South African managers to achieve specific aims.**
- **South African managers can identify the characteristics of good, healthy stories and good storytellers in organisations.**
- **South African managers can identify specific examples of stories used in their organisations.**

- **South African managers can identify other managers who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire.**

This study was intended to be of a qualitative nature, and the nature of qualitative research is such that the researcher is more concerned with the meaning (testing hypothesis or propositions) than the actual measurement (Daft, 1983). The researcher analysed the information collected and generated major themes that give meaning to the subject studied. It is contended that in the area of leadership generally, qualitative research methodologies generate a wider range of variables than is the case with quantitative research (Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth & Keil, 1988). Furthermore, this research investigated one aspect of the broader variable of organisational culture, where qualitative methodologies are often used to study this particular variable's causes and consequences (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991). Storytelling in this context is perceived to be part of organisational culture and operates within such a culture.

3.2. THE RESEARCH SETTING

As part of the 1993 Human Resource Development course requirements for the Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Human Resources), the lecturer for which was Peter Christie, students undertook an examination equivalent assignment which required the collection of data against which the researcher's propositions on storytelling stated in Chapter 2 & 3 were tested.

Individual students were required to interview those managers who were identified by their colleagues as storytellers and operating at executive levels of organisations.

The reason for focusing on managers as a sample of this study was because of the objective of this study to confine itself to storytelling and management.

Students were provided with a stru ured interview schedule, as well as training in conducting the interviews. All students received the same training and instructions, in order to minimise interviewer bias, and to increase the reliability and validity of the data generated. This assignment undertaken by students was perceived to be important because it could generate the data which could give meaning and provide some answers to questions pertaining to South African management practices in a changing South African businessphere. Because of the validity of this data the researcher made use of it in order to establish its relevance as well as meaning of the information generated.

3.3. METHOD OF CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

For research data collection questions, refer to Appendix 1. The interview guide containing questions which were developed by Peter Christie.

The research was conducted using an interview guide comprising six broad questions (see appendix 1) which would be read out at a personal interview. All interview schedules were completed during the interviews according to a consistent format, and the interviews were also tape recorded by the interviewers. "Storytellers" had previously been identified by contact persons, and interviews were set up at pre-arranged times.

3.4. SAMPLING APPROACH

A total of 74 managers from various organisations were interviewed, which comprises the specific sample for this research. Given the spread of organisations represented by these managers, it is suggested that such a sample is reasonably representative of managers in South African organisations operating within the PWV. Subject included senior managers from within the commercial and industrial private sectors (including financial service, manufacturing, banking and mining), the public sector (including local government, civics and educational institutions), as well as from non-governmental organisations.

Furthermore, the subjects are representative of a wide spread of management functions including general management, finance, marketing, operation and human resources. Subjects are also representative of all race groups in South Africa as well as representing both sexes. A demographic description of subjects interviewed is provided in Chapter 4 of this research report to indicate the sample's representativity to the broader management population in South Africa.

The interview schedule used for data collection purposes is justified on the following basis:

Each question contained in the interview guide tested a specific proposition, as indicated below. Therefore, the method of analysis used aimed to generate information for each question for its specific proposition. As this study was focusing on storytelling and management, it was quite appropriate to use managers as its subjects.

Finally, using a structured interview guide was aimed at reducing interviewer's bias on the results, as well as to ensure that subjects are asked the same questions in the same way, taking into consideration the fact that interviewers were students with limited experience.

- The *sixth* question (point 8) of the interview guide tested the *first* and the *fifth* propositions of this research.

- The *first* and the *second* questions (point 3 and 4) of the interview guide tested the *second* proposition of this research.

- The *third* and the *fifth* questions (point 5 and 7) of the interview guide tested the *third* proposition of this research.

- The *fourth* question (point 6) of the interview guide tested the *fourth* proposition of this research.

3.5. METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

In conducting research of a qualitative nature as mentioned in 3.1., the objective is to make sense of the data generated. This requires that structures within the data must be identified and made meaningful through subsequent interpretation (Jones, 1985).

For data interpretation purposes for this research, the following theoretical frameworks were utilised.

For the fourth proposition, concerning stories used in South African organisation, the framework provided by Martin *et al* (1983) was used to interpret data. For the third proposition, concerning the general characteristics of good stories and good storytellers, the theoretical framework provided by Breneman and Breneman (1983) was used. For the first, second and fifth propositions, concerning storytelling as an important managerial competency and which fulfils certain specific aims for South African managers, Lessem's (1993) theoretical framework was utilised.

The research analysis used the method of content analysis and thematic interpretation of data collected by means of a questionnaire. These techniques have the purpose of reducing the accumulated data into manageable statements, and of suggesting ideas for future quantitative research which can stand the rigours of statistical testing (Keogh, 1994). However, the distinction needs to be made between categories of data which are mutually exclusive and those which are not (Leedy, 1983). Where the possible responses to questions posed to interviewees were mutually exclusive, content analysis was performed on the data. Where responses to questions were not necessarily mutually exclusive, and thus content analysis was not possible, the data was thematically interpreted. In this case, frequency counts of the different themes identified was computed, in order to indicate the relative importance or unimportance of each theme across the sample spectrum of managers interviewed.

The specific steps utilised in this exploratory data analysis were as follows (Keogh, 1994):

a. Transferring the data into tables with emerging themes and percentage of responses.

b. Building constructs by entering short sentences from the interview schedules into columns of values.

c. Summarising long descriptions without losing the content and meaning of sentences.

d. Adding additional words to the original constructs where constructs are similar.

3.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations are inherent in every research conducted because of human factors involved in the process. Therefore, it is quite imperative to acknowledge such limitations. The research limitations are mentioned below.

3.6.1. The potential existed for interviewer bias to have occurred when the interview was conducted. The interview guide and transcripts helped to minimise this source of bias.

3.6.2 The potential for respondent bias. Given that the subjects of the research were identified by their colleagues as storytellers, the potential existed for responses to be biased in the direction of giving information which the subject believed the interviewer was looking for.

3.6.3. The research was limited to companies that were perceived to have storytellers.

3.6.4. The research was limited to companies situated in the PWV area.

3.6.5. The questions on the interview guide were limited in the sense that they did not deal with the important question of language diversity - use of interpreter, etc.

3.6.6. The methodology was time-consuming and very heavily reliant on the ability of the interviewer both to probe during the interview and to appraise the results thereof.

3.6.7. Structured questions used in the interview process might have limited the extent to which the respondent could have examined the subject.

3.6.8. The interview structure would also have guided the subjects to respond to the interviewer's vision as opposed to allowing them to explore and represent their own world views.

3.6.9. The questions did not probe certain crucial areas / issues, such as language and communication ability.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations of the research, it is the researcher's belief that the methodology used in this research was effective in acquiring the information required to test propositions and come out with findings which formulate possible answers to the fundamental question of this study mentioned in Chapter 1. Following in Chapter 4 are the results of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the research results based on the analysis of data collected.

The data collection exercise was conducted by students as mentioned in Chapter 3. The researcher analysed this data which produced results as detailed in this chapter. The students used an interview guide to collect the data. The interview guide consisted of six broad questions, summarised as follows:

- **Do South African managers use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire?**
- **What aims are achieved or partially fulfilled by storytelling?**
- **What are the characteristics of good, healthy stories?**
- **What are the characteristics of good storytellers?**
- **Can you tell a story about your organisation?**

The results are presented according to each of these questions later in this Chapter.

The companies which participated in this research as mentioned in Chapter 3 under (3.4) sampling approach, were diverse, including public and private business, educational institutions, religious organisations, trade union movements, political organisations and various non- governmental organisation.

The research results provided the basis for the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Of the responses of the 74 subjects interviewed, only 68 subjects whose responses were used in the analysis. This number is considered acceptable for this research. There were only six subjects whose data was not usable.

4.2. DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The body of subjects consisted of managers perceived as storytellers.

panies participated in this study had a manager who was involved in g storytelling in some form or another to further management or company aims or goals in the company.

4.2.2 Description of subjects

Gender Category

Male	Female
48	19

Table 1

72% of the subjects were males and 28% were females

4.2.3 Occupational Levels of Subjects

Management Levels Category

Senior Management	Middle Management	Junior Management
42	19	7

Table 2

62% of the subjects were senior managers, 28% middle managers and 10% junior managers.

4.2.4 Composition of Body of Companies

Companies Category

Business	Religious	Educational	Political	Trade Union
42	3	21	1	1

Table 3

62% of companies were from the business sector, 4% were religious organisations, 31% educational institutions, 1,5% political organisations and 1,5% trade union organisations.

4.3 RESULTS

The results are presented on the basis of themes generated from the data as well as the importance and strengths of such themes.

4.3.1 For purposes of presentation, the response statements recorded in the interview guide have been combined into single broad theme.

4.3.2 The subjects responses to the questions contained the interview guide were as follows:

Question 1: *Response to the questions*

- **"Ask the subject to comment on whether (s)he uses storytelling consciously and purposefully to achieve certain aims, and if so, what these aims specifically are?"**

- **"If the subject does not use storytelling consciously and purposefully to achieve certain aims, ask him / her to suggest what aims are potentially fulfilled by storytelling?"**

Responses

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
55	8	5
81%	12%	7%

Table 4

81% of total subjects responded "yes", 12% responded "no" and only 7% of subjects were neutral on this question.

4.3.4 Table 5 gives the ranking of aims achieved by storytelling based on the number of responses given by each subject.

Ranking of Aims achieved by Storytelling

Ranking	Aim	Frequency	Percentage
1	To explain and communicate information to employees or students in the learning process	91	53,5%
2	To teach employees about the culture of the organisation	53	31%
3	To illustrate complex matters to employees in a more simple way	15	9%
4	To teach employees about the history of the organisation	6	3,5%
5	To acknowledge and communicate employees' achievements in the organisation	5	3%

Table 5

Summary of aims achieved by storytelling as identified by subjects

- Storytelling is used to influence employees' behaviour and way of thinking.
- Storytelling is used to guide employees in doing their jobs.
- Storytelling is used to activate employees involvement in various projects within the organisation.

- Storytelling is used to illustrate complex matters to employees.

- Storytelling is used to assist employees and students in their learning process.

- Storytelling is used to promote customer service.

- Storytelling is used to explain the history of the organisation to new employees.

- Storytelling is used to acknowledge and communicate employees' achievements to other members of the organisation.

- Storytelling is used to create understanding among employees.

- Storytelling is used as a communication tool.

- Storytelling is used to simplify complex matters.

- Storytelling is used to motivate employees and students.

- Storytelling is used to break down moulds

- Storytelling is used to encourage innovation among employees.

- Storytelling is used to build relations between management and employees as well as among employees

- Storytelling is used to set goals and targets for employees.

Interpretation and discussion of these aims is provided in Chapter 5.

A total of 170 responses were received for this particular question. The results indicate that explanation or communication was highly ranked by the subjects.

The statement "To explain or communicate information to employees or students in the learning process" captures responses such as:

(i) Storytelling is used to guide employees in doing their jobs

(ii) Storytelling is used to illustrate complex matters to employees.

(iii) Storytelling is used to assist employees and students in their learning process, etc.

The statement "To illustrate complex matters to employees in a more simple way", captured responses such as:

> Storytelling is used to simplify complex matters.

The statement "To teach employees about the culture of the organisation", captured responses such as:

> Storytelling is used to induct new employees into the culture of the organisation.

The statement "To teach employees about the history of the organisation", captured responses such as:

> Storytelling is used to explain the history of the orgainsaiton to new employees.

The statement "To acknowledge and communicate employees' achievement in the organisation:, captured responses such as:

> Storytelling is used to acknowledge and communicate employees achievements to other members of the organisation.

4.3.5 Question 2 response to the question

"Ask the subject what (s)he believes are the characteristics of good stories in organisations."

Characteristics of good, healthy stories identified

- Imagination
- Relevant
- Instructive
- Humorous
- Real
- Credible
- Impressiveness

Ranking of Characteristics of Good Stories

Ranking	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Imagination	48	25%
2.	Relevant	48	25%
3.	Instructive	47	24%
4.	Humourous	22	11%
5.	Real	21	10,5%
6.	Credible	6	3%
7.	Impressive	3	1,5%

Table 6

Ranking of the characteristics of good, healthy stories in terms of importance is reflected in Table 6 above show that 'Imaginativeness', 'Relevancy' and 'Instructiveness' are ranked as the most important characteristics by subjects. A total of 195 characteristics were identified.

4.3.6 Question 3: Response to the question

"Ask the subject if (s)he can tell you a story about his / her particular organisation."

Stories about Organisations

Gave a Story	Did not give a Story
67	1

Table 7

99% of subjects had a story to tell about their organisations, and only 1% of subjects could not tell a story about their organisations.

4.3.7 Some of these themes were more important than others. Table 8 below gives the ranking of these themes. 'Motivation', 'History' and 'Success' were ranked as the most important themes. A total of 118 themes of stories were identified by subjects.

Ranking of Themes of Stories told by Subjects

Ranking	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Motivation	30	25%
2.	History	26	22%
3.	Success	23	20%
4.	Strategy	19	16%
5.	Founder	10	8,5%
6.	Culture	10	8,5%

Table 8

Subjects stories revolved around the following issues:

- Stories that promoted business strategy within the organisation
- Stories that were communicating the history of the organisation to new employees
- Stories that told about the founder of the organisation
- Stories that promoted the importance of customer satisfaction
- Stories that promoted equal and fair treatment of all employees in the organisation
- Stories that built and improved employees' relationships within the organisation
- Stories that reflected the past experience of the organisation, or individuals within the organisation.
- Stories that gave recognition to successful employees
- Stories that promoted or communicated the culture of the organisation to new employees
- Stories that encouraged employees to be responsible, as well as generated commitment to the job.

- Stories that communicated company vision to employees.

4.3.8 Question 4: Response to the question

"Ask the subject what (s)he believes are the characteristics of good storytellers in organisations."

100% of subjects did give some characteristics of good storytellers.

4.3.9 Ranking of Characteristics of Good Storytellers

Ranking	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Communicative	66	27%
2.	Sensitive	55	22%
3.	Credible	41	17%
4.	Imaginative	29	12%
5.	Humorous	27	11%
6.	Generally Effective	26	11%

Table 9

Following are the characteristics of good storytellers as given by subjects:

- Fluency
- Voice
- Imagination
- Drama

- People's person
- Sincere
- Humour
- Understanding of audience
- Sensitive
- Credible

These results indicate that there are similarities between the characteristics of effective stories and those of effective storyteller. There is no doubt in the researcher's mind that a good story needs a good storyteller in order to have greater impact on the audience.

4.3.10 Question point 8

Ask the subject if (s)he has come across other leaders of organisations who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire, and if so, who these people are?

Identification of Leaders

Yes	No Comment	No
54	11	3

Table 10

79% of subjects have come across other leaders who use storytelling, 11% preferred not to comment or identify such leaders, while only 5% of subjects stated that they have not come across leaders who use storytelling.

Following below is a list of names of leaders as identified by subjects. Some of these leaders' organisations were not given by subjects, hence there are gaps.

Names of South African Managers who use Storytelling

NAME	COMPANY
Colin Hall	-Wooltru
Kerin Butler	-Delta
John Ford	-Wits Business School
Grant Robinson (Late)	-Wits Business School
Lovemore Mbigi	-Nampak
Albert Koopman	-ITISA
Johan Nel	-ITISA
Raymond Ackerman	-Pick `n Pay
Kevin De Villiers	-Allied Bank
Francis Hugo	-Sanlam
Ronnie Gluckman	-Clinical Psychologist
John Carsam	-Producer and Writer
Clem Sunter	-Anglo American
Conrad Strauss	-Standard Bank
Richard Laubscher	-Nedcor
Brian Brooke	-The Brooke Theatre
Blain Burger	-Johannesburg City Council
John Pape	-Khanya College
Geoff Smelgar	-Deloitte and Touche
Gcina Mhlophe	-Zanendaba Storytellers
Christo Nel	-ITISA
Derek Jooste	-Mast
Koreff	-Executive Bank
John Crowford	-Glacier Bearings
Tom Peters	-
Mike Burgers	-Anglo- Alpha
Maurice Reznik	-Phillips Computer Systems
J. Frankel	-Renaissence Group of Financial Consultants
Rex Tomlinson	-Nampak
Koos Radebe	-Radio Metro
Njabulo Ndebele	-University of the North
Sr Bernard Naube	-
France Mkhatshwa	-
Zeph Mothopeng (late)	-PAC
Madala Mphahlele	-CCV
Rev. V. Mehawa	-National Sorgum Breweries
Tokyo Sexwale	-African National Congress
Frederick Van Zyl-Slabbert	-Wits Business School
Colin Englin	-

Table 11

Table 11 Continued

Martha Mokgoko	-University of Witwatersrand
Ian MacRae	-Eskom
George Lindaque	-Eskom
Gwedi Matash	-
Thabo Mbeki	-African Naitonal Congress
Arie Klaasen	-
Murray Hofmeyer	-
Cecil Brunekes	-
Eric Molobi	-Kagiso Trust
Vincent Mogane	-Kagiso Trust
Prof. L. Schlemmer	-Wits Business School
Donald Gordon	-
Dr. T. Motlana	-
Jan Spies	-
Eric Harrison	-
Ciifford Van Der Schyff	-
Russell Kitts	-
Norman Van Rheede	-
Glen Steward	-
Charles Orsmond	
Ben Brooks	-Redhill School
Sid Gosher	-TED
Bernard Sceff	-
Norman Saddler	-
Ernie Saks	-Rivonia Primary School
Rabbi Tanzer	-
Joanna Weinberg	-
Paul Schutte	-
Neil Crighton	-
W R Ellis	-
M. Maker	-
Mayer Kahn	-SAB
Harry Oppenheirmer	-
Anton Rupert	-
Rob Rimmer	-Sun International
Sol Kerzner	-Sun International
Clive Walker	-
Tom de Lange	-Nampak
Neil Cumming	-Nampak
Mark William	-Shope
Jay Naidoo	-Former Cosatu
Elijah Bagau	-Former Num
Kgalema Notlanke	-Num
Dr Speedy Batel (Late)	-

Table 11 Continued

Nelson Mandela	-African National Congress
Martin Luther King Jr	-
President Kennedy	-
Rabbi Greenburg	-
Professor Sharon	-
Isabel Hofmeyer	-
Kathleen David	-
John Kani	-Actor
Joyce Levenson	-
Janice Honeyman	-Theatre impressions, actress, writer
Clive Wiel	-
Tony Factor (Late)	-
Eli Wentzel	-
Cyril Ramaphosa	-African National Congress
Colin Andrews	-
Sipho Kubheka	-

These research results indicate that there are so many leaders who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire in South African organisations. Chapter 5 to follow provides more analysis of the results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. THE RESULTS ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed analysis of the results and interpretation in relation to the propositions and literature covered in Chapter 2.

5.1.1 Proposition 1

The first proposition was stated as follows :

"That storytelling is an important competency of South African Managers"

5.1.2 Questions used to test the first proposition

"Have you come across other leaders of organisations who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire, and if so, who are they?"

tested the first proposition.

The results strongly indicate that storytelling is part of the leadership repertoire of South African managers. 79% of subjects clearly indicated that they have come across leaders or managers who use storytelling. These results are strongly supported by Lessem (1994) and Chown (1994).

In addition to that 74 managers were identified easily to participate in this research.

Those leaders identified included well known influential names, to mention a few: Nelson Mandela, Clem Sunter, Raymond Ackerman, Conrad Strauss, Ian MacRae, Cyril Ramaphosa, Colin Hall, John Ford, Albert Koopman, Kevin DeVilliers, Francis Hugo, Lovemore Mbigi, Richard Laubscher, Tokyo Sexwale, Fredrick van Zyl- Slabbert, Thabo Mbeki, Lawrance Schlemmer, Sol Kerzner, Jay Naidoo etc. These are not just ordinary people. These are well known high powered leaders in this country. They have strong influence within the business community and society at large. They are respected by members of the society on the basis of their success in their leadership.

If such leaders use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire, it is clear that storytelling plays a significant role in African management. These results are supported by Lessem (1994); Christie (1993); Mbigi (1993) and Chown (1994).

In view of the South African diverse workforce in terms of cultures and language, storytelling is presumed to be a technique that could be used to overcome such obstacles. Therefore it will have to be retained and improved for the effective management of people (Mbigi, 1993). The majority of managers identified as story users are managers who are well known in South African business community. Therefore, based on the results, it is assumed that using storytelling as part of South African management practices may be far more effective than perhaps imported management practices which in some South African organisations proved to be less effective (Binedell, 1993).

5.1.3 Proposition 2

The second proposition was stated as follows :

"That storytelling is used consciously by South African managers to achieve certain specific aims"

5.1.4 Question used to test the second proposition

"Do you use storytelling consciously and purposely to achieve certain aims" and **"if so, what are these aims?"**

The research results clearly indicate that storytelling is used by managers to achieve specific aims. 81% of subjects strongly support this conclusion.

5.1.5 Aims as identified by Subjects

The results of this research indicate that storytelling is consciously used by managers to achieve specific aims. Lessem's (1990) argument that metaphysical management is an integral part of South African management is extensively supported by these results. Being metaphysical means, though storytelling is a non- tangible technique of management, it is also equally important like tangible techniques. Managers interviewed pointed out that they used storytelling to achieve specific aims. Therefore, storytelling is in fact a management technique. It is perhaps extensively used in South Africa but less formalised or encouraged as an integral part of management (Mbigi, 1993).

Organisations world wide create and promote their own business culture in terms of the behaviour and way of thinking expected from their employees. Subjects in this study strongly believe that storytelling in this regard is [illegible] used as a management technique to influence such behaviour. With reference to the literature review in Chapter 2, these results are supported by Zemke (1990); Christie (1993); Chown (1994); Wilkins (1984); O'Reilly (1989) and Deal and Kennedy (1982).

It is a fact of life that with the fast developing new technology, the 'how' of doing various jobs becomes more complicated, especially for those whose level of education is low. This is one of the major problems facing South African organisations, especially with its labour intensive and largely illiterate workforce. In order to overcome or minimise this problem, subjects felt that procedures and processes need to be simplified. Therefore, South African managers use storytelling because employees can easily understand and remember stories told (Wilkins, 1984; Hansen and Kahnweier, 1993).

Most subjects believe that they would find it difficult to achieve their aims unless they use storytelling to simplify concepts. This is true for most South African organisations whose employees have low understanding of abstract and sophisticated management concepts. Storytelling seems to be a convenient way of communicating such concepts and employees appear to have a natural flair for accepting stories as a means of communication. Even Zemke (1990) in his literature supports subjects arguments by pointing out that stories can be used to enhance communication. Storytelling in this regard overcomes the problem of language diversity in South Africa.

Another aim to be effected by storytelling as pointed out by subjects is knowledge of the cultural sphere of organisations. This aim was identified earlier in this Chapter and in the literature review in Chapter 2 (Wilkins, 1984 and O'Reilly, 1989) and is also supported by subjects' responses. Storytelling is used to create and express the values and beliefs of the organisations. These values and beliefs are the ingredients of the organisation's culture. Storytelling helps to reinforce and entrench the culture of the organisation. The culture of the organisation is not written in black and white except as policies and procedures. South African managers (subjects) who promote the unwritten culture of the organisation to new employees, stated that they use storytelling. This argument is supported by Wilkins (1984) who points out that new employees entering the organisation need a social map that will point out dangerous as well as safe behaviours within the organisation.

Storytelling is used to put events into context. South African managers use storytelling to explain certain dynamics that occurred at a particular stage in the life of the organisation. Stories retrieve the past (history) and make the past a reference point for guidance in the present and in the future. The past may be decorated by failures or successes. These failures or successes are communicated to the employees of the organisation to enable them to see what happened in the past so that employees can ensure that the good from the past is perpetuated and the bad is discarded. So to keep the history of the organisation alive and pass it to new employees, managers extensively use stories to communicate it. History they believe, helps employees to understand the organisation better. These results are supported by Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983); Boje (1982) and Schein (1983).

In storytelling, heroes are created. In many organisations stories are about leaders or successful employees in the organisations. The present leadership of the organisation use these stories hoping that they will be inspirational to employees (Martin and Powers, 1980). These stories acknowledge and communicate the achievements of employees as leaders to other employees. Managers (subjects) believe that for employees to be inspired and be eager to achieve, they need to see examples. Managers turn past achievements into stories and use them to inspire others to achieve. These stories help to motivate employees to put in the extra efforts required for best achievement. If employees are highly motivated they can also become innovative and develop new and better ways of doing the job. They drive to meet their goals and targets. For those organisations involved in providing services to their clients, respondents believe that storytelling is used to instil good customer services to employees. Managers (subjects) believe that if employees are motivated and inspired, they become committed and provide the best services to customers. These results are strongly supported by Martin and Powers (1983).

Some matters are too complicated to be communicated effectively to employees with vast differences such as language diversity, different levels of education, different backgrounds and cultures. Matters such as mission statements and procedures based on foreign principles could be very complex for low level employees in African organisations to understand. To effectively communicate these matters, South African managers use storytelling because storytelling can illustrate and simplify complex matters so that understanding is created among the workforce. Such understanding enables employees to identify themselves with such statements and the organisation itself. These results are supported by Wilkins (1984); Zemke (1990) and Wilkins (1983).

In addition to the above mentioned aims achieved by storytelling, South African managers added that they also use storytelling for educational purposes, especially those in the training and educational fields. These managers (subjects) believe that when the subject matter to be learned is illustrated in the form of the story it becomes easy for employees or students to understand and remember (Martin and Powers, 1983).

Finally, South African managers (subjects) pointed out that they also use storytelling in breaking down moulds as well as building relations between management and employees and among employees themselves, especially for the sake of bridging cultural differences.

5.1.6 Proposition 3

The third proposition was stated as follows :

"That South African managers can identify the characteristics of good, healthy stories and of good storytellers in organisations"

5.1.7 Questions used to test the third proposition

"What are the characteristics of good, healthy stories in organisations?" and **"What are the characteristics of good storytellers in organisations?"**

tested the third proposition of this research.

The subjects gave several characteristics of good stories. Following below is an integrated discussion of such characteristics as given by subjects.

The South African managers who are subjects in this study feel that a good story needs to be characterised by a reflection of truth and real life situations in it. It should be a story that could help people to relate to it. A good story should be brief and to the point. Most critically it should be relevant to the situation. These results are supported by Martin *et al* (1983) and Breneman and Brenman (1983).

Most of the subjects strongly agree that a good story must be simple and be easy to understand by the target audience. Most importantly, a good and effective story must be pitched at the intellectual level of the particular audience. Stories that are complicated, poorly narrated and beyond or below the intellectual level of the audience normally lose their effect and cannot achieve the intended purpose and aim. Breneman and Breneman (1983) strongly support these results.

A good story must also draw upon the experience of the audience and reflect upon the history and the founder of the organisation. A story must not be told in a vacuum or without a context. A story must evoke emotions and a feeling of attachment and belonging. The audience must identify with the characters in the story. Abstract and empty stories usually become impersonal to the audience, hence they lose any meaning and fail to make an impact to the audience.

Subjects felt that even if a story is a myth, it must contain an element of truth and of reality. They further stated that the audience must not see the story as fiction or as a far- fetched impossibility.

A good story must be easily believable and must identify with the roles the audience play in real life situations and must assert the value system of the organisation. Deal and Kennedy (1982) support these results.

In these results, subjects stated that effective stories are stories that convey a moral or a lesson to be learnt. They said the story must have an impact on the audience by changing things such as perceptions, assumptions and stereotypes. If a story cannot have an impact on the audience they believe it is better not to tell it. These results also indicate that in essence, storytelling as a management technique must be able to transform the organisations and change certain attitudes. Stories must be able to sensitise people and reinforce a new culture. These results are supported by Breneman and Breneman (1983).

Subjects pointed out that the story must have a common meaning and evoke emotions of both the storyteller and the audience. If there is no common lesson derived out of the story or the same story evokes different meanings, then such a story cannot be effective as a management technique.

The results indicate that a good story must contain humour which is strongly emphasized by Breneman and Breneman (1983). It must make people laugh at themselves, it must be able to relieve tension and unlock some thinking and deep introspection. However, such a story must still convey the intended message and not just simply be a good joke to be forgotten immediately thereafter. The subjects further believe that a good story must be remembered long after it has been told, and must have a visible impact on the behaviour and attitude of the audience.

Most importantly, the results indicate that a story must be a good sales pitch because a storyteller is trying to sell an idea to the audience. A good story must be able to captivate the imagination of the audience. Its message should be clear, and it should inspire the audience.

All these characteristics are clearly reflected in Breneman and Breneman (1983) framework contained in the Research Proposal for this research, and this framework was used for annalysis in this report. Therefore, there is no doubt that the theoretical framework was quite appropriate.

The results indicate that to be a good storyteller, the emphasis is on the storyteller being fluent and logical when telling his / her story. Secondly, the storyteller must have a good sense of humour and understand his / her audience well - this will help the storyteller to capture the interest of his / her audience and he / she will be able to tell a story that is more relevant to the audience and the situation. Most writers such as Breneman and Brenman (1983); Martin *et al* (1983) and Boje (1982) support these results.

5.1.8 Proposition 4

The fourth proposition was stated as follows:

"That South African managers can identify specific examples of stories used in their organisations"

5.1.9 Question used to test the fourth proposition

The fourth question (point 6) of the interview guide, viz. :

"Can you tell a story about your particular organisation?"

The results indicate that all organisations do have stories that prevail in them. Such stories are known and used by some employees working for these organisations. 99% of subjects were in a position to identify such stories in their own organisations.

Though there were many themes generated, the results indicate that most themes revolved around the history of the organisation, the success of the organisation, individuals within the organisation and motivating employees. These results are supported by Wilkins (1984); O'Reilly (1989); Ferris *et al* (1989); Smircich (1985) etc. The results indicate that an assumption could be made that storytelling is extensively used in addressing such themes in organisations.

These results support Martin *et al* (1983) theory that stories are started to address specific questions within the organisation. Martin *et al* (1983) questions are reflected in Chapter 2.

5.2. LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN MANAGERS

The results clearly indicate that storytelling is extensively used in South African organisations. Therefore, it is relevant for South African managers to start taking note of this technique and try to maximise its efficiency and establish its effectiveness.

The results assume that storytelling, if used properly, may overcome some of the unique obstacles prevailing in South African organisations, such as language diversity, low level of literacy; and could generate motivation in a fun and more enjoyable way.

Based on the results, it would perhaps be a good idea for South African managers, such as those identified as storytellers, to start training other managers who are not perceived as storytellers to be good storytellers. The black South African workforce, could easily identify with storytelling, because it is embedded in African culture (Mbigi, 1993).

The results indicate that even though storytelling is extensively used as a management tool in South Africa, it is highly under-utilised due to lack of knowledge and proper training (Chown, 1994). Storytelling, therefore could perhaps replace or supplement some of the management practices and methods that are already in place.

Based on the results of this research and further analysis done, it will be more appropriate to draw up conclusions of this research and also indicate areas for further research. Chapter 6 focuses on these issues.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the testing of the propositions in this report indicate that storytelling is well utilised in South African organisations. Therefore the propositions of Lessem (1994) that storytelling competence is an important component of current management practices, has been proved by these research results to be true.

6.2. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH

* Storytelling forms part of South African management.

* The use of storytelling is used on the assumption that the workforce of South African organisations seems to relate well to storytelling.

* Storytelling can eliminate the problem of language diversity characterising South African organisations.

* Even though storytelling is being used in South African organisations, there is still less official promotion of the technique in terms of training of managers to use it.

6.3. RELEVANCE TO BUSINESS

- The results clearly show that storytelling is extensively used in South Africa as part of management practices. They also indicate critical elements needed in using storytelling effectively. Changes facing South Africa require a certain level of management skills which will allow managers to manage effectively. In addition to these external changes, are the demands placed by the diverse workforce etc. Perhaps the use of storytelling which relates to all cultural grouping without becoming ineffective in the process, might assist mangers in dealing with management demands of the nineteen nineties.

- One of the major problems facing South African organisations is a high level of illiteracy. This research indicates that storytelling has been used to minimise the problem of communication prevailing in most organisations.

- The critical point of using storytelling is that stories used in organisation need to be the reflection of truth in order to be credible to the listener.

- The research results also indicate that the most prominent and successful business leaders in South African organisations have been identified as leaders who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire by the subjects, see Table 11. In this regard their success is partly attributed to improved communication through storytelling.

- It is clear from the research results that storytelling is used to replace or complement some of the existing management techniques in South African (business) organisations.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several areas of interest which require further research because they were not answered or addressed by this research.

1. Similar studies of storytelling could be conducted to:

- measure the effectiveness of storytelling

- identify the negative effects of storytelling in South African organisations

- establish ways and means of promoting the use of storytelling throughout all South African organisations

2. A study could be conducted beyond the PWV boundaries in order to allow generalisation of the findings.

3. A study could be conducted to establish ways and means of training young managers to use storytelling effectively and whether by the training organisation problems are resolved,effectiveness achieved, etc.

4. A study into the effects of language diversity could be conducted.

Because of time constraints, and other limitations this research was unable to provide an answer to the question that was mentioned in Chapter 1, i.e. - at the level of management style or in their technique are South African managers inspired storytellers or detached analysts? Managers could be storytellers or detached analysts at the same time. However, it is hoped, that more clarity has been given to storytelling and management in general. Though storytelling is a relatively new technique in terms of being practised consciously in a more professional way, this research has proved that its utilisation is quite extensive in the businessphere of South Africa; and this relates well to the economy of the country.

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APPENDIX 1

STORYTELLING INTERVIEW GUIDE

Information on Research Subject:

NAME : _____

POSITION : _____

ORGANISATION : _____

DATE OF INTERVIEW : _____

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

1. Thank the subject for agreeing to participate in the research. Mention to him / her that the interview will be tape recorded for subsequent analysis purposes, and that **strict confidentiality** will be maintained.
2. Indicate to the subject that **his / her colleagues have suggested that (s)he is a natural storyteller, who uses storytelling as part of his / her leadership style.**
3. Ask the subject to comment on whether **(s)he uses storytelling consciously and purposefully to achieve certain aims**, and if so, what these aims specifically are.

4. If the subject does not use storytelling consciously and purposefully to achieve certain aims, ask him / her to suggest **what aims are potentially fulfilled by storytelling.**

5. Ask the subject what (s)he believes are the **characteristics of good stories in organisations**.

6. Ask the subject if (s)he can **tell you a story about his particular organisation**.

7. Ask the subject what (s)he believes are the **characteristics of good storytellers in organisations.**

8. Ask the subject if (s)he has come across **other leaders of organisations who use storytelling as part of their leadership repertoire**, and if so, who these people are.

9. **Thank the subject** for his / her time and commitment, and indicate to him / her that they will receive a **follow- up call from Peter Christie**, lecturer in Organisation Development and HRD at the Wits Business School, in the near future.

INTERVIEWED BY : _____

SIGNATURE : _____

SYNDICATE GROUP : _____

Keep this original plus the tape cassette
for submission to Peter Christie.

APPENDIX 2

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Davis, L.	Lenkas Group of Companies
Segel, I.	Pretoria United Hebrew Congregation
Horwitz, R.	Improvair Holdings
Maister, D.	Yellow Pages
Mhlophe, G.	Zanendaba Storytellers
Mbigi, L.	Nampak
Mbabane, L.	Co-ordinated Management
Ntshangase, W.	PPAHWU
MacRobert, D.	Get Ahead Foundation
Mogano, P.	Get Ahead Foundation
Williams, J.	Get Ahead Foundation
Nel, C.	ITISA
Naasing, J.	Kagiso Trust
Sunter, C.	Anglo American
Mthembu, L.	Afgen
Klaaste, A.	Sowetan
Venter, V.N.	Sacol
Loopman, A.	ITISA
Steyn, P.	University of the Witwatersrand
Graham, D.	Standard Bank
Du Chenne, A	Supervision Food Services
Carver, S.	Mast
Roseblade, M.	Glacier Bearings
Cohen, N.	Operation Hunger
Heyman, D.	Beige Pharmaceuticals
Harpaz, J.	Autospares and Accessories & Carburettor City
Aron, A.	Anglo American
Richter, P.	SA Labour Bulletin
Viljoen,	Natbev
De Wet, A.	Johannesburg City Council
Tomlinson, R.	Nampak
Hofmeyer, I.	University of the Witwatersrand
Lipson, . .	Legal Aid Centre

Litabe, J.	Pick `n Pay
Moore, T.	HL&H Mining Timber
Dipico, M.	African National Congress
Lewenstein, N.	Sha'arei Torah Nursery School
Pienaar, J.	Hill High School
Bucholtz, C.	Hill High School
Orsmond, C.	Sandringham High School
Gordon, K.	Micronised Products and Pegmin Mining
Cockroft, D.	St. Francis College
Brennan, S.	St. Anthony's Adult Education Centre
Schneider, V.	Blue Bird Nursery School
Chilvers, G.	Sun International
Inzerello, J.	Sun International
Frost, T.	Lonro
Vorster, L.	Bonaero Park Primary School
Boyd, S.	Anglo- Alpha Ltd
Holgate, L.	Johannesburg City Council
Robinson, L.	SAB Beer Division
Marais, J.	Sandton Town Council
Kennedy, J.	Deloitte and Touche
Hofmeyer, G.	Deloitte and Touche
Jiyane, F.	Khanya College
Wharton- Hood, D.	Liberty Life
Gooher, S.	Transvaal Education Department
Kitto, R.	Transvaal education Department
d'Ymant, F.	Sandringham High School
Pincus, M.	1820 Foundation
Fait, R.	Symo Engineering Corporation
Honeyman, J.	Civic Theatre
Kani, J.	Market Theatre
Gasner, R.	Pieter Toerien Productions
Ndaba, Q.	Dorkey House
Oren, R.	University of the Witwatersrand
Tanzer,	Glenhazel Shul
Felsher, M.	Ex Primary School Teacher
Ramakhula, S.	National Sorghum Breweries
Skosana, K.	National Sorghum Breweries

APPENDIX 3

DEFINITIONS

This appendix contains the researcher's definition of the concepts as used in this report to classify the data for analysis purposes.

* Generally Effective - the story being able to convey the message.

* Explanation - the story intended to explain something to another person (s).

* Behaviour - the story that deals with a person(s) behaviour or manners.

* Instructive - the story that is intended to instruct or convey a lesson to another person.

* Education - the story that is intended to educate the person(s).

* Communication -the story that is intended to impart knowledge or information.

* Simplicity - the story that provides a condition of being simple.

* Culture - the story that gives customs, civilisation and achievements of the organisation.

* Relevant - the story which provides facts, information and message that is relevant to the audience.

* Humour- the story that is amusing to the people.

* Imagination - the story that allows people to use imagination.

* History - the story that reflects the past life of the organisation.

* Credibe - the story that is believable to the audience.

* Achievement - the story that shows the act of achieving.

* Real - the story that is based on reality.

* Impressive - the story which is impressive or excite deep feeling to the audience.

* Motivation - the story that inspires people to do something willingly.

* Success - the story that reflects the accomplishment of the aims.

* Strategy - the story that gives a policy in business or organisation.

* Founder - the story that talks about the person who started the organisation.

* Sensitive - the story that takes other people's feelings and situations into consideration.

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