

**Organisational culture in a South African  
non-governmental organisation:  
The challenge of a changing environment**

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts in Research Psychology.**

**Rhodes University**

**Grahamstown**

**1998**

## ABSTRACT

Using Schein's (1992) notion of organisational culture, this study explored the position of a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the changing environment of post-apartheid South Africa. The study pursued three central goals: to describe the organisational culture of a South African NGO; to examine the tensions that have emerged owing to the changing nature of the organisational culture; and to analyze the organisational culture in relation to the changing NGO environment.

The basic assumptions of the organisation regarding networking, the relationship with the government, funders and funding, leadership, human resource development, and service delivery, were collected. A single case study design was employed, with a sample of eight participants (representing the four different sections of the NGO) being drawn. Data were collected through documentary analysis, a focus group, and eight individual interviews using the critical incident technique. Analysis was performed using various qualitative data analysis techniques.

The researcher found that participants considered networking, a cooperative relationship with the government, a proactive approach to obtaining funding, effective leadership and human resource development, and a good reputation for service delivery, to be essential for NGO survival. NGO basic assumptions are undergoing a transformation process, and tensions exist between long-standing and emerging assumptions. It was found that the transformation of assumptions is enabling the NGO to adapt to the challenges of the changing environment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people:

- \* The eight participants for their interest in the research, and for giving up their time to meet with me.
- \* Those within the organisation who granted me the opportunity to conduct this study. Dalene, for arranging the focus group, and Bobbie for providing me with documentary information.
- \* My supervisor, Andy Gilbert, for his valuable insight and careful supervision.
- \* Syd, Evan, Lorraine, and Adam for proof-reading various parts of the thesis.
- \* Rufus for encouragement and support, discussion of ideas, and proof-reading.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are being increasingly drawn into mainstream development practice (Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994), and have become the favoured partners in global development activity (Hulme, 1994). NGOs are a unique organisational type in that primary interventions take place at the interface between the NGO and its constituents. As a consequence, NGOs are highly susceptible to influences from the external environment (Brown & Covey, 1989).

NGOs grew in South Africa during the apartheid era because government policy neglected the provision of services to disadvantaged communities. The apartheid political context provided the framework and direction for the mission, strategies, and operations of most South African NGOs (Maart & Soal, 1996). NGOs developed a culture of resistance and opposition to the apartheid government, and therefore international funding was readily available. During this time, an NGO's political stance was more relevant than effective service delivery when applying for funding. NGO organisational culture was primarily outwardly focused, neglecting capacity building of their own human resources. Many NGOs under apartheid became committed to radical forms of democracy, resulting in organisational cultures that rejected any hierarchical form of management (Brews, 1994; Macozoma, 1993; Meintjies, 1994; Pape, 1993).

With the advent of a democratic South Africa, the political, economic, and development environment in which NGOs operate has undergone fundamental changes. Based on a review of the literature, the researcher identified six areas of NGO functioning that have been most affected by South Africa's changing socio-political situation.

1. NGOs are struggling to come to terms with the changed nature of their relationship with the now legitimate government. Post-1994, the government has increasingly taken over the rhetoric of development. According to the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) (1996), all development sector players are having to review their activities in the light of reformulated relations with the government.
2. NGOs are experiencing harsh competition for foreign and domestic funding (Hanlon, 1994). Local funders are re-defining their role and scope (Bernstein, 1994), and international agencies have re-directed their funding to the government.
3. NGOs are being compelled to engage in networking relationships. Many local and international funders have made networking a funding requirement (Hallowes, 1995a), and the South African

government is insisting that consortiums of NGOs compete for tender bids.

4. NGOs have experienced a leadership drain to the new government, civil service, and private sector (Bernstein, 1994). The loss of leadership came at a critical stage in the transition process (Harding, 1995), and has resulted in a paucity of strong and experienced NGO leadership (Meintjies, 1993).
5. NGOs have also lost a large number of experienced staff. As with the haemorrhaging of leadership, this loss came at a time when NGOs required the skills of experienced staff to help build organisational capacity (Ward, 1995). At present, NGOs lack adequately trained personnel, and have too few blacks and women in decision-making positions (ibid, 1995).
6. Funders no longer judge South African NGOs on their political correctness, but rather on their ability to develop people (Brews, 1994). In order to secure funding, NGOs have to demonstrate results and financial accountability. A fundamental challenge facing NGOs is how to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of their services (Billis & MacKeith, 1996).

The body of knowledge known as Organisational Theory includes the organisational culture perspective. This perspective suggests that an understanding of how an organisation will behave in a changing environment requires knowledge of the organisation's pattern of basic assumptions, that is, its organisational culture (Shafritz & Ott, 1992). Organisational culture operates primarily to solve the organisation's problem of adaptation to the external environment, and to integrate its organisational processes (e.g. leadership) to ensure internal capacity (Schein, 1992).

The organisational culture perspective assumes that most organisational behaviours and decisions are predetermined by the basic assumptions held by organisational members. Patterns of assumptions continue to exist and influence behaviours because they repeatedly lead people to make decisions that worked in the past for the organisation. Basic assumptions are a pervasive and unconsidered part of the cognitive background of organisational members, such that they do not consciously think about or remember them (Shafritz & Ott, 1992).

No template exists for the "good" organisational culture. The goodness of the organisational culture is determined by its degree of "fit" with its context - culture must be continually transformed as the environment changes (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Organisational culture becomes a liability when basic assumptions do not coincide with those that would further the organisation's effectiveness (Robbins, 1997). This would most likely occur when the organisation's environment is undergoing rapid change (Schein, 1992).

Much of the NGO literature between 1993 and 1995 (cf. Macozoma, 1993; Pape, 1993) was concerned with exhorting NGOs to adapt to the changing environment. Bertelsmann (1996a) argues that the advice to South

African NGOs to "adapt or die" in the changing environment is superfluous, as remaining NGOs would not have survived had they not already restructured, repositioned, and transformed themselves. Although this critique is partly correct, it remains true that NGOs operate in an environment which is inherently complex, fluid, and characterised by insecurity (CDRA, 1994). Indeed, the reality of change and how NGOs respond to it, is the greatest factor affecting the future of these organisations in South Africa (Meintjies, 1994). According to Pieterse (1997), appropriate NGO organisational culture is a critical element in NGOs achieving sustainable organisational transformations.

Consequently, the present study pursued three central goals:

1. to describe the organisational culture of a South African NGO;
2. to examine the tensions that have emerged due to the changing nature of the organisational culture;
3. to analyse the organisational culture in relation to the changing NGO environment.

The research was conducted in an educational NGO. For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted a working definition of educational NGOs from the Development Resources Centre (DRC) (1994, p.2): "Educational NGOs are private, non-profit orientated organisations, operating not for commercial purposes, but for the benefit of, and to the account of, the public at large; for the promotion of education."

The conceptual framework for the study was provided by Schein's (1992, p.12) notion of organisational culture as the shared basic assumptions held by members of an organisation. The researcher employed a case study design, and a sample of eight participants (representing the four different sections of the organisation) was drawn. Data were collected using qualitative methods - specifically, documentary analysis, a focus group, and eight individual interviews using the critical incident technique (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 1991) were conducted. Finally, qualitative data analysis was performed using certain of the tactics outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a guide.

The research project is structured into ten chapters. In Chapter 2 the theoretical context for organisational culture and NGOs is established. Organisational culture is placed in the framework of organisational theory; it is defined and operationalized; current debates in organisational culture research are reviewed; and organisational culture research methodology is evaluated. The nature of NGOs in South Africa, and the six areas of NGO functioning, are described. Finally, suggestions from the current literature about appropriate NGO responses to the challenges they face are reviewed.

The methodology employed by the present researcher is discussed in Chapter 3. In order to contextualize the

results, a description of the organisation is provided in Chapter 4. The results are then presented in Chapters 5 to 8. In Chapter 5 the basic assumptions that emerged about the six areas of NGO functioning are described, while the tensions that have arisen due to the changing nature of the organisational culture are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 8 the organisational culture is analysed in relation to the changing NGO environment. The main findings, and their implications, are discussed in Chapter 9. Finally, the research conclusions, and recommendations for future research, are outlined in Chapter 10.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

In this chapter the theoretical context for organisational culture and NGOs is established. The chapter is divided into three broad sections. In the first section, organisational culture is placed in the framework of organisational theory, and is defined and operationalized. Further, current debates in organisational culture research are reviewed, and organisational culture research methodology is evaluated. In the second section, the nature of South African NGOs is discussed. The third section is focused on discussing the six areas of NGO functioning, and reviewing suggestions from the current literature about appropriate NGO responses to the challenges they face.

#### 1. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

##### 1.1. Its position in organisational theory

Modern societies are organisational societies (Morgan, 1997). Organisations are a central component of the social order (Pfeffer, 1997), and it is therefore important to understand how they function and how they can be analysed. Organisational theory is a loosely knit community of many approaches to organisational analysis (Gortner, Mahler & Nicholson, 1987), and is broad in both its theoretical scope and empirical focus (Pfeffer, 1997). It is a multi-disciplinary field, and the body of research draws from such diverse disciplines as Sociology, Industrial Psychology, Social Psychology, Cultural Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, Management, and Public Administration (Morgan, 1989; Pettigrew, 1983; Shafritz & Ott, 1992).

Blunt (1983) divides the study of formal organisations into micro and macro components. Micro elements comprise the behaviour of individuals and groups within organisations, and are referred to collectively as organisational behaviour. Macro elements of the discipline have the organisation as the unit of analysis, and are generally subsumed under the title organisational theory.

Most organisational theorists view the beginnings of the factory system in Great Britain in the eighteenth century as the birthplace of complex formal organisations, and consequently the beginnings of the field of organisational theory (Shafritz & Ott, 1992). Organisational theory also traces its roots to people such as Adam Smith, who wrote *The wealth of nations*; Frederick Taylor, the founder of Scientific Management; and Max Weber, with his study of bureaucratic organisations (Morgan, 1997).

Throughout this century, the ideas of structural theorists have dominated thinking about organisations. Structural theorists tend towards a mechanistic view of organisations. They assume that organisations are

rational institutions, whose primary purpose is to accomplish established objectives (Shafritz & Ott, 1992). The organisational culture perspective represents a counterculture to structural theory. It is the most controversial perspective in organisational theory, and is the view most likely to receive increased attention in the future (Sergiovanni, 1984; Shafritz & Ott, 1992).

## 1.2. Historical development of the organisational culture perspective

Serious academic study of the subject began around the early 1970s (Graves, 1986), but this work received limited attention outside of academia until the late 1970s. At that time, a small group of Americans began asserting the importance of what they called "corporate culture". Most of the members of this group were associated with the consultancy firm, McKinsey Inc., and the universities of Harvard, Stanford, and the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

Four books that were written by members of this group were extremely influential in popularising organisational culture. Namely, Peters and Waterman (1982) *In search of excellence* (the first edition broke nonfiction book sales records); Dale and Kennedy (1982) *Corporate cultures*; Ouchi (1981) *Theory Z*; and Pascale and Athos (1981) *The art of Japanese management*. By 1982, the general business literature was abuzz with the concept of organisational culture (Shafritz & Ott, 1992).

There are both material and theoretical reasons for the development of the organisational culture perspective. The most commonly cited material reason is the Japanese ascension to the status of leading industrial power in the 1970s. Theorists at the time agreed that Japanese culture played a major role in the country's transformation out of the ashes of World War Two, to becoming an industrial empire (Morgan, 1997). At the same time that Japan was experiencing an economic boom, Western societies (America in particular) were weathering an economic slump. Productivity problems were identified as the cause of the recession, and Western business people were looking for something to improve the quality of goods being produced (cf. Peters & Waterman, 1982). It was the combination of these two factors that provided the material basis for the exploration of new ideas about organisations (Alvesson, 1993; Martin & Frost, 1996).

On a theoretical level, the advancement of the organisational culture perspective has been attributed to frustration with the dominance of positivistic approaches to organisational theory, and dissatisfaction with traditional research efforts (Alvesson, 1993). Many organisational theorists had become disillusioned with the meagre grasp on organisational phenomena that traditional research methods provided (Louis, 1983). Traditional quantitative organisational research, often orientated towards hypothesis-testing, was proving incapable of providing rich and realistic pictures of organisations (Alvesson, 1993). In searching for ways to study organisations as human phenomena, rather than merely as mechanical systems, researchers drew on the notion of culture (Jones, Moore & Snyder, 1988).

### 1.3. Organisational culture perspectives

Despite the fact that both the academic and business literature are filled with references to organisational culture, the concept itself remains imprecisely defined (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997). There appear to be as many different understandings of organisational culture as there are writers on the topic (Christensen, 1988), and the widespread interest in the subject does not serve to simplify matters (Sackmann, 1991).

The multiplicity of definitions is partly due to the fact that organisational culture is studied by researchers from a wide variety of disciplines (Jonès *et al.*, 1988), with research orientations ranging from the positivist, to the interpretive, to the postmodernist. Divergent views on the ontological status of culture result in very different understandings of it (Alvesson, 1993), as well as different epistemological procedures for its study.

Pace Alvesson's (1993) claim that it is impossible to talk about organisational culture as a coherent area of study, Sackmann (1991) has developed a useful framework that integrates the many varied perspectives on organisational culture. She is careful to point out that the boundaries between the following four perspectives are not clear-cut.

#### The holistic perspective

Theorists promoting this perspective typically define culture as a general constellation of beliefs, mores, customs, value systems, and behavioural norms. Here, organisational symbols are emphasized as being the means of acquiring and transmitting organisational culture. The holistic perspective is widely espoused in the business literature, and theorists that adhere to this perspective include Carrell, Jennings and Heavrin (1997), Greenberg and Baron (1997), Hampden-Turner (1994), and Pettigrew (1983).

#### The variable perspective

In the variable perspective, organisational culture is commonly defined as "the way we do things around here". In this perspective the focus is on the expressions of organisational culture, which may take the form of verbal and physical behaviours, or material artifacts. Here, researchers observe collective activities, such as rites, rituals, and ceremonies; and collective verbal behaviours, such as jargon, stories, legends, and myths. Deal and Kennedy (1982), Kilmann, Saxton and Serpa (1985), Peters and Waterman (1982), and Robbins (1997), can be categorised under the variable perspective.

#### The cognitive perspective

The cognitive perspective has recently become the dominant view within the business literature (Hollway, 1991).

Its focus is on the tacit "blueprint" assumptions or meanings that underlie organisational beliefs, values, and norms. The influence of Clifford Geertz (1973) on this perspective is clearly evident, and his oft-quoted passage reflects its viewpoint:

Believing...that man [sic] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning (p.5).

The cognitive perspective on organisational culture is comprehensively captured in Schein's (1992) work, and another well-known proponent of this perspective is Hofstede (1991).

### The alternative perspective

Finally, Sackmann (1991) and others put forward what Sackmann terms an alternative perspective on organisational culture. An organisational culture is understood as a specific reality constructed by a group of people as its preferred way of operating (Whiteley, 1995). The collective process of reality construction allows people to understand particular events or actions in distinctive ways, and these patterns of understanding enable them to cope with the situations they encounter (Morgan, 1997). This perspective has been embraced by a number of the more recent organisational culture theorists (cf. Alvesson, 1993; Morgan, 1997).

#### **1.4. Schein's conception of organisational culture**

Edgar Schein (1992) is significant in the field as he is one of the few organisational culture theorists who has attempted to critically analyse the concept (Hollway, 1991). His conceptual framework comprises three levels of organisational culture. The deepest level is that of basic assumptions, while the surface levels consist of espoused values and artifacts.

##### 1.4.1. Culture as basic assumptions

Schein's (1992) formal definition of organisational culture has gained wide acceptance in the field (Christensen, 1988; Shafritz & Ott, 1992). He defines organisational culture as follows:

Organisational culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group<sup>1</sup> has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p.12).

Schein (1992) makes a sharp distinction between basic assumptions and the surface manifestations of organisational culture (i.e. artifacts and espoused values), and argues that the term organisational culture should

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<sup>1</sup> Schein uses the terms group and organisation interchangeably.

be reserved for the level of basic assumptions. Schein's (1992) notion of basic assumptions is congruent with what Argyris (1976) terms theories-in-use. Theories-in-use are implicit assumptions that guide behaviour.

Schein (1992) contends that there is little variation between the basic assumptions held by members of a cultural unit. He maintains that organisational members share basic assumptions about certain "core dimensions", which he lists as assumptions about reality, truth, time and space, human nature, activity, and relationships (1992, pp.94-143). Schein (1992) has been widely criticised for this idea (cf. Alvesson, 1993; Wright, 1994). Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) argues that not even nuclear family members share assumptions about these seven content areas, let alone members of a large organisation.

#### **1.4.2. Culture as artifacts**

According to Schein (1992), artifacts are the most visible level of an organisational culture. He defines artifacts as the constructed physical and social organisational environment. Included in this category are any visible organisational products, for example, organisational documentation.

As every facet of organisational life produces artifacts, classification is problematic. Artifacts are hard to decipher (Schein, 1992), which is probably why most researchers (cf. Pettigrew, 1983; Sackmann, 1991; Sapienza, 1985) choose to focus on organisational documentation. The types of documents most commonly studied in organisational culture research are publications such as the organisational policy manual, the employee handbook, annual reports, and publications about the organisation.

#### **1.4.3. Culture as espoused values**

Schein (1992) defines espoused values as a set of values that become embodied in an ideology or organisational philosophy. These values can serve as a guide for dealing with the uncertainty of difficult or uncontrollable events. Schein (1992) recognizes that if espoused values are not based on prior cultural learning, they may become what Argyris and Schon (1978) term espoused theories. These are values that predict well enough what people will say in a variety of situations, but which may not reflect what they will actually do in situations where those values should be operating.

Siehl and Martin (1988) maintain that espoused values often differ from the values that organisational members ultimately enact. They define espoused values as the values that organisational members say they believe in. However, they term the values that are actually enacted values-in-use. Their concept of values-in-use is identical to Anthony's (1994) notion of values in practice.

It is also necessary to distinguish between artifacts and values-in-use, as official policies (set out in organisational documentation and regulations) and actual practice often diverge (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997). Harrison (1987) maintains that researchers must distinguish between actual patterns of behaviour, and official descriptions of organisational life.

## 1.5. Current debates in the area of organisational culture

### 1.5.1. Management vs anthropological perspectives

Many of the first highly influential publications in the field (e.g. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982) were written for a popular managerial audience. The management perspective dominated the study of organisational culture throughout the 1980s, and it remains a powerful force today (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992).

The functional aspects of culture are of greatest concern to the management perspective (Sackmann, 1991). Culture is regarded as an organisational variable which can be manipulated to serve management ends (cf. Bellingham, Cohen, Edwards & Allen, 1990; Robbins, 1997). For example, Deal and Kennedy (1982, p.129) describe culture as a "money-in-the-pocket investment for managers". Management studies also frequently attempt to link culture with organisational performance (cf. Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Shaw, 1996; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997). The management concern with culture is prescriptive, and the prevailing assumption is that culture should be changed and managed rather than understood. Examples of authors that fit this category include Carrell *et al.* (1997), Greenberg and Baron (1997), and Whiteley (1995).

There is an anthropological critique of the management perspective which argues that these ideas rest upon a misunderstanding of the nature of culture, its strength, and its complexity (Anthony, 1994). Indeed, Morgan (1997, p.143) charges that many management theorists slur the complexity of culture, and consequently write about it at the "level of slogans". The anthropological perspective is critical of the management notion that culture is a variable that an organisation possesses, or is something that a leader brings to their organisation (Sackmann, 1991). This perspective holds that culture is embedded in an organisation's history and structural relationships (Alvesson, 1993; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Wright, 1994) - as Smircich (1985) puts it, "culture is something an organisation is". The anthropological view is that organisational culture is very difficult to change, and cannot be mandated, designed, or manipulated in an instrumental manner (cf. Alvesson, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Pheysey, 1993; Wright, 1994).

### 1.5.2. Cultures and subcultures

There are three conflicting perspectives about the existence of subcultures in organisations: the integration, differentiation, and fragmentation perspectives. It is possible to trace the development of thought about

organisational culture through these three approaches.

### Integration perspective

The integration perspective reflects the management perspective. It is assumed that every organisation develops a shared core set of values (cf. Deal & Kennedy, 1982), and the existence of subcultures is hardly acknowledged (Martin & Frost, 1996). The integration perspective has received widespread criticism (Siehl & Martin, 1988), and according to Czarniawska-Joerges (1992), the notion of a uniformly shared organisational culture has received neither theoretical nor empirical support.

### Differentiation perspective

The differentiation perspective challenges the integration perspective. It criticizes the integrationist assumption that organisational culture can be a unitary monolith, and that all employees can share basic assumptions in an organisation-wide consensus (Martin & Frost, 1996).

Differentiation perspective theorists hold that complex organisations consist of multiple, established subcultures holding very different or competing views (cf. Louis, 1985; Pheysey, 1993; Wells, 1988). Robbins (1997) maintains that an organisation often has a dominant culture and a set of subcultures. Davis (1985a, p.166,168) holds that the assumptions of the management group often tend to be the dominant culture.

Subcultures are frequently associated with different functional groupings (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992), organisational hierarchy (Schein, 1992), and geographic location (Robbins, 1997). Subcultures that form around key individuals, or even social interests are also common (Carrell *et al.*, 1997). According to Morgan (1997), any one of the following factors has the potential to become the basis for an organisational subculture: gender, race, language, or ethnicity; and religious, socio-economic, or educational background.

### Fragmentation perspective

According to the fragmentation perspective, fixed subcultures do not exist. Consensus is assumed to be transient and issue-specific, producing short-lived affinities among individuals, that are quickly replaced by a new pattern of affinities, as a different issue attracts the attention of members (Martin & Frost, 1996).

It is in the fragmentation perspective that one sees most clearly the influence of the postmodernist critique of organisations on the organisational culture field. Alvesson (1993) suggests that the fragmentation perspective is a postmodernist response to the idea that culture is a clear and known entity that creates unity and harmony within an organisation.

### 1.5.3. Organisational culture and leadership

Despite the enormous amount of energy that has been invested in studying the influence of organisational founders and other leaders on organisational culture, the relationship between culture and leadership remains an area of strong disagreement (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Three opposing stances can be isolated: leaders control organisational culture; leaders have a significant influence on organisational culture; and leaders do not have a significant influence on organisational culture.

Theorists who adhere to the control stance assume that leaders have the ability to shape and reshape organisational culture at will. This belief is associated with the integration perspective, and these theorists advocate that leaders build "strong" cultures around their own values (Martin & Frost, 1996). In order to demonstrate the absurdity to which this belief extends, what follows is a direct quote from Sayles and Wright (1990, p.34):

The most important determinant of culture is the behaviour of the CEO [Chief Executive Officer]. One can watch a strong-willed CEO cause an entire organisation of a 100 000 or even several 100 000 employees to change its value and belief system.

Critics have labelled this approach "cultural engineering" (Alvesson, 1993). Theorists who emphasize the role of leaders in shaping and dominating organisational culture include Deal and Kennedy (1982), Hampden-Turner (1994), Peters and Waterman (1982), Sergiovanni (1984), and Kilmann *et al.* (1985).

In contrast to the control perspective, there are theorists who argue that leaders have a significant, but not controlling, influence on organisational culture. Schein (1992) places a strong emphasis on the role of leaders in shaping and reinforcing culture but he does not assume that culture can simply be manipulated like other matters under the control of management. Theorists that hold views consistent with Schein (1992) include Graves (1986), Hofstede (1991), and Whiteley (1995).

Theorists holding the third view question the assumption that culture is leader-generated and leader-centred. Morgan (1997) contends that formal leaders have no monopoly on the ability to create shared meaning, and Sackmann (1991) maintains that senior management may think that their views are held throughout the organisation, when in reality they are not. Davis (1985b) argues that a culture entirely different to that of management frequently exists at the lower levels of an organisation. Anthony (1994) has criticized the control perspective for being based on brief, anecdotal stories of influential organisational leaders (e.g. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The implication of the third perspective is that researchers must sample participants from all levels of the organisation. Unfortunately, organisational culture research sampling procedures are seldom stratified to include various levels of the organisational hierarchy (Alvesson, 1993). Many researchers sample only senior managers

(cf. Gordon, 1985; Shaw, 1996), and Alvesson (1993) argues that the outcome of such research tends to be nothing more than a description of the espoused values of those managers.

## **1.6. Research methodology and organisational culture**

The organisational culture perspective looks to phenomenology, symbolic-interactionism, anthropology, hermeneutics, and critical theory as relevant scholarly traditions (Sergiovanni, 1984). Studies of organisational culture have relied almost exclusively on qualitative methodologies (Jones, 1988; Martin & Frost, 1996). Culture is generally defined as a socially constructed reality (cf. Alvesson, 1993; Geertz, 1973), and qualitative research methods are considered epistemologically congruent with this conceptualisation.

According to Siehl & Martin (1988), the advantages of qualitative approaches have been bought at a cost. They argue that there are many important theoretical questions which cannot be answered until culture can be measured with repeatable instruments that enable systematic comparisons to be made.

Certain organisational culture researchers have developed quantitative measures of cultural phenomena - such work draws primarily on techniques used in organisational climate research (cf. Cooke & Rousseau, 1983; Graves, 1986; Kilmann & Saxton, 1983). However, quantitative studies remain rare. The criticism that quantitative approaches risk missing the essence of culture (Hofstede, 1991), and the argument that quantitative methods cannot be used to identify or measure tacit basic assumptions (Shafritz & Ott, 1992), remains persuasive.

There are researchers that prefer an awkward, but possibly innovative, hybrid mix of the two approaches (e.g. Hofstede, 1991; Martin, 1990; Siehl & Martin, 1988). However, hybrid qualitative and quantitative research methods represent an uneasy compromise between quite different epistemologies (Martin & Frost, 1996), and such studies are considered problematic for that reason.

### **1.6.1. Research design and data collection**

A variety of organisational culture research designs have been developed. Approaches range from longitudinal ethnographic studies using participant observation, to in-depth interview methodologies, to one-shot questionnaire approaches (Sackmann, 1991). Most studies are snapshots of an organisational culture at a particular point in time (Anthony, 1994), but Pettigrew (1983) is a rare exception. He conducted a longitudinal study of an organisational culture over a period of 20 years.

The most commonly employed data collection techniques are field studies, documentation analysis, and surveys (Graves, 1986). Researchers that have employed interviews include Hofstede (1991), Sackmann (1991), Siehl

and Martin (1988), and Ward (1995). Structuring interviews around critical incident techniques is advocated by Pettigrew (1983) and Schein (1992).

Some theorists (cf. Gregory, 1983; Sapienza, 1985) argue that if a researcher is to understand a culture from an insider's perspective (Martin & Frost, 1996) they need to adopt "true" or emic ethnographic methods. This implies spending months or even years as participant observers in organisations. Since few researchers have such long periods of time at their disposal (McCracken, 1988), short-term participant observation is a favoured method in the study of organisational cultures (cf. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Sackmann, 1991; Siehl & Martin, 1988; Turner, 1988).

Most organisational culture studies take place in complex organisations in large Western industries (Alvesson, 1993), but there are a few exceptions to the rule, such as Goffman's (1961) classic study of psychiatric hospitals; Schwartz's (1988) research into the Challenger space shuttle disaster; and Handy's (1985) application of his notion of the different types of organisational cultures to voluntary organisations.

In South Africa, management consultants have applied the concept of organisational culture to their work in NGOs (cf. Kaplan, c.1994; Pieterse, 1997). However, there has been little, if any, academic research into organisational culture in South African NGOs. The present researcher submits that the reason behind the lack of Industrial Psychological research into NGO organisational culture reflects the state of Industrial Psychology. This sub-discipline of organisational theory has concentrated its attentions on the formal business sector (De Wolff, 1984). This is changing though, and the gradual name change from Industrial Psychology to Organisational Psychology is not without significance (Drenth, 1987). The previous emphasis on profit-orientated production and sales organisations has eased, and the focus is beginning to include service organisations (ibid, 1987).

## **2. NGOs AND THEIR FUNCTION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Non-governmental organisations are infinitely diverse by virtue of their size, fields of activity, methods, means, and objectives (Weiss & Gordenker, 1996). Theorists and practitioners of development have repeatedly attempted to impose some conceptual rigour by classifying NGOs into different groups, and by inventing new, supposedly less ambiguous terms (Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994).

NGOs are generally understood to be organisations that neither originate from nor belong to the apparatus of the state, and that are non-profit orientated organisations (Nelson, 1995). The NGO sector is made up almost entirely of organisations providing services rather than goods (McLaughlin, 1986).

South Africa, unlike many other developing countries, has an experienced and vigorous NGO sector (Lee, 1994). This is largely due to its role in the anti-apartheid struggle (Hanlon, 1994). Educational NGOs in particular played a vital role in the struggle against apartheid education (Pape, 1993). The phenomenal growth of the NGO sector in the 1980s was a consequence of apartheid government policy which neglected the provision of services to non-white communities, and the lack of government legitimacy which led black communities to reject services where they were provided (Hartzenberg, 1993; Macozoma, 1993). The ideological and material inadequacy of state-provided education was a compelling reason for the flourishing of educational NGOs (Salie, 1994).

The dominant image of the NGO sector from 1993 to 1995 was one of crisis. NGOs were seen as victims of the transition. There was a flight of human capital from the NGO sector to the government and the private sector, and it was a time of desperate uncertainty about funding. Today's image is of a sector establishing itself, still weak in many respects, but boldly staking its claim as the fourth pillar of society, alongside the government, business, and the unions (NGO Week, 1997). If NGOs are to survive and flourish they need to stop playing the victim, become proactive (Karras, 1996), and seize the opportunities in their environments (Meintjies, 1994). NGOs have to start exerting some control, and believing in their ability to affect their circumstances (CRDA, 1995).

### **3. THE SIX CORE AREAS OF NGO FUNCTIONING**

Based on a review of the relevant literature, the researcher identified six areas of NGO functioning that have been most affected by South Africa's changing socio-political situation. These six areas are: NGO networking, the NGO relationship with the government, the funding scenario and the funding relationship, leadership in NGOs, human resource development in NGOs, and NGO service delivery.

#### **3.1. NGO networking**

Inter-organisational relationships are usually based on one of two goals: the pursuit of efficiency, or the reduction of environmental uncertainties (Harrison, 1987; Morgan, 1989), "especially uncertainties concerned with the future supply of funds" (McLaughlin, 1986, p.77).

Networking in the NGO sector refers to cooperative working relationships between NGOs; between NGOs and business organisations; or between NGOs and their governments. NGO networking can occur on a local, regional, national, sub-continental, continental, hemispheric, or global level (Pieterse, 1995). Networking relationships vary in the degree to which they are formalised. Certain relationships are so highly standardized that rules and regulations govern each interaction; others are as casual as people from different organisations communicating with one another (Hall, 1977).

Butler and Wilson (1990) distinguish between two different types of networking relationships. They define coalescing as a relationship where organisations work together as a unit for a specified time, in order to complete a certain project. The second type of relationship (which is becoming an important trend) is an on-going formal networking relationship, that endures between projects.

Networking is a priority for the South African NGO sector (Harding, 1994a). Development work is likely to be carried out in an increasingly cooperative, and joint framework (Boulle, Johnson & Pieterse, 1993), and it is important that NGOs consider their approach to networking with great precision (Fowler, 1994; Pieterse, 1995). NGOs should concentrate on networking with other NGOs that share their ideals and goals (Madsen, 1997), as strong partnerships demand clarity of roles and common agendas (NGO Week, 1997).

NGOs must organise themselves regionally and nationally to ensure more effective and coordinated programmes of action (The African NGO Declaration to UNCTAD IX [ANGOD], 1996; Heyzer, 1995). In South Africa, the impossibility of the government meeting with 25 000 independent NGOs suggests that they organise sectorally, and constitute a national council to work with the government (cf. Derman, 1995).

### **3.1.1. Advantages and obstacles to NGO networking**

NGOs are only taken seriously by policy makers when they speak with one voice (Constantino-David, 1996). Networking can be a valuable tool for strengthening the common vision of the NGO movement (Editorial, 1992); and building the capacities of smaller and weaker NGOs (Eastern Cape NGO Summit, 1994). NGOs are often accused of duplicating services due to a lack of communication and collaboration between them (Boulle *et al.*, 1993), and networking ensures that this does not occur. Networking also exposes NGO staff to different ideas and information which can enhance their understanding of specific issues (Gordenker & Weiss, 1996), thus resulting in qualitative improvements in the knowledge and skills appropriate for the work of the organisation (Clark, 1991; Pieterse, 1995).

However, a number of obstacles to effective networking exist. NGOs are notoriously independent, and one United Nations official described the attempt to coordinate NGOs as "like herding cats" (Gordenker & Weiss, 1996, p.28). Coordination efforts are often hindered by NGO heterogeneity (Ritchie, 1996), as NGOs have divergent approaches to the development process (Boulle *et al.*, 1993). NGOs often struggle to locate a framework of values and positions that would provide the basis for a networking relationship (Harding, 1994a).

Furthermore, the scramble for limited donor funds has meant that NGOs have had to protect their territory in order to sustain themselves financially (Clark, 1991). NGOs have tended to cut themselves off from competing organisations - protecting their methodologies, information, and monitoring and evaluation techniques (Ward, 1995). NGO rivalries and "turf wars" have developed as a consequence (Cross, 1994), and a lurking

competitiveness makes certain NGOs wary about joint commitment (Harding, 1994a). However, Fowler (1994) and Friedman's (1994) view that NGOs network more effectively now than they did in the past, is an encouraging sign for the NGO sector.

### 3.2. NGOs and the government

There is an ongoing international debate about the role of the government in the delivery of goods and services to its citizens (Narsoo, 1996). In South Africa, the rhetoric of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) suggested that the state would be primarily responsible for development coordination and delivery (Pieterse, 1995). In the early 1990s, and shortly after the transition to democracy, there was an on-going debate about whether NGOs still had a role to play in the new South Africa (cf. Bernstein, 1994; Macozoma, 1993). It is now recognized (subsequent to the failure of the RDP) that NGOs will continue to play an important role in development (cf. Narsoo, 1996; Ward, 1995).

South African NGOs need to make critical choices about how they position themselves vis-a-vis the government (Narsoo, 1996). The relationship is a complex one as there are pressures for both cooperation and conflict (Hulme, 1994). The South African NGO literature in this area reflects a sector in confusion. Certain NGO authors (cf. Cross, 1994; Hanlon, 1994; Van Zyl, 1995) argue that NGOs must continue in their tradition of radical critique of the government, holding that NGOs should pursue the roles of watchdog and advocate, and ensure that the new government remains democratic and accountable.

Kleinenberg (1995) puts forward an alternative view. She proposes that during this period of transition NGOs should play a role in assisting government structures. However, Dangor (1994) warns that the NGO-government relationship should not become a situation where the government relegates its duties to NGOs. This caveat is well spoken, as according to Marsden (1994), third world governments are becoming increasingly reliant on NGOs.

A third perspective is proposed by authors such as Hanlon (1994) and Roodt (1996). They contend that NGOs should support the government, while holding it accountable at the same time. Such a relationship of critical support will enable NGOs to work with the government on those areas where they agree, and at the same time retain their autonomy and protect their right to disagree with the government (Eastern Cape NGO Summit, 1994; NGO Week, 1997). In this regard, it is significant that many South African NGO leaders have been coopted onto a variety of government bodies and commissions. Clark (1991) contends that this is a double-edged sword, and that although it provides an important forum for NGO opinions, it also dulls the sharp edge of NGO criticism.

The suggestion that development strategies would benefit from increased collaboration between governments and NGOs has become commonplace in recent policy discussions (cf. Bebbington & Farrington, 1993; Clark, 1991; Korten, 1990). According to Harding (1994a), conditions for South African NGO-government coordination around development issues look to be more positive than anywhere else in Africa.

### 3.2.1. Reasons for a cooperative relationship

There are a number of reasons why South African NGOs should enter into a cooperative relationship with the government. Amongst these are the following:

#### Government inexperience and NGO experience

The government lacks the necessary capacity to deliver development services (Hallowes, 1995b; Narsoo, 1996). National government structures are under-resourced, overburdened, and inexperienced (Kleinenberg, 1995; Ward, 1995). Provincial education administrations lack the administrative capacity to run educational affairs effectively (CDE Debate, 1997), while the civil service has a large cadre of new and inexperienced personnel (Boulle *et al.*, 1993).

In contrast, Hanlon (1994) maintains that NGOs have more development expertise than any government. NGOs can assist government policy makers, and can help to ensure the efficient delivery of services (Van Zyl, 1995). The government could benefit from NGO experience in the design and implementation of grassroots support services (Hartzenberg, 1993).

#### Increasing NGO influence

Whether through funding or through contractual relations, the South African government is likely to become an important source of income for NGOs (Hallowes, 1995a). By cooperating with the government, NGOs can gain access to public resources in order to tackle more large-scale operations (Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994).

The government exerts a significant influence over the scale and form of any NGO sector (Hulme, 1994). It remains the ultimate determinant of the wide political changes on which development depends, and it controls the economic and political frameworks within which organisations operate. It is only in working with government structures that NGOs are able to influence development policy and systems (Edwards & Hulme, 1992). The development activities of NGOs that are isolated from any influence on government policy are highly constrained in the impact they can achieve (Bebbington & Farrington, 1993).

### NGOs can mediate between the government and the grassroots

A cooperative NGO-government relationship establishes contacts between the grassroots, and influential individuals at national level. NGOs are critically important mediators, as they stand between the government and the communities they represent (Harding, 1994a; Ward, 1995). NGOs that are able to obtain a hearing in the centres of power are able to help their clients in their relations with the government (Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994).

#### 3.2.2. Means of engaging in a cooperative relationship

Bernstein (1994) suggests that joint ventures between NGOs and local or provincial governments would be the most fruitful area in which to build new collaborative relationships. There are several NGO-government relationships that might facilitate a transfer of experience to the government. The most feasible of these is for governments to hire NGO staff in the design stages of new programmes, and for NGOs to give training courses to government officials (Bernstein, 1994). In fact, Ewing (1996), found that many South African NGOs are already providing training for local government officials, aimed specifically at improving their ability to interact with communities.

#### **3.3. NGO funders and the funding scenario**

Funders are arguably the major force that shape the NGO sector in terms of scale and composition (Hulme, 1994). The changed NGO funding scenario is certainly the greatest challenge to which South African NGOs have had to adapt.

##### 3.3.1. NGOs and the current funding scenario

In order to secure money from international funders, NGOs are having to prove that they are agents of sustainable development (Kleinenberg, 1995). Funders are also looking for evidence of the impact of their funding (Orleyn, 1996). Accordingly, funders prefer to support NGOs that have a strategic plan, as it allows them to assess the degree to which NGO goals have been achieved (Ward, 1995). NGOs are also being put under pressure to be accountable for their use of funds (Hartzenberg, 1993).

South African NGOs need to develop new strategies to address new funders (Kleinenberg, 1995). Ward (1995) found that while "good" NGOs reported regularly, there was little move towards a long-term strategy that focused on the funder as a valued NGO customer. Drucker (1992a) has suggested that NGOs engage in funding development strategies, thereby creating a constituency which supports the NGO on an ongoing basis. Funding development is a long-term strategy of bringing funders to the NGO, and raising their sights in terms of how they can support the organisation.

NGOs should diversify their funding sources so as not to be dependent on one source of funding (Editorial, 1992; Hanlon, 1994). They also need to investigate ways of increasing their self-generating incomes. Although this will never cover NGO operating costs (Fowler, 1992), the higher the proportion of income independent of funders, the stronger the position of the NGO when negotiating with funders (Hallowes, 1995a). Suggestions to increase self-generated incomes include NGOs charging for services where feasible (NGO Week, 1997), and NGO staff selling their services as consultants (Grey, 1997).

Monitoring-by-reputation is an important basis of funder assessment of NGOs (Madsen, 1997). As funders have no easy way to "certify" NGOs, they are likely to contact an NGO that has collaborated on projects with other funders that they know (Nelson, 1995). In the present funding environment, it is vital that NGOs develop a good track record for service delivery and financial accountability (Kleinenberg, 1995). One of the implications of monitoring-by-reputation is that funders tend to concentrate on a smaller pool of more efficient NGOs (Nelson, 1995). As a result, these NGOs are becoming increasingly influential, and there is a risk that large NGOs might crowd out smaller NGOs, and come to dominate both funding and resources.

### **3.3.2. The funding relationship**

NGOs and their funders frequently have different ideas about the nature of development. According to Fowler (1992), most funders are concerned with a visible product, in a given time, and within the cost constraints and established programme boundaries. They are often also unwilling to support the slow, careful work, and gradual, often non-quantifiable results which characterize successful development (ibid, 1992). NGOs need to educate funders that development is a long-term process that takes years of sustained support if projects are to become self-sufficient (CRDA, 1993).

The CDRA (1993) and MacDonald (1997) contend that NGOs frequently gear their activities to suit what funders want, or what they think funders want. Edwards and Hulme (1996) add that NGOs often succumb to the temptation to take on functions which they know will attract large amounts of donor funding, to the detriment of other important aspects of their mission and vocation. In contrast, Ward (1995) and Hallowes (1995a) found that the South African NGOs they studied were not funder-driven in terms of the programmes they ran. Indeed, where funder conditions were in conflict with their objectives, capacity, and values, these NGOs refused the funding.

MacDonald (1997) proposes that three forms of funding relationship exist. A paternalistic relationship is where the funding agency controls most important decisions, and acts to coopt the NGO leadership. A laissez-faire form of relationship is where the funder establishes an arm's length relationship with the NGO, and interaction is limited to cash transactions and report writing. Accompaniment is the most recent approach adopted by some international funders. These funders respect that the NGO should have control over projects, and attempt to

provide the NGO with more than monetary support. For example, they may provide the NGO with training support.

Hallowes (1995b) contends that a power differential belies the rhetoric of partnership to which certain funders subscribe, as, on a whim, funders can shift their funding, and force NGOs to close. Boule (1993) suggests that a code of conduct be developed to guide the funding relationship. Working towards a genuine partnership between funder and NGO is widely regarded as the basis for good funding practice. However, a funding relationship of mutual interest and interdependence can only exist if both sides are secure and confident enough in their identities to be able to negotiate (CDRA, 1993).

### 3.3.3. Cooperation between NGOs, the government, and funders

None of the three role-players in development can survive without considering the other two (Pakade, 1995). Consequently, NGOs must develop a critical awareness of their roles vis-a-vis the government, funders, peer NGOs, and the larger NGO community (Bernstein, 1994; De Fonseke, 1995). Any effort to improve working relationships between NGOs, governments and funders must eventually come to grips with their different perspectives on the nature of development (Korten & Quizon, 1995).

Cooperation efforts are complicated by the complex and intertwined nature of the relationship between the three role-players. For instance, a context in which NGOs compete against each other for government funding, is unlikely to foster the collaborative relationships on which successful NGO networks are built (Edwards & Hulme, 1996). Further, international funders are increasingly contracting NGOs to implement project components rather than working with government departments. Many governments are becoming resentful about this, perceiving it as an erosion of their sovereignty (Clark, 1991).

### **3.4. Leadership in NGOs**

There is confusion about the definition of leadership, and how it differs from management. Some theorists (cf. McCall & Lombardo, 1984) have argued that leadership is simply one of the many roles that managers must play. However, most theorists would agree that not all leaders are managers, and not all managers are leaders (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1996). Kotter (1990, pp.4-5) maintains that modern management consists of planning and budgeting; organising and staffing; and controlling and problem solving. Organisational leadership tasks, *per contra*, involve establishing an organisational direction and vision for the future, aligning people to the vision, and motivating and inspiring people (cf. Fiedler & House [1994], Grint [1997], and Kotter [1990], for a full discussion of the differences between leadership and management).

### 3.4.1. NGO leadership and management

Brown (1988) has described two distinct types of NGO leaders, namely, participative and charismatic leaders. The first type of leader is the leader who is committed to participation, shares influence and functions with staff, and likes decision making to be done in a collegial process within a tight management structure. Brown (1988) describes charismatic leaders as people of deep commitment and vision, who lead by inspiration and by their personal qualities, but who maintain an ill-defined structure and tend to be somewhat autocratic in decision making. Charismatic leaders are typical NGO founders, and many South African NGOs have emerged around charismatic individuals (Cross, 1994). Unfortunately, such organisations are prone to decay when the leader moves on, and there tends to be a lack of continuity as these individuals come and go (Turok, 1996).

The current NGO literature is full of references to the need for charismatic leadership (cf. Drucker, 1992a; Harding, 1995; Meintjies, 1994). This is probably because charismatic leaders are ideal for pulling organisations through crises (cf. Robbins, 1997), are able to produce change, and set a direction for the organisation (cf. Butler & Wilson, 1990).

The pressures of transition in the South African context have resulted in the need for skilled adaptive management (Boulle *et al.*, 1993; Hallowes, 1994a). The NGO that fails to evolve management capacity as it grows is not sustainable, and a crisis is inevitable when too much depends on one person (Clark, 1991). Many South African NGOs suffer from a lack of management capacity (Harding, 1994b), and NGOs should address the management crisis by sponsoring management and leadership development programmes (NGO Week, 1997).

Twenty years ago, management was a dirty word for those involved in NGOs. Management meant business, and NGOs prided themselves on being above such vulgar considerations as the bottom line (Drucker, 1992b). South African NGO leaders have begun to embrace the management function - given that this is such a radical change from the past, the potential for conflict is inevitably present (Harding, 1994b). Indeed, Ward (1995) found that senior and mid-level NGO staff stress systems of control and demarcation, the regulation of job activities, and performance monitoring. On the other hand, lower-level NGO staff stress the need to preserve their autonomy, and to retain the potential for personal and professional development in their jobs.

### 3.4.2. Participative decision making in NGOs

Research into the challenges facing NGO management in the United Kingdom (cf. Edwards & Hulme, 1992) revealed that the greatest tension within NGOs was whether decision making should be hierarchical or democratic. This tension is also clearly evident in South African NGOs (cf. Friedman, 1994). There is disagreement in the literature about NGO commitment to democratic practices. Certain authors (cf. DRC,

1993a; Ward, 1995) believe that NGOs subscribe to a participatory democracy that emphasises collective organisational decision making. Others (cf. Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Harding, 1994a; Heyzer, 1995) question stated NGO democratic values, and hold that most NGOs are still highly centralized in their decision making.

An obstacle to participative decision making in NGOs is that there is often simply not enough time for it (Drucker, 1992a). NGOs have too many decisions that need to be made quickly (Butler & Wilson, 1990), and participative decision making can lead to delayed service delivery (Ward, 1995). Kaplan (c.1994) refers to this tension as the conflict between democracy and efficiency.

Research has demonstrated that NGO staff prefer to work in a democratic environment (cf. Mather & Amos, 1996), and desire full participation in the decisions affecting their work (cf. Billis & MacKeith, 1996). The majority of NGO staff believe that in working for NGOs they are making a significant sacrifice, both of personal income and time, through the long working hours and overall hard work (Hodson, 1996). Staff may justifiably argue that the participatory environment and ideological satisfaction compensate for the meagre salary (Clark, 1991). Furthermore, as a consequence of the belief that the world can and should be more egalitarian and democratic, NGO staff wish to see these characteristics present in their own organisations (Hodson, 1996). This belief is a feature of prefigurative politics, which entails a conscious attempt to practise within the structures of an organisation that which it strives to achieve in society as a whole (Pieterse, 1995).

Participative decision making has been shown to enhance employee motivation and commitment to the organisation (Boon, 1996). It is also held to promote personal identification with organisational objectives, as staff become stakeholders in the organisation (Jones *et al.*, 1988). However, Bass (1990) points out that it is important to distinguish between power sharing, in which staff participate in decision making processes of consequence, and the semblance of participation which yields neither commitment nor motivation. Unless staff are allowed to contribute in meaningful ways, they are likely to view participative decision making as a sham (Davis, 1985b).

### **3.4.3. Diversity in NGOs**

Organisational theorists focus on the group-based nature of diversity (Ferdman, 1995). Nkomo and Cox (1996, p.339), for instance, define diversity as a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system. Diversity in organisations is typically seen to be composed of variations in race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, social class, and age (Ferdman, 1995).

Diversity is a pervasive feature of South African NGOs. Yet Pieterse (1997) argues that NGOs are unable to deal with issues of difference in an open and comfortable manner. Adopting a colour-blind or assimilationist approach to cultural diversity is a way of maintaining the dominance of the white perspective in NGOs. This

approach does not attain true inclusivity, nor does it affirm all cultures, languages, religions, and so on. Under an assimilationist approach, minority groups will attempt to deny their differences in order to fit in with the dominant group (Robb & Richard, 1997). Rather than ignoring diversity, NGO leaders need to actively engage with it.

#### **3.4.4. Affirmative action in NGOs**

Some years ago, international funders started to question the all-white, largely male leadership structures of many South African NGOs (Kleinenberg, 1995). NGOs were charged with being white-dominated (Narsoo, 1996), and a call to replace white leadership with black leaders arose (CRDA, 1994). Hallowes (1995a) maintains that NGO leaders recognize the need for affirmative action within the sector. However, there are differing opinions about NGO leadership's commitment to affirmative action. Ward (1995), for example, describes a renewed commitment to affirmative action in NGOs, while Boule *et al.* (1993) charge that the absence of NGO affirmative action policies demonstrates a lack of commitment to the process.

Many NGO managers feel that funders fail to take account of the extent to which NGOs have lost skilled black people, or of the difficulty in replacing them (Hallowes, 1995a). NGOs have "whitened" post-1994 as the core of experienced and senior black staff have been siphoned off by government departments, the private sector, and parastatals (Pieterse, 1997).

Affirmative action should not be a stand alone issue, but should form part of an overall organisational capacity building programme (Brews, 1995; Narsoo, 1996). NGOs must be very clear about what they want from affirmative action programmes. Kleinenberg (1995) contends that affirmative action should be employed as a mechanism to transform organisational cultures so that white and male practices and behaviours no longer dominate.

#### **3.5. Human resource development (HRD) in NGOs**

Good staff are important for most organisations, but they are particularly vital for labour-intensive, professionally dominated NGOs (McLaughlin, 1986). Due to the flight of experienced staff, South African NGOs are attempting to re-establish their professional skills base (Du Toit & Strooh, 1995). The sector is experiencing rapid shifts in personnel, and NGOs are finding it increasingly difficult to attract experienced professionals who can cope with NGO work demands (Harding, 1994a). The NGO sector needs to build its human resources as a means of ensuring its sustainability (NGO Week, 1997).

The NGO sector requires a clearer view of what it needs in the way of skills and qualities from those who work within it. It must also seek more effective ways of developing and nurturing these qualities and skills. Flatter

management styles and decentralised authority demand staff who can take on decision making responsibility (Harding, 1994a). The challenges of development practice also necessitate staff who have a reflective approach, and are sensitive to their use of power and knowledge (ibid, 1994a). NGO staff should be committed to organisational values and the mission of social change that is inherent in their work (Clark, 1991).

Hodson (1996) argues that NGOs should take great care in the selection, initiation, and integration of new staff, a notion which is echoed in the American texts on managing NGOs (cf. Butler & Wilson, 1990; Drucker, 1992a; McLaughlin, 1986). However, according to Davies and Madlavu (1993), funding shortages limit the extent to which South African NGOs are able to hire properly trained, qualified, and experienced people.

### **3.5.1. NGO human resource development programmes**

NGO authors (cf. Drucker, 1992a; Stead, Thaw, Reddy & Banks, 1997) tend to advocate an holistic approach to human resource development. They maintain that HRD is about developing the whole person for a career and for life, rather than simply learning specific skills for specific jobs. This approach is in conflict with the strategic approach to human resource development. Here, staff are viewed as an organisational variable, and HRD as a pattern of planned activities intended to facilitate the achievement of broad organisational objectives (cf. Pieper, 1990; Wright & Ferris, 1996).

Drucker (1992a) and Harding (1994a) contend that NGOs rely too much on training, while De Satge (1993) believes that NGOs have inflated expectations of what training can achieve. NGOs need to develop integrated strategies for human resource development, as training alone will never enable NGOs to cope with the demands they face (Harding, 1994a). A perennial trap into which NGOs fall is that of conducting ad hoc training with their staff (Brews, 1995). Training which does not form a part of a strategic plan to meet organisational and individual needs leads only to wastage of organisational resources.

It is important to build teams in NGOs (Drucker, 1992a). Ward (1995) noted a strong emphasis on team work in the South African NGOs she studied. She found that team work was considered to be central to the functioning of the organisation, as NGOs are relatively small, and people have to work together to ensure effective service delivery.

There are many difficulties associated with NGO human resource development. First, NGO staff sometimes feel they have the right to training which objective analysis would find is not cost-effective (Hodson, 1996). Second, the availability of finance is a constraint on HRD decisions (Clifford, 1981). Third, most NGOs do not provide adequate training opportunities for their senior managers (Hallowes, 1994b). Fourth, the lack of NGO career pathing, and the small number of places at the top, is problematic in terms of the development of talented staff. A career bottleneck tends to result at the middle management level, and talented people quickly

outgrow their jobs (Billis & MacKeith, 1996).

### 3.6. NGO service delivery

The delivery of services is the mainstay of NGO budgets, and the basis for support from funders (Gordenker & Weiss, 1996). An NGO's approach to service delivery is based on the development philosophy held by NGO members.

#### 3.6.1. Philosophy of development: participation, knowledge, and power

According to Korten (1990), NGOs around the world are attending to the definition and projection of a people-centred development (PCD) vision. The PCD Forum (1995, p.5) lists justice, sustainability, and inclusivity as the three central principles of the people-centred development approach. Justice implies that priority must be given to ensuring a decent human existence for all people; sustainability means that the earth's resources must be used in ways that assure the well-being of future generations; and inclusivity stipulates that every person must have the opportunity to contribute to community and society.

The people-centred development approach acknowledges that only people themselves can define what they consider to be improvements in their quality of life (Korten, 1990). This implies the democratization of development decision making, and client participation in conceptualizing their development needs, designing projects, and controlling and utilizing scarce resources (DRC, 1993b; Hanlon, 1994; Heyzer, 1995).

Disagreement about NGO commitment to the participatory approach exists. Certain authors (cf. DRC, 1993a; Korten & Quizon, 1995) maintain that NGOs have long been committed to the idea that people should play a central role in their own development, and that NGOs work in a participatory framework when designing and delivering development projects. Yet others (cf. Bebbington & Farrington, 1993; Hanlon, 1994) charge that NGOs frequently fail to live up to their own rhetoric on client participation. Research has certainly revealed that NGO staff often impose their own values and perspectives on the communities they are supposed to serve (CRDA, 1996; Ticehurst, 1996a), and that it is not uncommon for NGO projects to fail as a result of inadequate prior consultation with communities about their needs (MacDonald, 1997).

There has been a renewed interest in the role of indigenous knowledge systems in the development process. It is believed that such systems may be the basis for building sustainable development strategies, as they begin from where people are, rather than from where developers would like them to be (Marsden, 1994). NGOs have proved themselves very open to working with client local knowledge, making possible a flexible and innovative approach to development (Harding, 1994a). However, Carroll (1992) warns that it is easy for NGOs to get trapped in one or other common fallacy - either that clients are the repositories of all the wisdom that they need,

or that privileged outsiders possess all the scientific knowledge that is needed for development. He holds that the development process always consists of a combination of the two knowledge forms.

Relations of power are a central concern in development work (Hallowes, 1994b), as an imbalance of power exists between NGOs that have skills, knowledge and resources, and clients who do not (Narsoo, 1996). According to Harding (1994a), there is often poor understanding of the power dynamics in the NGO-community relationship. Particular NGO actions may unintentionally create bonds of clientistic dependency (Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994), and Clark (1991) argues that one of the first things an NGO should consider when starting a new project is how it might end its involvement. Unfortunately such foresight is rare, and NGOs generally lack time-bound objectives and exit strategies in their work with clients (Boulle *et al.*, 1993).

### **3.6.2. Organisational processes and service delivery**

Increased competition, and the fact that delivery is now valued more highly than a progressive political perspective, gives South African NGOs no alternative but to adopt more professional and strategic approaches to service delivery (Du Toit & Strooh, 1995).

#### **Professionalism and strategic business orientation**

Accountability is a crucial component of NGO claims to professionalism. It is the means by which organisations report to a recognized authority, and are held responsible for their actions (Edwards & Hulme, 1996). Avina (1993, cited in Edwards & Hulme, 1996), distinguishes between short-term functional accountability (accountability for resource use and immediate impacts), and strategic accountability (accountability for the impact that an NGO's actions have on the actions of other organisations and the wider environment). Accountability requires an appraisal process for the overseeing authorities to judge whether results are satisfactory (Edwards & Hulme, 1996), and this may entail regular reporting, meetings, or direct representation of beneficiary groups on management boards (Harding, 1994a).

NGOs have multiple accountabilities: "downwards" to their partner organisations, intended beneficiaries, and staff; and "upwards" to their boards, funders, and host governments. Equal accountability at all times and to all is an impossibility. NGOs often have difficulty in prioritizing and reconciling these multiple accountabilities, and the danger is that accountability becomes skewed to the most powerful constituency, namely, funders (Clark, 1991). When competing demands come from the NGO's principal funding source, and the grassroots base it seeks to serve, accountability to the community may diminish (Nelson, 1995).

NGOs are also being pressurized to deliver, to become profitable (or at least financially self-sustaining), to "go to scale", to formulate business plans, to prove their productive capacity, and finally to justify their existence

thereby (CDRA, 1996, p.9). As a result, the NGO world is becoming more pragmatic (Grey, 1997), and is bowing to the demands of an increasingly commercialised and competitive culture of management and work (Harding, 1994a).

### Strategic planning

In the constantly changing environment, strategic planning is becoming central to organisational survival (Morgan, 1989). In fact, Butler and Wilson (1990) maintain that NGOs that are not strategising will not survive. Simply put, strategic planning consists of matching the activities of an organisation to the environment in which it operates (Johnson & Scholes, 1997). With the increasing popularity of strategic planning, greater attention is being paid to "environmental scans" (cf. Greer, 1995, p.117). These allow NGOs to develop more detailed and textured analyses of the environments within which they operate (Pieterse, 1995).

NGO strategic planning must concentrate on realistically operationalising service delivery plans (Drucker, 1992a). Plans should be flexible (De Satge, 1993), and must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are still relevant (Ward, 1995). Strategic planning must be integrated with monitoring and evaluation (Boulle *et al.*, 1993), and it is recommended practice to involve staff in the strategic planning process (Ward, 1995).

### Monitoring and evaluation

The emphasis on NGO monitoring and evaluation emerged out of the incapacity of NGOs to prove added-value and impact after development interventions (Pieterse, 1995). Various definitions of monitoring and evaluation exist. The common theme associated with all definitions of monitoring is that it is an internal project management responsibility. However, opinions differ on the extent to which evaluation is conducted by external parties, that is, funders or consultants (Ticehurst, 1996a). Monitoring occurs only on a project level, but evaluation can occur on a project or organisational level.

Many of the services provided by NGOs are intangible, essentially qualitative, processes and activities (Edlmann, 1997), and the measurement problem is thus severe (McLaughlin, 1986). NGOs have no easy way of judging their effectiveness (Kaplan, c.1994), particularly within the implementation periods of most projects (Ticehurst, 1996a). Certainly, funder modes of evaluation cannot easily cope with non-material client gains in power, knowledge, and confidence (Harding, 1994a).

There is no consensus on the criteria for assessing NGO effectiveness. Ticehurst (1996a, p.14) recommends that NGOs use practical systems based on simple "indicators". Hartzenberg (1993) suggests the following as indicators: reaching the poorest groups in rural areas, the extent to which the NGO develops institutions that can organise and maintain services over time, the extent to which client behaviour and attitudes change, and

the degree to which clients adopt the NGO practices, interventions, or services into their systems.

Obtaining client views is the most commonly used method to evaluate NGO services (Micou, 1995). Ticehurst (1996b) maintains that NGOs need the insights that can only be given by clients. The people-centred development approach emphasises that clients must be involved in the evaluation process. This is consistent with the broad notion of participation in development (Kearland, 1997). However, Boule *et al.* (1993) contend that the fact that services to clients are "free", discourages them from commenting on their quality. Furthermore, often clients do not know if the standard of the service is good or bad, as they do not have the right experience or information to evaluate it. Hanlon (1994) suggests that even if an NGO is providing a poor service, clients may be unwilling to criticize it for fear of losing the service altogether.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE STUDY

#### 1. GOALS OF THE STUDY

The present study pursued three central goals:

1. to describe the organisational culture of a South African NGO
2. to examine the tensions that have emerged due to the changing nature of the organisational culture
3. to analyse the organisational culture in relation to the changing NGO environment.

The theoretical framework was provided by Schein's (1992) notion of organisational culture as being the basic underlying assumptions held by members of an organisation. The first goal was operationalized as being to provide a description of the basic assumptions about six areas of NGO functioning, namely:

- \* networking with other NGOs
- \* the relationship with the government
- \* the relationship with funders
- \* leadership
- \* human resource development
- \* approach to service delivery

The second goal was achieved by analysing the consistencies and contradictions that existed between assumptions pertaining to each of the six areas of NGO functioning; and analysing the contradicting assumptions that existed more broadly across all the six areas of focus.

The third goal was realized by analysing the organisational culture in relation to what the literature described as the present South African NGO context, and the various recommendations put forward about appropriate NGO activity in order to facilitate adaptation to the environment.

#### 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

##### 2.1. Conceptual framework

Schein (1992) understands the essence of organisational culture to be the basic underlying assumptions held by members of an organisation; the assumptions learned as members attempt to solve their problems of adaptation

to the external environment and integration of internal processes. Schein (1992, pp.94-143) assumes that organisational members share basic assumptions about what he terms "core dimensions", namely, assumptions about reality, truth, time and space, human nature, activity, and relationships. Schein (1992) has in fact been widely criticised for assuming that it is possible for organisational members to share assumptions about all these "core dimensions" (cf. Alvesson, 1993; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Wright, 1994). Thus the present researcher has utilized Schein's (1992) concept of basic underlying assumptions for a theoretical framework, but has not adopted his notion of the core dimensions of basic assumptions. The researcher extracted basic assumptions about (what the current literature suggested are) six core areas of NGO functioning that are undergoing profound changes. In this study, it is these basic assumptions that are being termed the NGO's organisational culture.

In order to access basic assumptions about the six core areas, in the specific NGO under study, the research design consisted of collecting three sets of data based on Schein's (1992) notion of artifacts, and Siehl and Martin's (1988) notion of espoused values and values-in-use. Schein (1992) defines artifacts as the visible products of the organisation, or the constructed physical and social environment. Siehl and Martin (1988) define espoused values as the values people say they believe in, and values-in-use as those values that are actually enacted. Data collection was designed as such because espoused values and values-in-use frequently differ (cf. Anthony, 1994; Siehl & Martin, 1988), as do official descriptions in organisational documentation and actual practice (cf. Harrison, 1987; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997).

Qualitative methods were employed in order that the researcher could produce what Geertz (1994, p.213) calls a "thick description" of a culture. Qualitative methods allow ambiguities and contradictions to be explored with relative ease (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and are best suited for making sense of multiple realities and competing value systems (Lincoln, 1985). Furthermore, culture is generally categorized as a topic of the highest order of complexity, and Bolman and Deal (1991) rightly argue that using quantitative approaches to study culture runs the risk of oversimplification.

## 2.2. Design

The value of the case study research design is being increasingly recognized in organisational research (Carrell *et al.*, 1997; Gummesson, 1991). The present research design consisted of a case study of one South African educational non-governmental organisation. The case study was constructed by examining the organisation using three foci for investigation, based on the conceptual framework. The three foci are: artifacts, espoused values, and values-in-use. Each foci required a different data collection method. This is represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Research design - Foci and Methods of Investigation**

Focus of Investigation	Method
Artifacts - Data Set One Six areas of NGO functioning	Documentation
Espoused Values - Data Set Two Six areas of NGO functioning	Focus Group
Values-in-use - Data Set Three Six areas of NGO functioning	Individual interviews using the Critical Incident Technique

The researcher used age, size, and function of the organisation as criteria with which to select the case. It was necessary for the NGO to have been in existence prior to 1990, thus ensuring that it would have experienced a changed relationship with the government, with funders, and with other NGOs.

It was essential that the NGO be medium-sized, and have an established operational structure, thus necessitating a formal approach to leadership and human resource development. The researcher also noted the NGO trend of scaling-up (Edwards & Hulme, 1996), and becoming more business-like (Clark, 1991), and wished to sample an NGO that reflected this trend.

The function of the NGO was a significant consideration as the researcher needed an NGO that was responsible for providing services at the grassroots level. Given the altered NGO funding scenario, and the changed relationship with the government and with other NGOs, such an NGO would have had to re-evaluate its approach to service delivery. For a full description of the organisation on which this study is based, see Chapter 4. For purposes of anonymity, the NGO will be referred to as ECED.

### **2.3. Data collection**

The researcher employed a triangulation of data sources (Berg, 1995) in the study. This was necessitated by the varied nature of the surface manifestations of organisational culture, and is consistent with the prescription that case study research draw on multiple data sources (cf. Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993; Yin, 1994). Methodological triangulation (Janesick, 1994) was also employed, and although the research design was not chosen for the purpose of triangulation *per se*, research reliability and validity were improved by using different methods.

Data collection occurred over a period of four weeks in October 1997. The researcher obtained copies of the required organisational documents, held the focus group two weeks later, and the following week conducted all eight interviews over a period of two days. The interviews and the focus group were held on the premises, during office hours. The focus group ran for the duration of an hour, while interview times ranged between

forty-five minutes and one-and-a-half hours. This process generated three sets of data.

### 2.3.1. Data Set One: Artifacts

Deal and Kennedy (1982) assert that in any study of an organisational culture, the researcher must read the organisation's statements about itself. In fact, Hodder (1994) goes so far as to argue that any adequate study of social interaction depends on the incorporation of material evidence.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher specified artifacts (Schein, 1992) as formal written documents produced by the NGO between 1995 and 1997. This specification complies with Berg's (1995, p.145) conception of "official documentary records", which he defines as official documents produced for a special limited audience. The documents sampled included public relations pamphlets from the various ECED projects; policy documents (e.g. the affirmative action policy); the 1995 Annual Report (the 1996/97 Annual Report was not available); the organisational mission statement; the Code of Ethical Conduct; a document describing the history of ECED; a document presented at a provincial NGO colloquium; and various documents from the Employee File (i.e. the ECED Constitution, Conditions of Employment, monitoring and evaluation procedures, the career development review policy, and a statement of organisational values).

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), one of the drawbacks of using organisational documents in research is that they contain institutional biases. In the present study however, documents were conceptualized as cultural artifacts, and their institutional bias was thus desirable. Harrison (1987) notes that documents reflect the perspectives of the people who compile them. The majority of the documents analysed in this study were produced by senior management. However, certain documents were compiled by project leaders, and others by staff task teams.

### 2.3.2. Data Set Two: Espoused values

Espoused values (Siehl & Martin, 1988) were accessed through the use of a focus group, from what could be described as a stratified sample. Stratified sampling is used primarily to ensure that different groups of a population are adequately represented in a sample (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). It is a form of probability sampling, and requires that each element of the population be randomly sampled from within the strata. The population in this study was divided into strata according to job description. However, sampling from each strata occurred conveniently, not randomly.

Many organisational cultural descriptions have been criticised for being based solely on the management perspective (cf. Martin & Frost, 1996; Sackmann, 1991). Job description was specified as strata in order to ensure a sample that reflected all sections of the organisation. The overall sampling strategy is characteristic

of the trend in organisational research, which as Pugh (cited in Bulmer, 1988) notes, rarely makes use of probability samples. It also reflects the tendency in qualitative sampling to focus in-depth on relatively small samples (Patton, 1990).

The final sample of eight was selected by the gatekeeper, and represents the four different sections of the NGO, namely, management (two), curriculum and materials developers (two), field-workers (two), and administrative staff (two). An attempt was made to select participants with a variety of different service lengths, because employees who have been in an organisation for an extended period of time have a better knowledge of the organisational culture than those who have recently joined (Schein, 1992; Siehl & Martin, 1988), but an employee with at least a few months service can respond adequately about the organisation's culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). At the time of data collection, participants' lengths of service ranged from nine months to five years. Participant demographic characteristics that proved relevant to the research findings were that all the participants were women; and that four were black, and four were white.

An advantage of using focus groups for data collection is that the group setting frequently results in the production of data that might not be uncovered in individual interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). One of the weaknesses of focus groups is that they are limited to verbal behaviour (Morgan, 1988). Given, however, that the focus group in this study was aimed at obtaining qualitative data about espoused values, this weakness was immaterial. See Appendix 1 for the researcher's guide to the focus group.

### 2.3.3. Data Set Three: Values-in-use

Values-in-use (Siehl & Martin, 1988) were collected from the same sample of eight, using individual interviews structured according to the critical incident technique (Bass, 1990; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 1991). In accordance with Easterby-Smith *et al's*. (1991) suggestion, participants were asked to describe in detail one particular incident related to each of the six areas of NGO functioning that had occurred in their work lives. As with the sampling of documents, the researcher specified that the incident described was to have occurred within the previous two years. A time period was specified due to the rapidly changing NGO environment.

Grounding the interviews in descriptions of real-life events enabled the researcher to access data about values-in-use. As Harrison (1987, p.89) notes, in order for the researcher to obtain data about "actual values", explicit descriptions of actions, rather than generalizations or expressions of attitudes, are required. Furthermore, as Kvale (1996) points out, it is on the basis of uninterpreted descriptions of specific situations that the researcher is able to arrive at meanings on a deeper level. See Appendix 2 for the researcher's guide to the individual interviews.

## **2.4. Data analysis**

In order to realize the study's three goals, the researcher engaged in four phases of data analysis.

Phase One accomplished the first goal by extracting basic assumptions about the six areas of NGO functioning from each of the three data sets. The second goal was achieved through the second and third phases of data analysis. Phase Two identified the consistencies and contradictions between assumptions within each of the six areas of NGO functioning, while Phase Three examined the consistencies and contradictions between assumptions across each of the six areas of NGO functioning. The third goal was realized by the fourth phase of data analysis which entailed comparing the research findings to the review of the relevant literature.

### **2.4.1. Data analysis Phase One**

#### **Data Set One**

The social sciences (with the possible exception of content analysis) have not developed systematic techniques for documentary analysis (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994; May, 1993). In this study, the researcher's first step was to read through all the documents in their entirety twice, in order to gain a holistic sense of the data. She then highlighted all the passages pertaining to the six areas of functioning, making marginal remarks (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.67) on the text. As suggested by Schein (1992), the remarks focused on the possible underlying assumption of the particular passage.

The researcher proceeded to type-up (in direct quotation) all the highlighted passages, and their associated marginal remarks, under the six different headings. The "transcript" was then pattern-coded (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.57-58) into themes, and the direct quotations integrated with the marginal remarks. At this point the researcher had a document of basic underlying assumptions about the six areas of NGO functioning based on the artifacts.

#### **Data Set Two**

Both Morgan (1988) and Seidman (1991) insist that research interviews be audio-taped and a verbatim transcript made. In this study, the focus group and interviews were tape recorded. The researcher subsequently transcribed this material, and undertook the initial data analysis. Throughout the transcription process, she noted down both significant assumptions, and connections between assumptions. Having completed the transcription, she read it through twice, making marginal remarks on the transcript.

The researcher then closely analysed the focus group transcript and reduced the data by coding the relevant passages into each of the six areas of NGO functioning. The researcher linked each passage to her interpretation of the assumption that underlay it. Her interpretation was based on the notes made while transcribing, and the marginal remarks. The researcher then pattern-coded the document, drawing out wider themes. She now had a document of basic assumptions about the six areas of NGO functioning based on espoused values.

### Data Set Three

The analysis of data set three also began during the transcription process (cf. Kvale, 1996). Again, the researcher made marginal remarks on each transcript. As the interviews were clearly structured into the six different areas of NGO functioning, the researcher cut up the transcripts, and analysed each of the six areas separately. After following the procedure outlined for data set two the researcher was left with a document of basic assumptions about the six areas of NGO functioning based on values-in-use.

#### 2.4.2. Data analysis Phases Two and Three

Data analysis Phases Two and Three realized the second goal of the study. In Phase Two, the researcher constructed six computer files (one for each area of NGO functioning), made up of the relevant sections from the three data sets. Focusing the analysis on assumptions particularly related to the changing NGO environment, she examined each document for consistencies and contradictions across the three data sets.

Phase Two analysis was facilitated by using the memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.72) the researcher had written from the earliest stages of data analysis. The memos were designed to draw out the consistencies and contradictions between assumptions within a particular area of NGO functioning, across the six areas of NGO functioning, and between assumptions from each of the three data sets. The second phase of analysis was also advanced by the use of data displays (ibid, 1994). Data displays were employed so that assumptions about a particular area, from each data set, would be visible simultaneously. Having a complete display of the data immediately highlighted the presence of consistencies and contradictions between assumptions.

In Phase Three, the researcher examined the Phase One and Phase Two analyses, for consistencies and contradictions across all the six areas of functioning. Here, the analysis focused on assumptions about NGO survival in the constantly changing environment. The analysis mostly involved subsuming particulars under generalities (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process was again aided by using memos and data displays. In this instance, data displays were used as a tool to indicate how different assumptions related to one another.

#### **2.4.3. Data analysis Phase Four**

The final phase of analysis consisted of comparing the product of the first three analysis phases to the relevant literature. This literature examined the present South African NGO context, and made various recommendations about the activities NGOs should engage in so as to facilitate their adaptation to the changing environment.

#### **2.4.4. Conclusion drawing and verification**

Throughout the process of data analysis, the researcher employed a number of tactics to ensure the accuracy of her analysis, the first of which was to continually refer back to the transcripts and documentation to ensure that she had not lost the original meanings through the process of analysis. The researcher was also careful to note the source from which an assumption originated, and weight it accordingly. For example, staff assumptions about the effectiveness of participative management structures were weighted more heavily than those of senior management, as management might have an interest in protecting their image. In addition, the researcher engaged in the process of counting (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.252). This was to ensure that particular assumptions were not purely idiosyncratic. Finally, she held a second interview with one participant in order to clarify certain themes, and to check specific assumptions against factual evidence.

### **3. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) argue that researchers should have clear operational definitions of theoretical concepts in order to increase research reliability and validity. The researcher paid close attention to this point throughout the research proposal, data collection, and data analysis phases.

Given that the researcher employed a single case study design, and a non-random sample, the external validity of the study is not strong. However, as McCracken (1988) points out, in qualitative research sampling the issue is not one of generalizability. The aim is instead to gain access to the cultural assumptions and categories according to which a culture constructs the world. The present researcher was not intent upon establishing the sample as representative of a certain population, but rather on describing the organisational culture.

Triangulation is a tool used to enhance research validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Jick (1984) notes that the use of multiple measures may uncover some unique variance that may otherwise have been neglected using a single method. The researcher found that using different data sources and research methods certainly highlighted conflicting cultural assumptions.

The researcher attempted to maximise reliability and validity in the interviews and focus group by minimizing the potential response effects (i.e. context, role-restricted, and responder effects) listed in Dixon (1989).

Response effects are the distortions which may occur in an interviewing situation, caused by variables other than the participant's views in which the researcher is interested (ibid, 1989). Distractions and interruptions of the interview situation can result in a response effect, and in a few interviews, the process was definitely affected by the interruptions that occurred.

Many qualitative researchers are arguing for a new vocabulary with which to discuss validity and reliability (cf. Lincoln, 1985; Seidman, 1991). They disagree with the epistemological assumptions underlying validity, and propose that it be substituted with the notion of "trustworthiness" (Seidman, 1991, p.126-7). In order to enhance the "trustworthiness" of her results, the researcher asked two participants (one from each of the two main organisational subcultures) to comment on a draft of the results. This enabled them to correct any factual errors, and to highlight those aspects of the analysis they felt were inaccurate.

Schein (1992) argues that this process is necessary in order to avoid the researcher's subjectivity bias, and to overcome the insider's lack of awareness. Bulmer (1988) also advocates this procedure as a means of increasing the accuracy of a cultural description. Although the process certainly improved her results, the researcher noted Silverman's (1993, p.199) warning that researchers must avoid treating the "actor's point of view as an explanation". She was also conscious of the fact that researchers can often understand a situation more clearly than their participants (cf. Kelly, 1994).

#### **4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Mirvis and Seashore (1982) (cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.288), warn that "naivete [about ethics] itself is unethical." This caveat is particularly important in organisational research, as ethical issues take on unique features arising from the phenomenon of social organisation (Bulmer, 1988). As a social system, an organisation is composed of people with positions in a hierarchy, and a collective identity as an organisation. Therefore organisational researchers cannot approach participants as independent individuals, as they operate within an interdependent framework of rights and responsibilities (Mirvis & Seashore, 1984). Voluntary participation and confidentiality are ethical concerns of specific importance in organisational research (Harrison, 1987). Schein (1992) maintains that the issue of confidentiality is particularly important in organisational culture studies, as an organisation may not want its culture revealed to others. In this study, the researcher insisted on voluntary participation, and guaranteed the confidentiality of all the data collected.

Organisational anonymity has been ensured by not naming the organisation and the province in which it operates. Both are commonly used devices for safeguarding organisational anonymity (cf. Bulmer, 1988). Participant anonymity was ensured by having a lack of identifiers attached to information that might indicate which participant had provided the data. Given the fact that a small sample was drawn from a relatively small organisation, the researcher paraphrased participant quotes in the results chapters, as certain turns of phrase

could easily be linked to specific participants.

The researcher undertook to supply the NGO with a copy of the final report. Both Bulmer (1998) and Turner (1988) consider it the organisational researcher's ethical responsibility to feed back the results of their research to the organisation studied. Schein (1992), however, warns organisational culture researchers that organisations may not be ready to receive feedback about their culture. During the negotiation of access, the researcher made ECED management aware of the potential benefits of the research, but also highlighted the consequences of having one's culture revealed. She offered to provide a support service should the organisation require it.

The issue of informed consent (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996) was raised with the participants at the introduction to the focus group and individual interviews. The researcher also clarified (at the outset) the relationship between herself and participants (cf. Gorden, 1980; Miles & Huberman, 1994). See Appendices 1 and 2 for details.

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that research should be conducted carefully and thoughtfully, and in terms of some reasonable set of standards. The researcher strove to conduct the research in such a manner, but certain methodological limitations do exist, and the reader must bear these in mind when studying the results.

## **5. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS**

It is possible that a sampling error (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995) may have entered into the selection of the eight participants. As mentioned above, the researcher specified job description as the strata, and length of service as a consideration. However, the gatekeeper used her discretion in selecting the particular eight participants, and a conscious or unconscious bias may have entered into her selection.

By definition and design, the statements of focus group participants are influenced by group interaction and the opinions of others (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Having staff and senior management in one focus group appeared to inhibit both sides. Indeed, Harrison (1987) describes such a circumstance as one of the difficulties associated with using focus groups in organisational research. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) maintain that one of the disadvantages of focus groups is that the process is likely to increase the effects of social desirability. Certain staff participants were careful not to own their words, using such statements as: "amongst some people that I've heard talking" and "I don't know but that's what I've heard". Sackmann (1991) argues that questions about leadership may be particularly threatening to employees and they may withhold information for fear of negative consequences. Participants in this study did appear reluctant to contribute to the discussion about leadership. This perception was confirmed by the fact that participants who did not contribute to the focus group discussion felt free to express themselves in their individual interviews.

There were both positive and negative consequences to conducting the focus group a week before the interviews. Gordon (1980) argues that information about events which may have occurred more than a month in the past, is more efficiently obtained by giving participants advance notice of the research topic. In this study, participants were more easily able to think of critical incidents having attended the focus group the previous week. However, as Brewer and Hunter (1989) note, multi-method research entails a risk that the prior use of one method will affect the next method's observations. The researcher found that in the individual interviews, some participants kept referring back to the focus group, attempting to confirm the values that had been espoused there.

Finally, it must be borne in mind that organisational culture is self-organising and constantly evolving. Although at any given time it can be seen as having a discernible pattern, this pattern is merely a snapshot abstraction imposed on the culture from the outside. It is a pattern that helps the researcher to make sense of what is happening in the culture, but it is not necessarily synonymous with the experience in the culture itself (Morgan, 1997). For example, Western interpretations of Japanese organisational hierarchy may be that it is a pattern of domination. However, internally it may be experienced as a process of mutual service.

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE DESCRIPTION

#### 1. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

ECED is an educational NGO. The educational NGO sector is the largest and best-funded of South Africa's non-governmental multitudes (Ntshakala, 1997). The sector provides adult, tertiary, secondary, primary and pre-primary educational services (Boulle *et al.*, 1993). However most educational NGOs concentrate on early childhood development (ECD), and adult basic education and training (Ntshakala, 1997).

ECED was founded in 1987, and is presently the largest educational NGO in the province in which it operates. The head office is based in one of the provincial cities, and the branch office in a nearby town. The entire study was conducted at the head office, thus the researcher is referring to the head office when she refers to ECED.

ECED employs 43 people at the head office. ECED staff are functionally divided into four different categories: management (the Director and Deputy-Director, project leaders, and section heads) (8); administration (which includes the finance division) (16); field-workers (14); and educational curriculum and materials developers (5). The last two categories make up what are referred to a project staff. ECED has 38 female, and five male staff members. 23 employees are black, 16 are white, and four are coloured or Asian.

#### 2. ECED PROJECTS

ECED's largest project is providing in-service teacher training programmes on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The second largest project involves conducting management training courses for school principals and school governing bodies (SGBs). ECED curriculum and materials developers produce a immense amount of educational materials for the ECD and SGB training projects.

ECED's third largest project provides vocational guidance and entrepreneurial training to students, school leavers, out-of-school youth, and guidance teachers. Further projects include training in science and technology for secondary school learners and teachers; administrative and secretarial support to schools and educational institutions; literacy programmes in rural areas; and a resource library which operates from the ECED premises.

ECED focuses primarily on providing educational services to the rural areas, but it does maintain a presence in the urban areas. Its area of operation extends throughout the province. In addition, staff meet training appeals from other provinces through a consultancy approach.

### **3. NETWORKING AT ECED**

ECED is a member of both a provincial and a national networking structure. The provincial structure is a network of educational NGOs, and the national structure is the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). Three national NGO projects operate from the ECED premises. Staff from these projects have unrestricted access to ECED's administrative and financial services.

Networking relationships normally occur between different educational NGO projects. Relationships either consist of a partnership of two NGO projects, or a consortium of three or more NGO projects. ECED typically engages in the following two types of networking relationships.

#### **3.1. Consortiums for contract projects**

This type of networking occurs when ECED works on a contract project requiring a consortium of NGOs. These relationships are limited to the time period of the particular project. Project collaboration may consist of joint planning, training, and evaluation; and sharing of materials. Alternatively each NGO may simply perform their role in the project, with minimal interaction occurring. In fact, the extent of collaboration in these relationships is often constrained by partner NGOs having different focuses in the project.

#### **3.2. Formally established networking relationships**

In these networking relationships, a formal written agreement to cooperate on a long-term basis exists between ECED and another educational NGO. The relationship thus endures between time-limited contract projects. Formal communication channels are established between different sections of the respective NGOs: management with management; finance with finance; and field-workers with field-workers. The respective NGO staff work together very closely, sharing materials and expertise. A fair amount of cross-training (i.e. NGO staff training staff from other NGOs) occurs in this form of networking.

### **4. ECED AND THE GOVERNMENT**

ECED has an extremely cooperative relationship with the government. The provincial education department accounts for approximately 60% of ECED's dealings with the government. ECED also cooperates with the Health Department; the Welfare Department; and the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

Management and project staff are the only groups that have any real contact with the government. Management interacts mostly with provincial and national government for the purpose of educational policy formulation. Field-workers cooperate with grassroots and district level government officials on joint venture projects. For

example, as part of the government's Curriculum 2005 project, ECED field-workers are currently training teachers how to implement Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in their classrooms.

ECED deals with government officials from grassroots to national level. Government representatives at the site of learning (or grassroots) level consist of school principals, ECD facilitators, and school governing bodies. The government officials at the district level are district managers and subject advisors. District officials accompany ECED staff on site visits, and are invited to attend HRD training programmes at ECED. Association on a regional level consists of ECED staff serving on regional advisory committees. Provincial level interaction entails more senior ECED staff acting on provincial advisory committees. On a national level, senior management serve on a variety of national education advisory councils.

A recent development in ECED's relationship with the government is their appointment as a managing agent of government funds. Due to the government's financial and administrative mismanagement, funders who previously gave their money directly to the government to administer, now appoint NGOs as fund managers. The implication is that NGO staff and government officials now manage donor funds jointly.

## **5. ECED AND ITS FUNDERS**

ECED's funding distribution in 1997 was as follows: international funding (50%); local funding (27%); self-generated income (23%). ECED has been highly successful in securing funding for its projects. In fact, despite the changed funding scenario, the 1995 Annual Report indicated that ECED's funding had increased over the previous few years.

The 1995 Annual Report lists 19 ECED funders. The relationship with funders is essentially confined to the management domain. Staff contact with funders is limited to when funders tour the premises, or accompany field-workers on site visits. The funding relationship differs according to the funder's level of involvement in projects. Most funders tend not to get involved in the projects they fund. However, some funders take an active interest in projects, and meet regularly with ECED staff to discuss any problems associated with the particular project.

## **6. LEADERSHIP AT ECED**

The present Director of ECED is also the founder of the organisation. The ECED senior managers (i.e. the Director and Deputy-Director) are both white females. Both are leaders in the true sense of the word, however, the same is not true for all project and section leaders.

Participative management, in the form of staff advisory committees, has been in existence at ECED since 1995. The Director took the initiative in implementing the advisory committees. However, as they serve only an advisory function, she is under no obligation to take into account any opinions expressed by these committees when taking decisions. ECED has no representative trade union.

Three advisory committees exist: the Educational Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), the Organisational Development Advisory Committee (ODAC), and the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). EDAC consists of all the project leaders, and is headed by the Deputy-Director. It focuses on everything related to the educational services that ECED provides, for example, curriculum development, the training conducted by field-workers, methods of project assessment, and so on. ODAC is headed by the Director and consists of the finance manager and five elected staff members. In essence, its brief is to make decisions about human resource policy. JAC is the combination of EDAC and ODAC, and is headed by the Director. All decisions taken in EDAC and ODAC are ratified at JAC. The highest and final decision making body at ECED is the Executive Committee (EXCO) which consists of the Director and Deputy-Director.

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) AT ECED**

ECED management have implemented a number of programmes to encourage HRD within the organisation. The NGO has a policy of holistic training, meaning training that is both skills related and personally enriching. Approximately 30% of HRD training is conducted by external consultants, the remaining 70% is conducted by ECED management or staff. Examples of HRD training include: conflict resolution, personal growth training, facilitation skills, and computer skills.

ECED management have also instituted career development reviews (performance appraisals), and a multi-skilling programme. Management assume that HRD occurs through staff participation, for example, in organisational task teams. Staff task teams address such diverse issues as staff loans, flexi-time, and social functions.

## **8. SERVICE DELIVERY AT ECED**

ECED has a reputation for effective service delivery and is well-known on a provincial and national level. The organisation aspires to being a leader in educational service provision, and aims to develop and pilot creative and ground-breaking educational projects. Staff consider ECED to be a professional NGO, in other words, an NGO that is highly accountable to its clients and funders, and is responsible about education.

### **8.1. Approach to development**

ECED has a policy of whole-school-community development. This approach requires that ECED field-workers work not only with site of learning facilitators, but also with school principals, and school governing bodies. In working with SGBs, they start to work with the community surrounding that school. The assumption that underlies this approach is that learning occurs within a context, and in order to facilitate the learner's development, their environment must be conducive to learning. On an individual level, ECED are concerned with holistic development. Holistic development assumes that in addition to increasing their knowledge, learners need to develop physically, spiritually, and attitudinally.

### **8.2. Organisational factors that encourage effective service delivery**

Strategic planning is an important factor in determining ECED's service delivery. Individual projects meet at the end of each year to set project objectives for the following year. The NGO then meets as a whole and finalizes the organisation's objectives for the up-coming year. At mid-year, projects meet again to assess their progress and to determine whether they need to re-evaluate their objectives. Part of what ECED terms strategic planning is simply long-term planning. However there is certainly a strategic element to their planning process. For example, ECED made a decision to work towards becoming an accredited educational institution, and planned how to achieve this objective.

All ECED projects have in-built monitoring and evaluation procedures. Procedures vary according to project, but the most commonly used procedure is the assessment sheet. The Early Childhood Development project has actually generated indicators of development. Field-workers complete a pre-assessment observation schedule about the facilitator, learners, and physical site. During subsequent site visits, field-workers again complete the observation schedule. The schedule measures, for example, learners' ability to be critical by noting such things as: are learners asking questions?, and, can learners work in a group without the facilitator telling them what to do? Other development indicators include: are facilitators using the ECED educational materials provided?, and, have they generated any materials of their own?

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS - PHASE ONE ANALYSIS

The results section has been divided into four chapters. Chapter 5 is the first phase of analysis and consists of basic assumptions about each of the six areas of NGO functioning. Assumptions about the six areas are presented in the following order: networking, the government, funders, leadership, human resource development, and service delivery. Assumptions in each of the six areas are sequenced according to cultural artifacts, espoused values, and values-in-use.

Chapter 6 constitutes the second phase of analysis. Here the consistencies and contradictions between assumptions within each area of functioning, across the three data sets, are analysed. In Chapter 7, the third analysis phase, the basic assumptions about NGO survival in the changing environment that emerged across all six areas and all three data sets, are drawn out. The analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 also examines the transformation process that these basic assumptions are currently undergoing. Chapter 8 examines the basic assumptions in relation to literature about the changing NGO environment.

#### 1. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NETWORKING BETWEEN NGOs

There are a variety of different networking forms that NGOs can engage in, and to use the term "networking" is to use it in a broad sense. Networking can refer to NGO collaboration with business and the government, but the assumptions that follow refer specifically to networking with other South African educational NGOs.

##### 1.1. Artifacts

###### 1.1.1. Assumptions about environmental conditions

The NGO sector is very diverse, and there is a consequent lack of shared vision, values, and common objectives amongst NGOs. This lack of commonality hinders the establishment and smooth operation of networking relationships.

###### 1.1.2. Assumptions about NGOs

An NGO's capacity parallels its level of adaptation to the environment. NGOs that are able to adapt to the constantly changing environment are those with higher levels of organisational capacity.

Only professional educational NGOs (i.e. those staffed by professionals) recognize their responsibility towards education. Not all educational NGOs share this responsibility, and professional educational NGOs should avoid networking with such NGOs.

### **1.1.3. Assumptions about the nature of networking relationships**

The networking relationship is a structured business relationship, a "partnership contract" between different NGOs. As many NGOs lack organisational capacity, most contractual networking relationships consist of ECED assisting their partner NGOs. It is possible though, for ECED to have equitable formal networking relationships with NGOs that have similar objectives, and a sense of responsibility towards education.

The possibility of better networking relationships is constrained by the competition that exists between NGOs. This competition stems from many NGOs not being comfortable with the fact that they are not the only service providers in a particular area. Competitiveness undermines effective service delivery and NGOs must attempt to overcome it.

### **1.1.4. Assumptions about the benefits of networking**

The expertise gained from staff members of other like-minded educational NGOs can add value to individual NGO projects. The networking process also has the potential to facilitate the development of a shared vision for the future of the South African NGO sector. Networking also leads to better NGO service delivery.

## **1.2. Espoused Values**

### **1.2.1. Assumptions about environmental conditions**

The recent tendering process established by both funders and the government requires that consortiums of NGOs compete for tenders. This criterion is likely to remain a prerequisite in future. Thus networking has become a strategic survival decision for NGOs, and an accepted part of organisational life.

### **1.2.2. Assumptions about NGOs**

Many "old-style" NGOs have not recognized that they need to change their style of operating to suit the changed environment. Such NGOs have a dubious service delivery capacity, and are therefore unreliable networking partners. NGOs must be very discerning about the organisations with whom they network, and they should avoid, where possible, networking with "old-style" NGOs.

### **1.2.3. Assumptions about the nature of networking relationships**

Formal networking partnerships that involve a process of equitable sharing of expertise and materials are very satisfactory relationships. Contractual networking relationships are more often unequal in nature, with smaller NGOs gaining more from large partner NGOs, than vice versa. Importantly though, through the networking relationship, large NGOs play a vital role in building up and empowering smaller NGOs.

Networking relationships are negatively affected by the fact that NGOs are in competition with one another for funding. Due to the competition for funding, NGOs tend to be very territorial, not allowing other NGOs into their area of operation. Furthermore, larger NGOs that have the necessary infrastructure to compete more successfully for funding are resented by those NGOs not able to do so.

### **1.2.4. Assumptions about the benefits of networking**

NGOs that have established formal networking relationships have an important advantage over other NGOs in the present tendering scenario. Formal partnerships also provide NGOs with a measure of say in the organisations they will work with on contract projects.

Equitable networking relationships broaden the knowledge and skills base of NGO staff. They also lead to more efficient use of the NGO's expertise and material resources. This results in improved service delivery across a broader geographical area. For example, ECED and a partner NGO utilize each other's educational materials in their respective areas of operation, thus improving service delivery in both regions.

## **1.3. Values-in-use**

### **1.3.1. Assumptions about environmental conditions**

In the present environment NGOs need to network in order to survive. Small, isolated NGOs are not able to sustain themselves, let alone grow and develop as service providers. However, the NGO sector is not a united one, and not all educational NGOs speak a "common [development] language". Nor do all NGOs have similar values about education.

### **1.3.2. Assumptions about NGOs**

NGOs can be distinguished in terms of those that have adapted to the changed environment and those that have not. Staff from non-adapted NGOs are still living in the past, and these NGOs will ultimately not survive.

NGOs need to be discerning in their networking, and should only network with those NGOs that have good reputations. NGO reputation is based on the organisation's service delivery and financial accountability record, and on perceptions about the NGO's leader. Where an NGO leader is resented (or respected) by members of other NGOs, it extends to resentment against (or respect for) the entire NGO.

### 1.3.3. Assumptions about the nature of networking relationships

Many networking relationships are based on personal contacts between individual staff members from different NGOs. Here, the networking relationship is dependent on the individual staff members concerned. When the particular individuals are no longer there, the relationship becomes defunct.

Management held that networking is essentially a strategic business relationship, and is not about NGOs altruistically aiding one another for a common good. They criticised as naive and inappropriate the idealistic, "let's work together because we are all sister organisations" approach to networking.

Networking relationships are negatively affected by the mistrust and resentment that arise from the complicated interrelationship between NGOs, the government, and funders. NGOs are in competition for the attention of the government, and an NGO that has a close relationship with the government finds itself being resented by other NGOs. Furthermore, mistrust is directed against larger NGOs that are able to compete more successfully for tenders. Such mistrust can be overcome with time, and NGOs need to work closely at their networking relationships.

Contract networking relationships are fraught with difficulties that partners have to overcome. Difficulties stem largely from the fact that NGOs which may not share the same values about development are forced to work together. Management held that in order to facilitate better working relations, each partner must clarify their values and how they intend to operate in the consortium at the outset. Consortium work must be structured very carefully. Every networking relationship requires a tight business contract between partners, thus making it clear which partner is responsible for any poor service delivered. NGOs must not be naive about networking partnerships, and partner NGOs must be required to substantiate what they say they can deliver.

The ECED leadership is not prepared to compromise on its development and work principles, and leaders will only enter into consortiums if they are able to determine the relationship ground rules. ECED have the influence to be able to do this because of their good service delivery reputation. In contract networking relationships, specifically, a perception exists that large NGOs tend to dominate consortium activities.

NGO networking is moving in the direction of formally established networking partnerships. However, it is really only possible for financially secure NGOs to engage in this type of networking: "It's possible to establish

formal relationships now that funding is secure. If we were in dire need of funding, the brief from the top would be: 'Don't endanger your own funding to go into a relationship with someone else'.

Formal networking relationships can only be successful between NGOs which consider each other trustworthy and competent, and that have similar values about development.

#### **1.3.4. Assumptions about the benefits of networking**

Networking provides NGO staff with the opportunity to make useful contacts for their work, and their career development. Networking is also a developmental process for staff: "if you meet as NGOs you will always learn something new" and "when we meet [with other NGOs] we grow because we shared ideas". The learning process occurs as much informally (through conversation, observation, and listening), as it does formally through cross-training.

Networking relationships challenge staff. Networking brings them into contact with new ideas that they can integrate into their development practice: "We are working with different participants, they view participants in this way and we view participants in another way. We have different views, so we had to come to a common ground. So it is challenging, but it is good, we enjoy it."

Networking keeps NGOs relevant and strategic in the constantly changing educational environment. For example, at the time that Outcomes Based Education was introduced, ECED did not have the necessary expertise. ECED leaders consequently approached an NGO that they knew had the expertise, and have engaged in a formal networking partnership with that NGO.

Networking can also assist NGOs in adapting business systems to their particular needs. For example, ECED contacts other NGOs, businesses, and government departments, for advice about how to implement particular administrative and information systems. Networking also has certain financial benefits for NGOs. For example, partner NGOs often agree to buy materials from one another at cost.

## **2. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs AND GOVERNMENT**

The assumptions that follow are based predominantly on experiences of interacting with site of learning, district, and regional levels of government.

## **2.1. Artifacts**

### **2.1.1. Assumptions about the government**

The government has a legitimate role to play in the development sector. However, it will not be able to transform the education system without the support and cooperation of professional educational NGOs.

### **2.1.2. Assumptions about the nature of the relationship with the government**

NGOs play the role of critically and constructively supporting the government. Their previous watch-dog role has been tempered by the fact that the government has become legitimate, and NGOs are now more tolerant when educational issues are addressed in a way not strictly to their satisfaction. Nevertheless, it is important that they remain vigilant about government service provision.

NGOs assist the government on a variety of levels - from policy formulation to the implementation of projects. As NGOs have more experience and educational expertise than the government, they play an active role in making policy recommendations and advocating policy changes for education. Joint venture projects are in reality more about NGOs supporting the government, than about the two parties contributing equally. To enable NGOs to continue to support the government, a formal system of communication between the two parties is required. NGO staff must be kept informed of government needs and strategies by serving on government advisory councils and task teams.

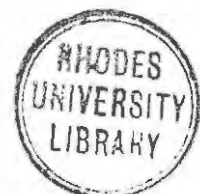
### **2.1.3. Assumptions about the benefits of a cooperative relationship with the government**

A close working relationship between the government and funders on the one hand, and the government and NGOs on the other, will ensure the future financial security of NGOs. A cooperative relationship between NGOs and the government will also lead to improved service delivery in the education sector. NGOs secure additional funding by cooperating with the government, thus enabling them to deliver more effectively. In addition, through working with government officials they build government capacity and this also benefits service delivery.

## **2.2. Espoused Values**

### **2.2.1. Assumptions about the government**

The government is incapable of effective service delivery without the assistance of NGOs. This is partly because government officials lack capacity, but it is also because the educational needs that exist are so



immense, that it would be impossible for the government to meet them all. Government officials recognize that NGOs have an important role to play in the development sector, and are eager to cooperate with NGOs.

The government plays a secondary role to NGOs in the educational sector: "we're paying for government officials to *go with us*" and "if we are not going to support [the government]...*they wouldn't see where we are going*". If NGOs were to pull out of the government projects in which they are involved, they would leave a "whole big hole", as government officials do not have the necessary experience and expertise to run projects.

Furthermore, a shortage of financial reserves paralyses the action of government officials, and this situation is more likely to worsen than improve in the future. The implication is that NGOs will have to continue to support government officials with materials and expertise.

### **2.2.2. Assumptions about the nature of the relationship with the government**

NGOs are no longer an opposition voice to the government. The two parties are now working towards the same end: "We are working for the same communities that the government is working for." It is also unnecessary for NGOs to compete with the government in the education sector as there is a great deal of development work to be done.

### **2.2.3. Assumptions about the benefits of a cooperative relationship with the government**

It is strategic for NGOs to support the government, as their support is likely to result in continued funding for the government, and thus increased levels of funding for NGOs.

## **2.3. Values-in-use**

### **2.3.1. Assumptions about the government**

Staff in professional educational NGOs have a better understanding of implementation in education than do government officials. This is why NGO service provision is superior to government service provision. In addition, provincial governments do not have the financial resources to honour their service provision commitments.

Government officials recognize the need to work closely with NGOs, and provincial government policy is very influenced by NGO input. Officials prefer to concentrate their dealings on "reliable" NGOs. Reliable NGOs tend to be large NGOs, as it is due to an NGO's large staff size that they are able to be consistent about assisting government officials.

One set of assumptions about government officials at all levels, was that educational NGOs can expect very little contribution to the development process from government officials. Officials are presumed to be operating out of their depth, having been introduced into a completely new working environment without the necessary skills to cope, and to be incapable of managing funder monies responsibly.

Another set of assumptions revealed a different perspective on government officials. Certain participants held that government officials have the potential (if not the present capacity) to perform competently at their jobs, but that their development is being undermined by the ECED leadership. The assumption was that the leadership has created a dependency relationship, and government officials have become unnecessarily reliant on ECED. At present, when faced with a particular problem, officials call on ECED to deal with it, and no longer even attempt to work out project details carefully. The ECED leadership do not allow government officials too much responsibility, and some participants considered this problematic because "you've got to allow [government officials] the opportunity otherwise they'll never get it off the ground".

### **2.3.2. Assumptions about the nature of the relationship with the government**

Up to a provincial level, the personal contact phenomenon operates pervasively, and accounts for the close relationship between NGO staff and government officials. Having former NGO staff now working for the government makes an important contribution to a good relationship with the government. A good relationship is highly dependent on the particular people in the two structures at any one time.

NGOs are a great deal more supportive of the government than vice versa. The only thing NGOs require from the government is funding. The changed funding scenario has resulted in NGOs having to continually bolster their provincial government because "the government needs to be seen [by funders] to be delivering". Given that the government is incapable of service delivery without NGO assistance, if NGOs do not assist the government, funders will withdraw their support and NGOs will lose out.

Bolstering the government necessitates a certain amount of subterfuge on the part of NGOs. Although ECED leaders do a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work for the government, they are careful to be seen by funders as the junior partner in the NGO-government relationship. NGOs are essentially leading from behind, but have to avoid being seen as driving the government.

### **2.3.3. Assumptions about the benefits of a cooperative relationship with the government**

Through assisting government officials, NGOs have a direct input into government policy formation and service provision. A cooperative relationship with the government also ensures that NGOs can keep government officials informed about specific community needs that require their attention. NGOs have a crucial role to play

in promoting the relationship between the government and communities - for example, in the easing of education department officials back into the schools.

A cooperative relationship ensures that NGOs and the government are able to rationalize their service delivery and avoid duplication of one another's work. NGOs have well-established service provision infrastructures, and instead of having to develop their own, the government is able to utilize these. Lastly, a cooperative relationship results in the empowerment of government officials. For example, having officials attend NGO training workshops teaches them how to facilitate their own training workshops.

### **3. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FUNDERS AND THE FUNDING SCENARIO**

#### **3.1. Artifacts**

##### **3.1.1. Assumptions about the funding scenario**

Although it is difficult for NGOs to obtain funding in the present funding scenario, it is certainly not impossible if staff simply work at it. In the past NGOs were not used to having to work to obtain funding, and what is required is a change in the amount of effort devoted to securing funding. The present funding scenario is unlikely to improve for NGOs, and they must therefore adopt long-term strategies to increase their self-generated incomes. Strategies include marketing their skills and materials, and charging consultancy fees.

##### **3.1.2. Assumptions about funders**

Funders require impeccable reporting and accountability from NGOs. They also require that NGOs have organisational systems that will enable them to operate smoothly and effectively. An NGO's past practice is important to funders. NGOs need to continually demonstrate timeous delivery of quality projects in order to maintain their present funding, and secure further funding. Funders will not continue to fund an NGO regardless of the erratic quality of their service delivery.

##### **3.1.3. Assumptions about the nature of the funding relationship**

The relationship between funders and NGOs is fundamentally one of NGO dependence on funders. However, there is also an element of negotiation involved in obtaining funding, and throughout the relationship.

## **3.2. Espoused Values**

### **3.2.1. Assumptions about the funding scenario**

The present funding scenario necessitates that NGOs track environmental trends, operate in a strategic and organised manner, and be proactive and competitive about obtaining funding. NGOs can no longer be complacent and wait for funding to come to them, because "it doesn't work like that any more".

Funders prefer to fund NGOs with proven service delivery records and efficient organisational infrastructures. NGO staff should bear in mind the future implications of each service provision project, as word travels between funders. Delivering an extraordinary service may result in additional funding for an NGO, as other funders may notice the good service delivered and approach the NGO with additional funding.

### **3.2.2. Assumptions about funders**

Funders require that NGOs are financially accountable. In order to be financially accountable, NGOs need to have business systems (such as administrative and financial management) in place. Conducting frequent evaluations and writing regular reports are ways in which NGOs can demonstrate their accountability.

Funders and NGOs do not always share the same ideas about development. Funders generally look for impact in numbers, that is, the highest number of people an NGO can train in the shortest possible time. NGO staff should not allow their development beliefs to be compromised by the limitations of funder project conceptualisation and funding constraints. Staff must take what they can from funders, but should go beyond the requirements of a project if they consider it necessary for the delivery of an effective service.

### **3.2.3. Assumptions about the nature of the funding relationship**

The funding relationship is one of mutual influence, of give and take - "you offer something while asking something". When approaching funders, NGOs must be able to demonstrate that they are engaged in meeting community needs.

A consequence of the funding relationship is that NGOs tailor certain of their activities to meet funder expectations. NGOs have to be flexible enough to adapt to funder expectations in order to secure funding. ECED is strategic about offering their services to funders: "you know a certain funder will only fund curriculum development, so you only offer them curriculum development." NGOs must work at the funding relationship in order to keep it smooth.

Public relations (P.R.) is an important element of the funding relationship. Keeping funders satisfied necessitates that NGOs engage in P.R. activities. An example at ECED would be bringing funders to the NGO and showing them around the various projects.

### **3.3. Values-in-use**

#### **3.3.1. Assumptions about the funding scenario**

Funding is hard to come by, and NGOs need to "sell" themselves to funders. NGOs must be proactive about seeking out funders and bringing them to the organisation. Once there, staff must pay close attention to "where funders think their money should be going", and follow up with written proposals. NGOs also need to be persistent and follow up on funders.

In the present funding scenario, NGOs must operate like businesses. This is particularly important as one of the trends in the funding environment is that many funders are appointing NGOs as fund managing agents.

#### **3.3.2. Assumptions about funders**

Funders want to see NGOs engaging in affirmative action. As a result there is (what some staff members perceive to be) a certain amount of window-dressing for funders. For example, "When we take funders on site visits...you have to be there because you are black. The white person won't [conduct the tour] even though she is the one who works there."

Funders judge NGOs primarily on the services they deliver, thus NGOs need to keep the quality of their work constant in order to maintain their funding: "It's only as good as the work you did yesterday. If you foul up, then you know they're not going to look at the work that you've done in the last six months, but if you foul up yesterday, then that's what they're going to look for."

Certain funders do not understand the current education field, and consequently they have negative attitudes towards certain NGO projects (e.g. Outcomes Based Education). However, these negative attitudes can be turned around by having funders visit the NGO, as NGO staff can make funders "see things differently".

#### **3.3.3. Assumptions about the nature of the funding relationship**

NGO management can build up a good informal relationship with their funders over a period of time. Both parties have a role to play in ensuring a good working relationship. NGOs need to "do what they promise to do", be financially accountable, and keep funders informed through regular report-writing. For their part,

funders should set strict deadlines, and provide clear guidelines about what they require from NGO staff. The funding relationship is a negotiated one, and NGOs must be assertive with funders. ECED management assumes that they can usually get more money out of a funder than they are originally advanced. NGOs must simply be bold enough to ask, and demonstrate that they are delivering an effective service. Entertaining funders does not have a significant impact on NGO funding. The public relations interventions that do impact on funding include organisational and site visits.

#### **4. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP IN NGOs**

The assumptions about leadership that follow are based on assumptions about ECED managers and their leadership behaviour. The words leadership and management are used interchangeably, as participants used the words in this manner, and understood the concepts to have the same meaning. The assumptions relate primarily to the Director, and to a lesser extent to the Deputy-Director and project leaders.

##### **4.1. Artifacts**

###### **4.1.1. Assumptions about NGO leaders**

Educational NGO leaders must have a clear vision about the role their organisation has to play in education. The most important leadership task in NGOs is engaging in strategic planning, which requires that leaders be knowledgeable about their environment. Their awareness should incorporate the education and NGO sectors, the government and politics, and "communities".

Leaders are competent individuals who are known to deliver. They should possess a high level of responsibility for education and development. This implies that leaders should be professionals, as responsibility comes with being a professional. Furthermore, good leaders are concerned about their staff and endeavour to develop staff capacity through various HRD interventions.

###### **4.1.2. Assumptions about the leadership at ECED**

The ECED leadership values democracy and operates in a participative manner. The participative management structures that exist within the organisation are effective, and are popular with staff.

The leadership are drawing affirmative action candidates into the management structures, and ECED leaders recognize and respect the cultural diversity of the NGO staff. In fact, they actively build on it to strengthen the organisation.

## **4.2. Espoused Values**

### **4.2.1. Assumptions about NGO leaders**

One of the most important qualities of good NGO leaders is that they are able to make effective decisions. The ability to make good and timeous decisions is crucial in an NGO leader, as it expedites effective service delivery.

### **4.2.2. Assumptions about participative management structures**

Participative management structures are difficult to implement when an NGO has a very strong-willed and powerful leader. However, it is in exactly such cases that participative structures are most needed, as it is problematic when power rests too heavily with a leader.

Democracy (in the form of participative management structures) does not necessarily advance the process of a leader making good decisions. The director of an NGO should always have the final say in organisational decision making. Indeed, staff in the ECED participative management structures are unable to oversee smooth service delivery without the advice and input of the Director.

According to management, NGO leadership structures can never be perfect as they are continually having to evolve to meet the requirements of the changing environment. Management did however identify an NGO trend towards flattened leadership structures, with a more even distribution of authority across staff.

## **4.3. Values-in-use**

### **4.3.1. Assumptions about NGO leaders**

Educational NGO leaders should have a vision about the contribution that their NGO can make to educational development. Such a vision needs to be closely combined with careful and strategic organisational planning.

A staff participant, with experience in ECED participative management structures, held that managers are more knowledgeable than staff, and have a different way of thinking to staff. This is because as managers they have an opportunity to comprehend the "broader picture", for example about the funding situation, and to understand the reasoning behind certain organisational policy decisions.

#### **4.3.2. Assumptions about the leadership at ECED**

The ECED leadership is very independent and self-reliant. Occasionally this is to a fault, because as a consequence they often fail to delegate sufficiently, or make optimal use of their support staff. ECED management are intolerant of the staff viewpoint: "There is a tendency for managers to forget that people who are not in management don't understand the premise that management moves from." Furthermore, some participants assumed that there is a lack of downward communication about the reasoning behind decision making. Other participants contradicted this, assuming that ECED leadership is totally transparent, and that there is substantial verbal and written downward communication. Their assumption was that the problem lies in one of the differences between management and staff: "The level of understanding is not the same, and it is impossible for the person at the lowest level of the organisation to understand exactly [why decisions are made]."

Certain participants assumed that because participative structures exist at ECED, participative management is occurring. However, other participants held that the structures are participative in name only, because the Director dominates participative meetings and staff do not have a real opportunity to contribute. It was widely (but not exclusively) held that the ECED Director lacks real commitment to staff participation, and that there is no real incorporation of staff views into policy decision making. The fact that the Director periodically overrides participative structures (e.g. task teams and advisory committees) suggests that she does not feel bound by them.

#### **4.3.3. Assumptions about participative management structures**

NGOs must rely on management structures rather than individual leaders. Participative structures are necessary to ensure that an NGO survives regardless of the particular leader in place: "We need to build up a strong management structure that will survive irrespective of who the leader is."

There were certain participants who assumed that participative decision making is not necessarily desirable. This assumption was based on a variety of considerations, such as: it is not always possible for people to reach consensus; consensus-reaching is a time-consuming process, and certain service provision decisions need to be made very quickly; and staff are often not in a position to be able to contribute knowledgeably to policy decision making.

There were differing assumptions about the effectiveness of ECED participative management structures. Senior management felt that staff are content with the structures and make good use of them. However, the majority of staff expressed dissatisfaction with the structures. They felt that staff concerns are neither listened to, nor taken seriously, and that staff are not given any real power to exercise in these structures.

A few staff members assumed that the participative structures are no risk to senior management's authority, that the structures do not deal with "the" issues, and that the Director makes her own decisions about important organisational issues. The structures were seen as an attempt to disguise the uneven distribution of power within ECED: "It's a body from within, it will never work out...[it will never be able to influence decision making]. It will never represent the needs of the workers to the full." A couple of staff members assumed that a trade union is the only body that would enable staff to effectively influence organisational policy on matters such as salary scales and affirmative action.

#### 4.3.4. Assumptions about cultural diversity at ECED

Certain participants assumed that the leadership is failing to adequately deal with the cultural diversity, and conflicting interests, that exist amongst ECED staff. The Director seems to believe that the organisation is like a family, but one participant had this to say: "'At ECED we are a family' [the participant quotes the Director]. We are not a family. We have such diverse interests...we are not interacting. They say there is a family and it's not there, it's not working."

The diversity experienced is based on racial differences: "it's about not seeing things the same way, more than just having diverse interests" and "we're looking at issues from different angles". These participants felt that a racial division exists at ECED: "There's a separation, I don't know how to describe it."

The difficulties associated with cultural diversity were assumed to be exacerbated by the fact that the ECED senior leadership is white: "White people are in the leadership, so it's difficult for them to think the way we think." When issues that divide staff along racial lines arise, this difference in thinking is particularly problematic: "Sometimes they think that we are aggressive and negative. Yet we are saying the same things, just differently." Some participants assumed that when black staff members criticise a particular decision of the (white) Director, it is unfairly perceived that they are creating a racial issue, and that they do not have ECED's interests at heart.

There was also an assumption that because the dominant NGO culture is Eurocentric, certain organisational policies are devised without due consideration to cultural differences. For example, the ECED staff leave policy provides paid compassionate leave only in the event of the death of a member of staff's nuclear family, not their extended family.

#### 4.3.5. Assumptions about affirmative action at ECED

Certain participants assumed that the ECED leadership lack commitment to affirmative action, and that the efforts that have been made have merely been attempts at window-dressing. Other participants assumed that

the ECED leadership is very committed to affirmative action, and is making a genuine effort to engage in it. A further assumption held was that because the Director is very conscious about being a white leader of an NGO, she tends to accede to staff demands about affirmative action that do not comply with the ECED affirmative action policy.

## **5. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) IN NGOs**

### **5.1. Artifacts**

Human resource development is specifically a job related process. Its desired outcome is to increase the organisation's human resource capacity for the benefit of the NGO.

#### **5.1.1. Assumptions about how HRD occurs**

One of the main functions of an NGO's leadership is to support the human resource development of their staff. However, leaders cannot ensure that HRD will occur, as each individual determines the extent of their own development. NGO staff possess the desire to develop themselves, and the capacity to identify their own development needs. Staff also aspire to become professionals. The process of becoming a professional is an exercise in HRD, because it leads to the development of responsibility in staff. Professionalization occurs primarily through staff obtaining professional educational qualifications.

HRD can occur in an informal manner through group-work processes. Group discussion processes are particularly important for facilitating the integration of new staff members, and for enabling junior staff to learn from senior staff. HRD also occurs through staff participation in organisational operations such as strategic planning, task teams, and participative management structures.

There are a number of specific interventions that lead to HRD. Affirmative action programmes are an example of an intervention designed to develop and promote staff who have been denied growth opportunities on the grounds of race. Career development reviews and training programmes also promote human resource development.

#### **5.1.2. Assumptions about the benefits of HRD**

On an individual level, human resource development programmes foster and support competence, well-being, and self-esteem in staff. On an organisational level, HRD is essential for continued NGO survival and competitiveness. HRD enhances job performance which in turn improves organisational efficiency and service delivery, thus helping to secure funding.

## 5.2. Espoused Values

Two different sets of assumptions about the meaning and primary aim of HRD emerged. One assumption was that HRD is something that one "does", the aim being to improve work performance. For example, "There are actually chunks of time that everyone in ECED will be *doing* human resource development." The second assumption was that HRD is an on-going process, aimed at giving staff the opportunity to develop beyond the confines of their job description. Here the primary focus is not on developing the individual's ability to improve job performance.

### 5.2.1. Assumptions about how HRD occurs

NGO leadership plays a role in HRD by giving staff the opportunity to engage in their own development. Two differing assumptions about staff, and their approach to their own development, emerged. The first assumption was that not all staff are equally competent and accountable for their actions, and that not all staff make full use of their HRD opportunities. The second assumption was that staff have a great deal of (leadership) potential, and when given the opportunity to demonstrate it they perform very well.

HRD is encouraged by the informal ethos of sharing (knowledge, skills, and expertise) that exists amongst ECED staff. Staff participation, particularly in participative management structures, also facilitates human resource development, as do formal interventions such as holistic training. A personal growth component is an essential aspect of any HRD training, as the personal growth process enables staff to become more effective in their jobs. NGOs should be self-reliant about HRD training and must attempt to conduct most of it themselves.

### 5.2.2. Assumptions about the benefits of HRD

HRD benefits the individual staff member by building their capacity. On an organisational level, a benefit of HRD is that it can contribute towards the cost-effective use of human resources, and thus improve organisational efficiency. The reasoning behind the ECED multi-skilling programme is an illustration of this assumption.

HRD has important benefits in terms of service delivery. The assumption emerged that NGOs must have well-developed human resources of their own in order to deliver effective services to clients. This assumption is captured in the ECED saying: "Look after your children first, before you can satisfy someone else."

### 5.3. Values-in-use

#### 5.3.1. Assumptions about how HRD occurs

Successful HRD requires a caring, supportive, and developmental organisational climate, and this is something that a leadership engenders. Leaders can also encourage HRD by persuading their staff to critically reflect on their work practice, and their approach to problem solving. This empowers staff to become independent thinkers, and discourages constant reliance on their leaders for direction. The primary manner in which staff can engage in their own HRD is through part-time study for work-related tertiary qualifications, or through attending work-related seminars and courses.

HRD occurs through the process of formal group discussions held in task teams; workshops; and project, participative management, and staff meetings. It also occurs through informal group discussions, particularly where more experienced staff advise new staff. Informal discussions are as important a means of learning as "learning that is put together as formal training".

Staff participation leads to human resource development. Here development occurs because staff are being allowed to assume responsibility for organisational policy issues. Examples include staff participation in task teams, participative management structures, and strategic planning. Participation is empowering because staff feel that they have a stake in the organisation, and are part of determining the direction in which the NGO moves: "You feel that you are part of the strategic planning - not to sit there and be told what to do. You really see that when something happens the following year - this is our plan. Not that this is what the project leader told us to do."

HRD also occurs through staff gaining an insight into the reasons behind management decision making. This insight is gained through staff involvement in management structures. The consequence is that: "You [staff] tend to do things differently if you get enough knowledge and training and background in [management thinking]." Holistic training also enhances HRD. However, certain participants assumed that the training conducted by ECED management and staff is of a lower quality than the training conducted by external consultants.

#### 5.3.2. Assumptions about the benefits of HRD

HRD is beneficial not only because it develops work-related skills, but also because it is personally enriching. In addition, HRD prepares the individual for any future positions they may hold: "If you're going out of ECED you need to go out well-developed, so that at least you can get a better post outside."

Both management and staff assumed that multi-skilling led to improved service delivery, but for different reasons. The management assumption was that multi-skilling is a means of utilizing staff more efficiently, because they become competent at more than one job. However, staff held that multi-skilling is not done thoroughly enough to enable them to competently perform another person's job. For staff, because multi-skilling gives them a better insight into other parts of the NGO, they come to respect the value of other staff members' work. This leads to improved work relations, and consequently to better service delivery.

### **5.3.3. Difficulties in the practice of HRD at ECED**

The rationale behind certain forms of staff training is not always thought through carefully enough. Staff held that, while certain types of training were interesting and increased their knowledge, they would never be able to use it for the NGO's benefit. Some participants also assumed that a number of HRD principles are not put into practice.

Certain difficulties appeared to undermine the process of staff participation at ECED. For example, the Director's leadership style occasionally discourages the process of HRD. Staff in task teams feel undermined and resentful when the Director "puts on hold" or alters (without consent) staff suggestions that differ from her way of thinking.

Finally, there is a lack of adequate HRD opportunities for middle management. The reason for this is either that ECED's HRD programmes are below management's level of sophistication, or that middle managers have no career development prospects: "All project leaders can do to increase their responsibilities is expand their projects. Building yourself up that way; but other than that, there's nothing you can do."

## **6. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NGO SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **6.1. Artifacts**

#### **6.1.1 Organisational factors that encourage efficient service delivery**

NGOs must have a clear organisational vision, linked to an overall strategic plan. To be effective, an organisational strategy must be based on knowledge of current environmental trends, the NGO's human resource capacity, and the economic viability of projects. Strategic planning involves setting realistic service delivery objectives, deciding on outcomes for projects, and determining delivery time-frames for each objective. Fund-raising strategies are also an integral component of strategic planning.

An NGO must continually monitor and evaluate the quality of its service delivery. Evaluation enables an NGO to regularly reality check its service delivery objectives, and determine their relevance to the constantly changing environment. Educational NGO staff must constantly keep themselves abreast of developments in education. Individual staff members must also be accountable for the work they produce, and clearly defined job descriptions and lines of responsibility are essential for this purpose. NGO staff should operate in a responsible and professional manner, as working with communities demands that decisions of a moral and ethical nature need to be made on a daily basis.

#### **6.1.2. Assumptions related to development theories and approaches**

Human development cannot occur unless the context in which the individual exists is addressed. Schools exist within communities, and educational NGOs must attempt to alleviate some of the constraints in the learner's broader environment.

All human beings are equally deserving of dignity and respect, and every person has potential that can be fostered. NGOs must work in equal partnership with the communities they serve, and clients should be full participants in project decision making.

People are empowered by knowledge, and not only by the knowledge gained through formal education. Knowledge can be developed informally, and every person has the ability to contribute to this process. Capacity building occurs through encouraging independent and creative thinking in people, through skills training, and through the provision of educational resources to clients.

#### **6.1.3. Assumptions about practical steps in the service delivery process**

The context in which learners exist influences their ability to learn, which is why ECED has a policy of whole-school-community development. NGO staff need to work closely with communities in order to be sensitive to their needs. NGO programmes, including monitoring and evaluation procedures, must be flexible enough to adapt to the variety of client needs identified.

NGO educational programme content must be appropriate to the multi-cultural context in which clients exist. Thus South African materials must be multi-lingual and free of bias. NGO staff must be realistic about client capabilities, and clients should be allowed to work at their own pace and according to their individual abilities.

## **6.2. Espoused Values**

### **6.2.1. Organisational factors that encourage efficient service delivery**

NGOs require good organisational systems that are appropriate to the demands of the NGO sector. Any system an NGO may have had in the past probably needs to be changed, strengthened, or expanded to suit the present context.

### **6.2.2. Assumptions related to development theories and approaches**

Development must be an integrated, holistic approach; people's needs must be addressed by taking their environment into account. Therefore, although ECED's primary focus is the school, they also keep the broader community context in mind.

NGO services must be appropriate to the African context. NGO staff need to respect client values, and should never attempt to "change or make better" in Western terms. Service providers need to be sensitive to the effects on South African communities of the high levels of social change. Communities are in a fragile state at present, and trying to change them too much would be damaging to them.

People are the cornerstone of the development process. NGO staff should build on their strengths and abilities, and should tap local knowledge. Clients need to be made to understand that the knowledge they possess is valuable, and that an individual's worth is not determined by the measure of Western knowledge (e.g. literacy) they possess. Clients must also be provided with educational material resources for the period after the NGO has left, thus empowering them to continue with projects on their own.

### **6.2.3. Assumptions about practical steps in the service delivery process**

NGOs must be proactive and approach communities to conduct needs analyses with them, rather than waiting for communities to approach them. NGOs should never impose their perspective of a community's needs on clients or funders, and must always work according to their clients' pace of development.

All NGO projects must be evaluated, and NGO clients are the only ones in a position to do so. It is irresponsible of NGOs not to evaluate their services, as a community need can be met by any type of service, but that does not necessarily mean that it is being met very well. The materials that NGOs develop must be appropriate to the specific geographic and cultural context. Furthermore, materials should be anti-bias, in terms of the depiction of race, gender, and disabilities.

## 6.3 Values-in-use

### 6.3.1. Organisational factors that encourage efficient service delivery

Good organisational infrastructures (e.g. a centralised administrative function), business systems, and well-defined job descriptions all facilitate efficient service delivery. Systems need to be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. NGOs must engage in strategic planning. It provides focus and direction for the organisation; and puts in place a process of on-going evaluation (on an individual, project, and organisational level), thus enabling the NGO to constantly monitor its service delivery progress.

A motivated, committed, and hard-working staff contributes enormously to effective service delivery: "At ECED a lot of staff are very keen...they know the value of the work that they are doing and that is quite a motivator for them." The process of staff collaboration, by reviewing and critiquing one another's work, also contributes to the delivery of a better NGO service.

The contribution of an individual staff member, particularly a field-worker, has the potential to make a real difference to the quality of an NGO's service delivery. The field-worker's role is a vital one because "they are out there seeing what happens". NGO staff must keep themselves abreast of current trends in administration, technology, and education. They must also remain flexible in their approach to work - for example, being able to accommodate staff from other NGOs in networking situations.

The contribution that a competent and well-organised NGO leadership makes to effective service delivery should not be underestimated. Leaders must be able to communicate clearly with their staff and give them guidance. When guidance is not forthcoming: "...it's quite difficult. Staff need to know what's required of them...and it's hard to know which direction to go into." Furthermore, because project work is so spread out, leaders must succeed in building a sense of team spirit to enable project staff to work together successfully.

### 6.3.2. Assumptions related to development theories and approaches

Development can only occur when people take responsibility for their own development. NGO staff must avoid creating a relationship where clients become dependent on them. Staff must try to enhance their clients' critical thinking skills, thus improving their ability to adjust to adverse situations. Clients must also participate in the formulation and implementation of NGO projects. There should be a constant two-way flow of knowledge, information, and ideas between NGO staff and their clients. For example, curriculum development at ECED is a process of constant consultation and feedback between clients, field-workers, and curriculum developers.

NGO services need to be appropriate to the local context, and educational NGO staff must develop materials with their clients in mind, rather than using "something from overseas that's got no relevance to them whatsoever".

### 6.3.3. Assumptions about practical steps in the service delivery process

NGOs must never impose themselves on a community. Communities should always be consulted as to whether they desire the services of an NGO: "ECED never goes in from the position of 'We've got it and we're going to come'". After obtaining the consent of the community, an NGO must work in equal partnership with it. NGOs must avoid creating a dependency relationship with clients. In this regard, they should plan an exit strategy at the start of every project, and encourage clients to do what is necessary in order to ensure the sustainability of the project after the NGO leaves.

Services need to be evaluated to determine whether they are reaching their target. Indicators of effective service delivery vary according to project, and include: when clients are empowered to empower others; client usage of a particular service, for example attendance at workshops and use of the resource library; and when ECED is reaching out into the "very remote areas".

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS - PHASE TWO ANALYSIS

This section of the results is focused on analysing the consistencies and contradictions that emerged between assumptions within each of the six areas of NGO functioning, across the three data sets. The consistencies presented are those assumptions that are particularly significant in the present NGO context. The contradictions reflect those basic assumptions undergoing a process of transformation due to the changing NGO environment.

#### 1. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NETWORKING BETWEEN NGOs

##### 1.1. Consistencies

Due to the changed funding scenario, networking has become a survival decision. Small, isolated NGOs will not survive in the current environment. The primary benefits of networking are improved NGO adaptation to their environments, and enhanced service delivery.

##### 1.2. Contradictions

Contradicting assumptions emerged about the manner in which networking is constructed. Management tended to assume that networking is primarily a strategic business relationship: a means of being better able to compete for tenders, adapt to the changing environment, and accrue financial benefits. Staff, on the other hand, assumed that NGO networking is primarily about "sister organisations" empowering one another, and larger NGOs building up smaller ones. One participant held an assumption that seemed to bridge the gap between these two positions. She held that networking is primarily about survival, but when an NGO is comfortable with its funding position, then staff can do developmental work in other NGOs.

#### 2. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs AND GOVERNMENT

##### 2.1. Consistencies

The South African government is incapable of transforming the education system without the support of educational NGOs. The government is a legitimate, but secondary, role player in the education sector. The government's secondary status is due to its lack of both money and competent officials. There are important strategic benefits for NGOs in having a cooperative relationship with the government. Central among these are increased funding and improved service delivery.

## **2.2. Contradictions**

A complex power dynamic exists between NGOs and the government. Their relationship is at once a cooperative, supportive, and dependent one. The two parties collaborate on joint project ventures and NGOs assist the government in terms of expertise and resources, yet NGOs are dependent on the government in the sense that the government pays them for services rendered.

A number of conflicting assumptions emerged pertaining to how participants conceptualized ECED's relationship with the government. The assumption that emerged from the artifacts was that NGOs have a critically supportive, watch-dog role to play in relation to the government. In the espoused values section, the critical element has been lost, and the assumption emerges that NGOs are no longer an opposition voice to the government. The prevailing assumption from the values-in-use section is that NGOs must play a supportive role in relation to the government.

## **3. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FUNDERS AND THE FUNDING SCENARIO**

### **3.1. Consistencies**

NGO funding has by no means dried up. There is sufficient funding for NGOs to access, they must simply be proactive about seeking it out. Obtaining funding requires that NGOs are hard-working, persistent, efficient, and strategic. Specific strategies include arranging funder visits to the NGO, developing a good reputation for service delivery, and increasing the NGO's self-generated income level. In order to retain funding, NGOs must be financially and operationally accountable to funders. This requires organisational efficiency, hence the necessity of having appropriate business systems in place.

### **3.2. Contradictions**

A tension emerged between the actual and desired nature of the funding relationship. On the one hand, ECED is making a concerted effort to develop an equitable relationship with their funders, and it appears to be succeeding to a large degree. Assumptions that the funding relationship is a negotiated one of mutual influence, and that NGOs should be assertive with their funders, are indicative of this success.

On the other hand, assumptions that reflect the unequal and dependent nature of the funding relationship persist. For example, that NGOs must engage in public relations activities for funders, and that NGOs have to work to keep funders satisfied - with the implication that the converse does not obtain.

## **4. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP IN NGOs**

### **4.1. Consistencies**

Assumptions about the desired qualities of NGO leaders were consistent across all three data sets. NGO leaders must be knowledgeable about their environment and its constant changes. They should have a clear vision of the role that their organisation can play in development, and they must be able to plan strategically in order to realize that vision.

### **4.2. Contradictions**

The following analysis of contradictions focuses on broad NGO leadership issues, rather than on the differing perspectives about the ECED leadership. However, given that such profound contradictions relating to the ECED leadership emerged, the researcher considers it necessary to provide possible explanations.

#### **4.2.1. Contradictions about the ECED leadership**

The assumptions emerging from artifacts and espoused values tended to contradict values-in-use assumptions. In order to understand this trend, one must consider the data sources drawn on, and data collection techniques employed. Artifact data derived essentially from a management perspective, while values-in-use data was derived from all participant categories. The contradiction between espoused values and values-in-use assumptions can be understood by taking into account the social desirability effect in the focus group, and the fact that participants felt more free to express themselves in their individual interviews.

#### **4.2.2. Contradictions about participative management structures**

The set of assumptions that supported the existence of participative management structures was based on process and principle concerns. For example, NGOs should rely on management structures and not individual leaders; power should not be concentrated in a director; and there should be an even distribution of authority across an organisation.

The perspective that did not support the existence of participative management structures was based more on strategy and product concerns. Assumptions included: democracy does not advance leadership decision making; consensus-reaching is time-consuming and certain service delivery decisions need to be made quickly; and staff do not always have the capacity to contribute knowledgeably to decision making.

#### **4.2.3. Contradictions about racial tension and cultural diversity**

Certain participants held that no racial tension exists at ECED, and that the organisation is like a family. This assumption was in conflict with the assumption that racial tension does exist, and that black and white staff at ECED have different ways of thinking. Only black participants raised the issue of racial tension, and they were the exclusive holders of the latter assumption. No white participants raised the issue, and when asked by the researcher, did not acknowledge that any racial tension existed at ECED.

The participants who held that racial tension exists at ECED, also assumed that the ECED leadership fails to recognize and adequately deal with the conflicting staff interests that result from cultural diversity. This assumption is in conflict with the artifact assumption that the ECED leadership recognizes cultural diversity, and is building on it in order to strengthen the organisation.

#### **4.2.4. Contradictions about affirmative action**

Contradicting assumptions about affirmative action were again divided along racial lines. Three contradicting assumptions about the ECED leadership's commitment to affirmative action emerged. First, leadership lacks genuine commitment to affirmative action, and its efforts to date have merely been attempts at window-dressing. Second, the ECED leadership is genuinely committed to affirmative action, but the policy is simply not working yet. Third, the leadership is extreme in its commitment to affirmative action, such that the Director accedes to demands not in compliance with ECED's affirmative action policy.

The contradiction between the first and second assumption is based on differing beliefs about the availability of affirmative action candidates. Black participants believed that suitable candidates are available, but that they are being overlooked. White participants assumed that while the ECED leadership is committed to affirmative action, the reason why it is not working is that there are insufficient suitable candidates from which to draw.

### **5. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) IN NGOs**

#### **5.1. Consistencies**

HRD can only occur when individuals take responsibility for their own development. The most important way in which staff can facilitate their own development is by obtaining advanced educational qualifications. Holistic training is the most important formally designed NGO HRD intervention, but informal organisational processes, such as staff participation and group-work discussions, also result in HRD.

## **5.2. Contradictions**

### **5.2.1. Contradictions about the primary aim of HRD**

A management-held assumption was that HRD is primarily aimed at benefitting the organisation through improved staff work performance. This pragmatic view was in opposition to the staff-held assumption that the primary aim of HRD is individual personal enrichment, and the opportunity for staff to develop beyond the confines of their job description.

This contradiction explains why certain participants, who held the second assumption, felt that HRD policies are not always put into practice. Management is required to balance HRD principles with financial constraints, and to consider the overall good of the organisation. Therefore, due to financial considerations, management may prevent a staff member from attending a course that would benefit her.

### **5.2.2. Contradictions about the nature of HRD**

A lack of consensus about the nature of HRD emerged between management and staff participants. This lack of consensus becomes particularly problematic when ECED management puts forward certain processes as HRD exercises. For example, while management (and certain staff members) consider staff involvement in strategic planning to be an HRD exercise, not all staff agree. Having management espouse the view that they are using staff involvement as an exercise in HRD leads to staff discontent.

## **6. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NGO SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **6.1. Consistencies**

The human component, in the form of leaders and individual staff members, plays a vital role in effective service delivery. The structural component of the organisation is also important - business systems, organisational evaluation, and strategic planning in particular. Both components need to be flexible enough to adapt to the constantly changing environment. NGO leaders and staff must keep themselves abreast of environmental trends, and evaluation should be employed to constantly reality-check organisational objectives.

NGO staff must take into consideration the environment in which their clients exist. This assumption is reflected in ECED's policy of whole-school-community development, and in their policy of developing educational materials appropriate to the particular geographic and cultural context. NGO staff must also be sensitive to the effects of social change. This requires that they work according to the client's pace of development, and avoid initiating changes from a Western perspective. Finally, tapping local knowledge,

encouraging critical thinking skills in clients, and having clients participate in project decision making, were all highlighted as important practical steps in the service delivery process.

## **6.2. Contradictions**

### **6.2.1. Contradictions about the relationship between NGOs and their clients**

ECED staff aspire to work in equal partnership with their clients, but are constrained by the power differential between the two parties. Assumptions such as the need for NGO staff to avoid clients becoming dependent on them testify to the inequality of the relationship.

Attempts have been made to equalize the relationship. For example, it is assumed that NGOs should not impose themselves on clients, but rather first obtain their sanction; that NGO staff should not impose their perspective of client needs, but let clients determine their own needs; and that clients should participate in project decision making. There is evidence to suggest that an equal partnership has been achieved in certain areas. For instance, curriculum development at ECED consists of a two-way flow of equally valuable knowledge between clients and NGO staff.

### **6.2.2. Contradictions about measuring the effectiveness of NGO services**

The differing assumptions about how service delivery is best evaluated, reflect the process of NGOs coming to terms with having to demonstrate the impact of their services. In the values-in-use section, one of the measures of effective service delivery was whether communities are utilizing the ECED service provided. However, in the espoused values section, the assumption emerged that mere utilization of a service does not necessarily imply effective delivery, as the community may have no access to alternative services.

## CHAPTER 7

### RESULTS - PHASE THREE ANALYSIS

This section of the results focuses on the basic assumptions that emerged across the three data sets and the six areas of functioning, about NGO survival in the changing environment. The analysis explores the transformation that assumptions are undergoing, and the tensions associated with that process. Finally, two sets of assumptions that have significant implications for educational NGO development work are examined.

#### 1. NGO SURVIVAL REQUIRES THAT NGOS ADAPT TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Several assumptions surfaced that reflected the importance placed on NGO adaptation to their environment. For example, an NGO's adaptation parallels its level of capacity; and adaptation to the environment is a means of distinguishing between "old-style" and professional NGOs. It was also held that NGO leadership, staff, and organisational systems should be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

In order to facilitate adaptation to the environment, it was assumed that NGOs need to keep abreast of environmental trends. An assumption such as: what separates ECED from NGOs that are less successful at obtaining funding is that ECED is strategic about examining environmental needs, illustrates this point.

##### 1.1. NGOs must operate professionally

The most important aspect of NGOs operating professionally is being accountable to funders. NGOs need to demonstrate financial accountability, and accountability about services delivered. Accountability requires that NGOs are organisationally efficient, conduct frequent project evaluations, and write regular reports to funders. NGOs should also be organisationally accountable. They require systems which ensure that each staff member is held to account for the work they produce. Hence the stress placed on job descriptions and chains of command.

The notion of the professional educational NGO also implies having a well-developed sense of responsibility. Responsibility is uniquely emphasised in the NGO context because NGOs are responsible for human development. NGO staff are working with people's lives and futures, changing and developing them, and it is therefore vital that NGO staff are certain about what they are doing.

##### 1.2. NGOs must operate like businesses

The new breed of South African NGOs have a strong business orientation. This orientation came through in

a number of areas. For instance, in networking relationships being constructed primarily as business relationships, and in staff being seen primarily as an organisational resource. This emerging orientation is backed by strong business realism. For example, the assumptions that NGO visions must be closely linked to realistic organisational strategies and service delivery objectives; that NGOs should be realistic about financial constraints when planning; and that NGO networking partners must be made to substantiate what they say they can deliver.

The ubiquitous emphasis on NGOs having business systems in place is indicative of the underlying assumption that NGOs must be organisationally efficient to successfully compete for funding. The entire section in Chapter 5 on "Organisational factors that encourage efficient service delivery" illustrates the growing NGO emphasis on business systems, infrastructures, strategic planning, and evaluation.

The transformation to operating like a business has not proceeded entirely smoothly at ECED. For instance, although the assumption existed that business systems must be adapted to suit the NGO context, it appears that certain business ideas are being applied straight from the proverbial textbook. In this regard, multi-skilling has been implemented at ECED, but its theoretically intended benefits have not eventuated.

Furthermore, although the business orientation has thoroughly taken hold with the NGO management, this is far less the case with staff. A good illustration of this is that management constructed networking relationships as strategic business partnerships, while staff tended to think of networking as a process of sister organisations empowering one another.

Each of the following conflicting sets of assumptions are indicative of NGO organisational culture in the process of change. In each example, the first assumption reflects the new business orientated set of assumptions, while the second assumption signifies an increasingly less dominant, but persistent, set of NGO assumptions.

### **1.2.1. Pragmatism vs idealism**

It was assumed that NGOs must operate pragmatically in order to ensure their survival. NGOs must act because it is pragmatic for them to do so, and not because of the principle involved. For example, it is pragmatic for NGOs to network; to have a cooperative relationship with the government; to be proactive about obtaining funding; to engage in HRD; and to develop a good reputation for service delivery, because each of these advances the process of securing funding.

These pragmatic assumptions are in contest with the idealistic assumptions that emerged across several of the six areas. Assumptions such as that networking is primarily aimed at NGOs empowering one another, and that the central aims of HRD are personal enrichment for staff, and developing staff for any future positions they

may hold, reflect the idealistic perspective.

### **1.2.2. Organisational benefit vs individual benefit**

Emerging assumptions that emphasize the importance of the organisational benefit of organisational processes are in tension with assumptions that focus primarily on the individual benefit of these processes. The assumption exists that HRD is important primarily because it benefits the organisation through more efficient service delivery, and thus its ability to secure funding. This is in conflict with another assumption that focuses on the individual benefit of the HRD process. It holds that HRD is important primarily because it results in enhanced personal growth for the individual staff member.

### **1.2.3. Structures vs individuals**

The value of having business structures in place so that processes are not dependent on particular individuals, is gaining wider acceptance. This is illustrated in assumptions supportive of participative management structures. However, an underlying assumption about the value of the individual, rather than the structure, in any process, persists. Here the assumption is that when particular individuals are removed from a process, the process comes unstuck. This was evident in assumptions about networking relationships, relations with the government, and leadership processes.

### **1.2.4. Formally designed procedures vs informal processes**

A process of adjustment to the formality associated with operating like a business is clearly occurring at ECED. Formal organisational policies (e.g. on affirmative action) have been designed, and formal organisational structures (e.g. participative management structures) have been implemented. However, it appears that the ECED leadership is not adhering to the prescriptions of these policies and structures.

ECED management have attempted to formalise the HRD process by introducing holistic training, multi-skilling, and career development reviews. However, staff participants continue to place a high value on informal HRD processes, such as group-work discussions, the sharing ethos, and staff participation. Staff participants assumed that the informal discussions that occur amongst individuals during cross-training are as important as the formal training itself.

The emphasis on informal processes is indicative of an underlying assumption about how people learn and develop. It was widely assumed that the primary means through which people learn are informal discussion processes, observation, and behaviour modelling. The assumption that learning occurs through discussion processes is demonstrated by the emphasis on group-work as a means of new and junior staff learning from

more experienced senior staff. The assumption that people learn through observation and behaviour modelling is illustrated by the view that government officials learn by accompanying NGO staff on site visits, and by sitting in on NGO meetings.

### **1.3. NGOs must be self-reliant and proactive**

Self-reliance and proactivity are both vital to an NGO's survival and continued competitiveness in the present environment. NGOs should conduct their own staff training, rather than relying on external consultants. They must also increase their self-generated incomes in order to become more self-sufficient.

NGOs should adopt a proactive approach to obtaining funding, and not wait for funders to approach them. NGO managers need to seek out funders, write funding proposals, and arrange public relations visits to the organisation. In addition, NGOs must be proactive about initiating formal networking relationships and offering their services to the government.

While it is clearly strategic to be self-reliant and operate proactively, this behaviour is partly the result of a lack of belief in the capacity of other education sector role-players. One of the reasons behind ECED being so proactive is that the leadership tends to assume that nothing will happen unless they make it happen. For example, there is the idea that professional NGOs have a responsibility to "serve as a voice for quality education everywhere". The assumption that underlies this is that NGOs have an obligation to do so because they are the only role-players with the required capacity.

It is important that NGOs maintain a balance of proactivity and self-reliance, as both have the potential to become extreme. For example, the ECED leadership is so proactive in their relationships that they tend to dominate their networking partners, and government officials. Leaders are also so self-reliant that they tend not to make sufficient use of their support staff.

### **1.4. NGOs must cooperate with other NGOs, the government, and funders**

Networking is considered an important means of adapting to the changing environment, and thus a necessity for survival. It is a requirement in the tendering process, and a strong emphasis was placed on NGOs overcoming the competition, resentment, and mistrust that hinders networking relationships.

A cooperative relationship between NGOs and their funders, and NGOs and the government, is assumed to be vital for NGO survival. ECED placed a premium on satisfying funders by being financially accountable, reporting regularly about services delivered, and engaging in open communication with funders. In terms of ECED's relationship with the government, ECED supports the government financially, materially, and with its

expertise. As one participant put it, "[ECED] could have chosen not to [support the government]." The reason it chooses to support the government is because of the spin-offs it receives in funding terms.

The assumption emerged that NGOs consider themselves the most significant role-player in the education sector. Furthermore, that NGOs know more about development and education than both funders and the government. However, the reality is that NGOs are considered to be a secondary role-player in the education sector, and are dependent on both funders and the government for money. NGOs are having to work through the tension between how they view themselves, and the role they are expected to play in the sector. For example, NGOs recognize that funders must not see that they support the government as much as they do.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT THEMES**

### **2.1. Different categories and hierarchies of knowledge**

Significant assumptions about the status hierarchy of different knowledge categories emerged:

- \* The first (and most prestigious) category of knowledge consisted of three knowledge types, the most significant of which is professional academic knowledge. The second type of professional knowledge is that held by professional training consultants. The third type of knowledge in this category is Western-derived knowledge.
- \* The second category was made up of the knowledge held by educational NGOs, and consisted of two different types, namely NGO management and staff-held knowledge. However, management knowledge is considered superior to staff-held knowledge.
- \* The third (and least prestigious) knowledge category was African local knowledge. This is the knowledge held by NGO clients and members of their communities. This category of knowledge tends to be non-formal, independently generated knowledge that is not certified by any professional educational institution.

These subconsciously constructed categories and their hierarchy have a number of significant implications. For example, certain participants had a negative attitude towards internal training, and felt that more ECED training should be conducted by professional consultants. This negative attitude was based on the underlying assumption that the knowledge held by professional consultants is superior to that held by NGO management and staff.

Assumptions related to the knowledge hierarchy has also created an interesting tension in the development process. Ideas about the role of knowledge in development are in tension with ideas about the role of

knowledge in cultivating NGO professionalism. The assumption emerged that people are empowered by knowledge, but not necessarily formal knowledge. Hence the importance placed on local knowledge, and informal processes of knowledge creation. Furthermore, it emerged that a client's worth is not determined by the amount of formal Western knowledge they possess. However, assumptions relating to NGO professionalism reveal that an NGO's worth and legitimacy is assumed to be determined by the amount of formal tertiary education knowledge NGO staff possess. Hence the emphasis on staff engaging in part-time study. Two standards appear to be operating simultaneously, and NGOs need to reconcile their assumptions about the role of knowledge in development, and the role of knowledge in NGO professionalism.

## **2.2. Ambivalence about the capacity of the "Other"**

The following opposing set of assumptions has serious ramifications for NGO development work. On the one hand, assumptions reflecting a basic belief in the capacity of the individual, and in other role-players in the education sector, arose. However, another equally strong set of assumptions that demonstrated a distinct lack of belief in the capacity of NGO staff, and other role-players, also emerged. ECED staff tended to hold the former set of assumptions, while ECED management tended to maintain the latter set of assumptions.

At the organisational level, one assumption was that ECED staff have capacity and leadership potential. Indeed, the participative management structures that exist are based on an underlying assumption of staff capacity. However, the assumption that staff in participatory management structures are not competent enough to oversee smooth service delivery, and the fact that staff are rarely allowed to assume roles of responsibility, both reflect an underlying assumption about staff incompetence.

On a broader level, an assumption about the competence and potential of all people emerged in the service delivery section. The emphasis on equal partnerships with communities, client participation in project decision making, and the value of local knowledge, are all indicative of this. However, a lack of belief in the capacity of other role-players also emerged - for example, the assumption that government officials and the majority of other NGOs lack capacity, and the assumption that funders do not understand the education field.

## CHAPTER 8

### RESULTS - PHASE FOUR ANALYSIS

This final section of the results is focused on analysing, in relation to the literature reviewed, the basic assumptions that emerged about the changing environment. In particular, to achieve the third goal of the study, the focus is on the assumptions' appropriateness in terms of facilitating NGO survival through adaptation to the environment.

#### 1. AWARENESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Participants were highly aware of the NGO environment, of the importance of keeping abreast of environmental trends, and of the need to be flexible in order to continually transform and adapt. Such assumptions bode well for the survival of the NGO sector, as most research has demonstrated a primary correlation between superior performance and the extent to which organisations scan their environments (cf. Bedeian, 1994; Morgan, 1989). Furthermore, Kaplan (c.1994) considers NGO organisational capacity to be the organisation's ability to be proactive in its environment, and to be flexible enough to adapt to changes in its environment.

#### 2. PROFESSIONALISM

A strong emphasis on demonstrating financial and operational accountability emerged. On an organisational level, this was associated with an emphasis on efficient business systems, regular evaluations and report writing, and systems of financial control. These assumptions are congruent with the current context in which funders want to see evidence of the impact of their funding (Orleyn, 1996), and are demanding that NGOs are able to account for their use of funds (Hartzenberg, 1993).

On an individual level, the stress was on staff being accountable and responsible professionals. This finding echoes Ward (1995), who found an emphasis on NGO staff having professional skills, and Harding (1994a), who maintains that NGO staff require a reflective approach towards their use of power and knowledge.

#### 3. STRATEGIC BUSINESS ORIENTATION

ECED is indubitably part of the new breed of pragmatic, expedient, strategic, and business orientated NGOs described by Grey (1997) and Harding (1994a). As urged by Pieterse (1995, p.21), ECED has shed its "adhocratic mode", and is largely succeeding in operating with the efficiency of a business. Such notions as that South African NGOs are characterised by detailed concern with process above product (Cross, 1994), and that NGOs work solely on principle as opposed to out of expedience (CDRA, 1996), are no longer entirely

accurate descriptions of NGO organisational culture.

#### **4. COOPERATION BETWEEN NGOs, THE GOVERNMENT, AND FUNDERS**

ECED is currently engaged in critical consideration of its role vis-a-vis other role-players in the sector. The importance of such critical consideration is highlighted by De Fonseca (1995). Participants were well aware of the benefits (in terms of funding and service delivery) of cooperative relationships with other role-players. However, the complicated inter-relations that exist between the three players makes cooperation less straightforward than the literature (e.g. Pakade, 1995) suggests.

For example, government officials favour partnerships with ECED above other NGOs. However, this position can be uncomfortable for ECED, as other NGOs become resentful of them, which consequently complicates their networking relationships. Edwards and Hulme (1996) describe precisely such a scenario. They argue that a context in which NGOs compete against each other for government funding is unlikely to foster the collaborative relations on which successful NGO networks are built. Furthermore, ECED has also been appointed as the managing agent of a number of government projects, and the researcher considers this a possible cause for concern. Although participants assumed that the managing agent scenario would never lead to government resentment against NGOs, documented evidence of precisely this exists (cf. Clark, 1991).

#### **5. NETWORKING BETWEEN NGOs**

Participants were committed to networking, and it was recognized as a strategic survival activity due to funder demands, and government tendering requirements. It was also seen as a means of keeping the NGO relevant in the changing environment. One of the most significant observations about effective NGOs is their commitment to networking coalitions with NGOs and other role-players in the arenas in which they work (Biggs & Neame, 1994). It is clear that networking is both an important means of adapting to turbulent environments, and a strategic survival decision for South African NGOs (Hallowes, 1995b; Morgan, 1989).

Although obstacles to NGO networking persist, a number of assumptions emerged which demonstrate that NGOs are forging fresh means of overcoming these obstacles. The establishment of stable formal networking partnerships, as described by Butler and Wilson (1990), is probably the most significant means. Formal partnerships are being used as a means to reduce the difficulties inherent in contract networking relationships.

Secondly, there is a transformation in the manner in which networking is constructed. The assumption that networking relationships are structured business partnerships is becoming increasingly dominant. The formality associated with such a construction facilitates smoother working relations, and ensures that each partner is held accountable for the work they deliver. Finally, assumptions around reputation and professionalism are operating

as a standardizing device for NGOs. This enables NGOs to be discerning about the NGOs with whom they network, a necessity stressed by Madsen (1997) and Pieterse (1995).

## **6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs AND THE GOVERNMENT**

Participants were very aware of the strategic benefits (in terms of funding and service delivery) to having a cooperative relationship with the government. Although some ambivalence about the desired nature of the relationship remained, the ECED leadership has made a strategic decision to cooperate with the government. This is certainly the direction suggested by most development policy theorists (cf. Bebbington & Farrington, 1993).

Participants assumed that NGOs are having an enormous input into government education policy formation and dissemination. They believe that provincial education departments are highly reliant on NGOs and cannot deliver without NGO assistance. This finding is consistent with the CDE Debate's (1997) assertion that no illusions exist that the national department of education knows all there is to know about schooling, or is the most important player in the field.

This situation is beneficial for educational NGOs in that it ensures their continued survival. On the other hand, such a dependency relationship is hardly desirable in the development context. Certain participants held that the ECED leadership is responsible for creating this dependency relationship with the government. Clearly, when one is working from the assumption that other role-players are incompetent, and that nothing will get done unless the NGO does it, the tendency to take over will occur naturally. In turn, government officials internalize the belief that they are incompetent, and so become unnecessarily reliant on the ECED leadership to make decisions.

## **7. FUNDERS AND THE FUNDING SCENARIO**

ECED has been very successful in securing funding - as stated in the case description, ECED funding levels have actually increased over the past few years. The ECED leadership is proactive about obtaining funding, and features of what Drucker (1992a) terms a funding development strategy were in evidence at ECED.

Participants also recognized the necessity of developing a good reputation for service delivery and financial accountability (cf. Kleinenberg, 1995). The NGO is working towards increasing its self-generated income by charging consultancy fees, and selling the educational materials it generates. This strategy is recommended by both Fowler (1992) and Grey (1997).

ECED enjoys a relationship of mutual influence with its funders. The leadership is assertive and bold with ECED funders. The leaders do not passively accept the amounts funders donate and the project requirements they prescribe, but rather negotiate on both issues. Suggestions of the dependent nature of the relationship persisted, but these were minor. ECED has a fair amount of control and influence in its funding relationships because it competently fulfils funder requirements, enabling leaders to operate on an equitable basis with funder representatives.

## 8. LEADERSHIP IN NGOS

It was interesting to note that many of the assumptions about how NGOs should operate in order to survive, were reflected in assumptions about important leadership qualities. These were that: leaders should be professionals who are known to deliver; they must be knowledgeable about their environment, and have a vision for the NGO; and they must be able to engage in strategic planning. Each of these qualities is recommended in turn by CDRA (1995), Harding (1995) and McLaughlin (1986).

There was a trend towards focusing on leadership structures as opposed to on individual leaders. This is encouraging as it would prevent the lack of continuity and organisational decay that occurs when individual leaders come and go (cf. Turok, 1996).

The three American texts on managing NGOs reviewed here (Butler & Wilson, 1990; Drucker, 1992a; McLaughlin, 1986), all discuss the importance of NGOs marketing their services. Assumptions about marketing that emerged in the present study were relatively unsophisticated, these being the need for NGOs to "sell" themselves to funders, and to increase their self-generated incomes. The marketing skills of South African NGOs are underdeveloped, and this is reflected in the lack of coverage of NGO marketing in the local literature.

Finally, certain features of the leadership at ECED are not conducive to survival in the changing environment. First, the ECED leadership was held to be too self-reliant and independent. Consequently, leaders do not delegate or make sufficient use of their support staff. The failure to delegate authority limits the time leaders can devote to strategic issues (Clark, 1991).

Second, the Director appeared to be over-involved in overseeing every organisational decision, which is inappropriate given the manner in which NGOs operate. A situation where field-workers are concerned about "having to live with the consequences" (in relation to the Director) of decisions they make in the field, is problematic. Carrell *et al.* (1997) argue that managers should encourage fast decision making by those closest to the situation. A more decentralised approach to NGO decision making is clearly required, and managers should delegate as much authority and responsibility to staff as their job permits.

## 9. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) IN NGOs

There was a widespread assumption that HRD ultimately enhances NGO survival, as funding is secured through enhanced service delivery (cf. Brews, 1995). Although staff continue to emphasize the holistic development approach to HRD (cf. Stead *et al.*, 1997), the ECED leadership has adopted the strategic HRD framework (cf. Wright & Ferris, 1996). Management has appropriated the strategic framework to such an extent that personal growth is considered important primarily because it enhances staff job performance.

The ECED leadership is experiencing teething problems with the shift to HRD as a strategic exercise. Certainly, an integrated HRD strategy, as described by Hallowes (1994b), appears to be lacking. There is also a sense in which textbook application of HRD concepts (e.g. multi-skilling) is occurring. Furthermore, the finer details associated with the content of training programmes are not being adequately thought through. For example, Xhosa-speaking staff were asked to devise a training course to teach Xhosa to non-Xhosa-speaking staff. However, the requirements that non-Xhosa-speakers had of such a course were not carefully considered.

There appeared to be a lack of consensus (largely between management and staff) about the nature and primary aim of HRD. Organisational consensus on these two issues must be obtained so that when HRD policy decisions are taken, staff are able to accept the reasoning behind them.

Pieterse (1995) maintains that NGOs require formal HRD processes, which is the direction in which ECED management is moving. ECED HRD interventions include holistic training, career development reviews, multi-skilling, and an affirmative action programme. With the exception of affirmative action, these interventions are an advance on what is recommended by various NGO writers (cf. Drucker, 1992a; Harding, 1994b; Ward, 1995).

Pieterse (1995) criticises as outdated and inappropriate the assumption widely held by NGO staff that new recruits can be trained in a hands-on fashion, and through participative exposures. This assumption did emerge in the present study, and it is submitted that the emphasis on informal HRD processes need not be the weakness that Pieterse (1995) claims. Mbigi (1997), for example, contends that the collective learning that occurs through staff participation and group work is critical for organisational survival in turbulent environments. Furthermore, informal discussion processes between new or junior staff and more established senior staff, are an important enculturation process (cf. Schein, 1992). The NGO tradition is one of non-formal training (Hallowes, 1994a), and leaders should build on the value their staff place on these informal processes by implementing mentorship programmes. Drucker (1992a) maintains that mentors are very important in NGOs, and Ward (1995) found mentorship programmes to be highly effective in the NGOs she studied.

The present researcher notes with concern that certain NGO authors are labelling as outdated and inappropriate, many of the basic assumptions that define the very essence of NGOs. One such assumption that has come under attack is that the individual is more important than the organisation. It is important that the idealistic or moral dimension of NGOs not be allowed to wither in the attempt to operate like businesses.

## **10. NGO SERVICE DELIVERY**

The influence that the individual field-worker has on service delivery has been stressed by Maart and Soal (1996). In the present study, participants clearly recognized the value of individual staff members in this regard, particularly leaders and field-workers. Appropriate and flexible organisational systems - specifically strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluation - were also emphasized as methods of enhancing NGO service delivery. These assumptions are congruent with the writings of Butler and Wilson (1990), De Satge (1993), and Ticehurst (1996b).

Finally, Ticehurst (1996a) contends that it is essential that NGOs generate indicators of development for evaluation purposes. In this regard, ECED project staff have devised numerous flexible and practical indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the services they deliver.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCUSSION

#### 1. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE THEORY

The present researcher found support for Alvesson's (1993) critique of Schein's (1992, p.94-143) notion that organisational members share basic assumptions about "core dimensions". Organisational members in the present study did not share basic assumptions about the six areas of NGO functioning, and by extension, they would certainly not have shared assumptions about the seven "core dimensions".

Research findings supported the fragmentation perspective on subcultures (cf. Martin & Frost, 1996) which holds that subcultures are not fixed, but rather develop around certain issues. For example, black and white participants formed two distinct subcultures on the issues of racial tension and affirmative action. Subcultures based on organisational hierarchy existed for the issue of the effectiveness of ECED participative management structures. Established subcultures such as those described by the integration perspective did not exist, and no empirical support for the integration perspective of subcultures was demonstrated.

The research uncovered significant differences between the assumptions held by management and staff. This finding supports the view that assumptions held by leaders and staff may vary widely, and that leaders do not have a decisive influence on staff assumptions (cf. Morgan, 1997; Sackmann, 1991). There were also significant differences between the assumptions that underlay artifacts, espoused values, and values-in-use. This supports the notion that it is important to distinguish between espoused values and values-in-use (cf. Siehl & Martin, 1988), and official documentation and organisational practices (cf. Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992), when designing research. Accordingly, it is submitted that future organisational culture researchers sample a range of organisational participants, and collect different forms of cultural data.

#### 2. NGO REPUTATIONS

The importance placed on operating professionally and in a business-like manner reflects the NGO drive towards overcoming the reputation they have developed for being disorganised, unreliable, and unaccountable. By operating like professional businesses, NGOs are attempting to demonstrate their worth, efficiency, and ability to deliver effective services.

The emphasis on NGO reputations flows out of the above concerns. There is a strategic significance to NGOs earning a reputation for effective service delivery - funders and the government actually approach those NGOs that have good service delivery records. Likewise, clients often engage an NGO's services on the basis of its

reputation. For example, a number of clients have begun to use the ECED resource library because of its good reputation.

As a consequence of the emphasis on NGO reputation, large NGOs are becoming increasingly prevalent. Large NGOs are better able to secure and maintain funding in that they can be proactive about obtaining funding because of their staff size; they possess the necessary infrastructure in order to be efficient; and they are able to engage in formal networking relationships. Furthermore, governments and funders tend to concentrate on large, reliable NGOs (Nelson, 1995), which reinforces the cycle of large NGOs obtaining more funding, and thus becoming larger and more efficient.

The danger of this scenario is that smaller NGOs are likely to be squeezed out (cf. Butler & Wilson, 1990). Edwards and Hulme (1996) argue that large NGOs should never dominate to such an extent that they act as a barrier to the diversity of opinions and approaches that are the hallmark of any healthy NGO sector.

### **3. THE ROLE OF NGO LEADERSHIP IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT**

Overwhelming demands are placed on organisational leaders during periods of rapid growth and transition (Clark, 1991). Strong NGO leadership is required in order to cope with the considerable uncertainty occasioned by a changing environment. NGO leadership structures are having to continually evolve to meet changing requirements. In order to guide their organisations through the change process, NGO leaders have to transform their basic assumptions more quickly than their staff.

It is interesting to note that all the assumptions about how NGOs should act in order to survive, are reflected in assumptions about important leadership qualities. Namely, leaders must be knowledgeable about their environment, they must have a vision for the NGO, and their most important task is strategic planning. Furthermore, leaders must be people who are known to deliver, and should be professionals with a well-developed sense of responsibility.

Studies indicate that leaders contribute a great deal to the success or failure of an organisation (Fiedler & House, 1994; Grint, 1997), particularly in small organisations (Koopman & Pool, 1994). South African NGO leaders are currently expected to set organisational direction, lead strategic planning, foster staff development, engage with cultural diversity and affirmative action, and introduce participative management structures.

A prediction of Butler and Wilson's (1990) may be relevant here. They argue that the requirements being placed on NGO leaders may have implications for the type of manager recruited in future. They contend that the selection of managers is likely to include the ability to handle large spans of control and to operate effectively in the decision making arena. This could imply a trend towards recruiting professional managers

from outside the NGO sector, who may not possess the same degree of commitment, altruism, and selflessness which characterised some of their predecessors. If this prediction proves accurate, it will certainly have a significant impact on NGO organisational culture.

#### 4. NGO LEADERSHIP STYLE

McLaughlin (1986) argues that it is impossible to recommend a specific NGO leadership style, and that a leader's approach should be situational to their environment, organisation, and staff. However, many NGO authors (cf. Harding, 1995; Meintjies, 1994) advocate charismatic leadership as the ultimate form of NGO leadership. Certainly, the advantage of charismatic leaders is that they are good decision makers, are able to initiate change, and are able to set a direction for the organisation. However, there are disadvantages to charismatic leadership, as uncovered in this research.

Brown (1988) states that charismatic leaders tend towards autocracy in decision making. This contention was supported by the findings of the present research - which is problematic for NGOs intending to move in the direction of participative management. A further disadvantage of charismatic leadership is the rapid middle-management turnover that is often associated with it (Robbins, 1997). This was clearly evident in the present research: "As people develop, they leave, that's their way of dealing with [the Director's leadership style]." This is problematic in an environment where NGOs are finding it difficult to attract experienced professionals (cf. Harding, 1994a).

In the search for an appropriate South African NGO leadership style, Mbigi's (1997; cf. also Mbigi & Maree [1995]) notion of African management deserves further examination. Broadly speaking, he recommends staff participation, effective managing of diversity, openness to other mindsets, team-building, and employing traditional African values to build South African organisations.

#### 5. LEADERSHIP CONGRUENCE

Deal and Kennedy (1982) warn that leadership inconsistencies are noticed and magnified by staff. In the NGO case, because staff are sensitive to injustices in society, they are extremely quick to spot discrepancies between rhetoric and action in the organisation (Brown & Covey, 1989). Hence the importance of NGOs devising formal policies and procedures, and of leadership adhering to them, in order to ensure consistency in leadership decision making and behaviour.

The present researcher supports the notion of NGO management and leadership development training, as suggested by NGO Week (1997), in order to enhance leadership insight and performance. Since it is imperative that leadership behaviour be congruent with their espoused values, NGO leaders require a high degree of insight

into self, and an awareness of their own values and limitations. For example, the ECED Director conforms to Brown's (1988) description of a charismatic leader, and has the associated autocratic decision making style. However, she maintains that she values participative decision making, and she is attempting to integrate the behaviour of the participative leader - a role to which she appears not particularly well-suited. Consequently, her behaviour often fails to reflect her espoused values, which results in staff discontent and resentment.

In order for participative management to be effective, adherence to a certain set of assumptions about staff is required. McGregor (1960) argues that behind every managerial action are assumptions about human nature, which is consistent with Schein's (1992) notion that behaviour reflects basic assumptions. McGregor (1960) contends that all managers hold either (what he terms) Theory X or Theory Y assumptions about their staff.

Theory X is the traditional paternalistic view of direction and control, including assumptions such as that the average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, and desires security above all. Theory Y assumptions include that people will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed, and that under proper conditions, the average person learns not only to accept, but also to seek responsibility.

Participative management approaches are based on Theory Y assumptions. It is problematic when leaders hold certain Theory X assumptions and attempt to introduce participative management. The negative consequences of such a situation were evident in the present research. Staff in task teams and participative management structures felt undermined when they were encouraged to take responsibility for certain policies, and then had their input ignored by the Director. It certainly suppressed their desire to become involved in further participative activities. Furthermore, they felt manipulated: "People feel like puppets, just being put there to get [the Director's] message across. When the fact of the matter is you're not really given any power to exercise."

The introduction of participative management structures, which has been urged by many authors (cf. Boon, 1996; Jones *et al.*, 1988), needs to be carefully considered. If leaders do not hold the appropriate assumptions about their staff, participative structures can cause more harm than good to staff development. This can be ill-afforded in a sector that needs to build its human resources (NGO Week, 1997). It should also be noted that despite the consensus in favour of participative management in NGOs, Hodson (1996) warns that this approach can make it difficult for leaders to take and implement the unpopular decisions necessary to cope with change.

## 6. RACIAL TENSION IN NGOS

The present study found that most black participants experienced a significant amount of racial tension in the NGO. Interestingly, only the black participants raised the issue; when questioned about it, white participants

did not acknowledge that any racial tension existed. This is perhaps indicative of how white South Africans post-apartheid attempt to avoid the race issue.

It would appear that the issue is complicated by the NGO scenario. NGOs fought against racial discrimination under apartheid, and it would be difficult for whites in NGOs to admit that racial tension could exist in their organisations. However, it must be realized that employees of all races, even with the best of intentions, often have ingrained racial stereotypes (Fuhr, 1993).

Pieterse (1997) argues that one of the most pervasive trends amongst South African NGOs is their inability to deal with issues of difference in an open and comfortable manner, whether the difference relates to gender, race, generation, ability, or sexual orientation. Fuhr (1993, p.16) contends that the "eggshell issues" of racial prejudice, racial tension, and racial stereotyping, need to become the subject of ongoing debate at all levels of South African organisations.

## **7. MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN NGOs**

The ECED Director espouses the notion that the organisation is like a family, which has resulted in a fair amount of resentment and discontent amongst staff. The present researcher considers the notion of an organisational family inappropriate in the South African multi-cultural context, particularly because of the country's history of racist paternalism. The notion of an organisational family excludes the possibility that real differences exist between staff, and thus denies the actual differences felt by staff.

The organisational family idea is consonant with the assimilationist approach to managing diversity. Here minority groups are expected to fit in with the dominant culture. In South Africa, the continued dominance of the historically Eurocentric culture reflects the assimilationist approach (Norris, 1996). Black employees are expected to assimilate into white-dominated organisational cultures by adopting the norms, values, and standards of the dominant culture (Fuhr, 1993).

Accepting the challenge of diversity implies changing organisational culture and reconceptualising appropriate leadership styles (Norris, 1996). The dominance of the Eurocentric culture must be broken, and organisational culture must change to reflect a diverse culture with revised beliefs and value systems (Norris, 1996). Leaders must not adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach, in which people are forced into a predetermined organisational culture (Fuhr, 1993).

South African organisations need to re-evaluate the premise upon which many of their organisational policies are based, and develop policies more suited to a diverse workforce. For example, an issue that arose in the present research concerned paid compassionate leave applying only in the case of the death of a nuclear family

member. Such a policy posits the nuclear family as normative, thus ignoring the importance of the extended family in African cultures. Certain progressive South African organisations have revised and aligned their organisational policies and procedures to reflect the cultural diversity of their staff (Christie, 1996). Examples include incorporating staff consultations with registered traditional healers onto medical aid benefit schemes.

## **8. WHITE LEADERSHIP IN NGOs**

As funders demand that NGOs engage in affirmative action (Kleinenberg, 1995), white NGO leaders find themselves in a highly stressful position. Local funders such as the Kagiso Trust have been accused of making funding decisions for political rather than developmental reasons (Hallowes, 1995a), and Bertelsmann (1996b) argues that government tenders are being awarded to those NGOs that are considered to have "transformed themselves internally".

The behaviour of white leaders is consequently being negatively affected in certain respects. In the present study, the Director was perceived by certain white staff to be very self-conscious about her position as a white leader of an NGO. They felt that as a result she tended to accede to demands that were inconsistent with the affirmative action policy, which was resented by the white staff.

There is a sense in which white leadership can constrain organisational transformation.

For example, a few black participants experienced the language issue as a barrier to their full participation in management structures. All ECED meetings are held in English, and Xhosa-speaking participants felt that they could not express themselves as fluently as in their mother tongue. A leader who could speak Xhosa would overcome this problem and would be able to facilitate staff participation. It is vital that white senior leadership show visible commitment to ensuring that blacks are represented at all levels of the organisation (Fuhr, 1993), as placing affirmative action candidates in key leadership positions can assist in transforming organisational culture (Norris, 1996).

## **9. NGOs IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Development must be based on local cultural, political, and economic specificities - problems, needs, and visions (Pieterse, 1995). Participants were sensitive to the context in which their clients existed, which is demonstrated by the ECED policy of whole-school-community development. Participants were very aware of not imposing their definition of development on clients, and of working according to their clients' pace of development. There was a strong emphasis on designing educational materials appropriate to the African context, and to client values.

Western knowledge systems have habitually displaced indigenous ways of knowing (Jones, 1996). In recent decades the notion of the superiority of Western objective, scientific knowledge over all other forms of knowledge, and the desirability of its attaining hegemonic status, has been contested by anthropologists and philosophers of science, among others (cf. Feyerabend, 1988; Geertz, 1983; Marsden, 1994). The present study demonstrates that this issue is highly relevant to NGO work.

Educational NGOs work at the intersection between various bodies of knowledge (e.g. Western knowledge and African local knowledge), and NGO staff are having to negotiate a relationship between the different categories of knowledge. At present NGOs espouse the centrality of local knowledge in development, but many of the participants still hold an unconscious assumption that formal educational knowledge is the highest and most desirable form. While this assumption accords with a widespread societal view, it sits ill with their professed allegiance to local knowledge.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

The environment in which South African NGOs are operating remains highly fluid, and NGOs will continue to face threats to their survival. The organisational culture of the NGO studied was undergoing a process of transformation, and tensions did exist between long-held and emergent basic assumptions. Leaders are rapidly adopting the assumptions needed to adapt to the changing environment, but the process is occurring more slowly with staff. Analysis of the assumptions in relation to literature about the NGO context suggested that, overall, they were highly conducive to facilitating adaptation to the NGO environment. On the basis of the present study's findings, this researcher concludes that NGOs have definitively secured their position in the development sector.

Billis and MacKeith (1996) point out that much of the NGO literature is based on personal experience and consultancy work. There is certainly a paucity of academic research on South African NGO organisational culture, and this is a weakness of the NGO literature that requires redress. Systematic study of the NGO sector is particularly important as NGOs have become significant players in attempts to promote development (Hulme, 1994).

NGO leaders have a vital role to play in ensuring NGO survival in the current environment. They face the greatest pressure to adapt and are having to lead the transformation of basic assumptions. Given this, it seems appropriate that more intense research is conducted on NGO leaders. Specific lines of enquiry could include leadership assumptions about the NGO environment, and research aimed at developing a model of the most effective and appropriate NGO leadership style.

Research into the methodology of NGO networking would help to achieve a greater understanding of the means by which it may work in practice (Biggs & Neame, 1994; Micou, 1995). The present research demonstrated that NGOs have started to develop means of overcoming the difficulties inherent in the networking process. Further research into mechanisms that would improve coordination and reduce conflict would be most valuable.

This researcher found that strong NGOs enjoy a fairly equitable relationship with their funders. However, according to Hallows (1995b), weaker NGOs remain vulnerable to poor funding practice. Boule (1993) has proposed that a code of conduct be developed to guide the funding relationship. This is an extremely worthwhile notion, and research aimed at generating a funding code of conduct should be undertaken. Hallows's (1995a) work on NGO perceptions and expectations of funders could be usefully drawn into the development of such a code.

The research findings also suggest a need to develop HRD strategies suitable to the NGO environment. Most NGO writers urge NGOs to adopt more formal HRD processes. However, it is submitted that the strength of established and valued so-called informal HRD processes should be built upon, rather than simply discarded as inappropriate. Research aimed at investigating HRD strategies that are congruent with NGO staff characteristics would prove very useful.

The fact that ECED is an educational NGO undoubtedly influenced the results about knowledge and professionalization. Ward (1995), for example, also found a strong emphasis on self-study in the educational NGOs she studied. The assumptions that emerged about knowledge hierarchies have significant implications for the development process. Further research into NGO staff and client assumptions about local knowledge, alternative approaches to formal education, NGO accreditation, and professional educational knowledge would advance understanding of (educational) NGO practice.

A systematic effort is needed to study the processes fuelling change within the NGO sector, and to analyse the implications for the actors involved in these processes (Hulme, 1994). Researchers are at an early stage of understanding how NGOs adapt to changing environments (Gordenker & Weiss, 1996), and the mainstream management literature on culture change is under-theorized and relatively unsophisticated (Newman, 1995). Furthermore, a gap exists in the literature concerning how basic assumptions evolve without any planned change interventions. In this regard, the present study's findings suggest that in such a case leaders transform their assumptions more quickly than staff do. Longitudinal organisational culture studies would certainly be a useful means of examining the natural evolution of basic assumptions within organisations.

Finally, employing Schein's (1992) notion of basic assumptions as in the present research proved to be an extremely fruitful endeavour. This researcher has not encountered any other studies that have employed such a design, and would recommend it for exploring basic assumptions about specific areas of organisational functioning.

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## APPENDIX 1

### RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO THE FOCUS GROUP

- \* Introduce myself.
  
- \* Thank participants for agreeing to participate in the research and sacrificing their work time to attend the focus group.

The research I am conducting forms part of my Research Masters Course at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. What I am interested in understanding is the organisational culture of South African NGOs in this period of social change. I am sure that you of all people are aware that the environment in which South African NGOs operate has undergone radical changes, and that your organisation has had to adapt in order to survive the changes. I'm interested in finding out exactly how ECED is adapting.

My research design consists of three parts: (1) analysing organisational documentation; (2) this focus group; (3) individual interviews. I want to assure you that confidentiality will be ensured throughout the research project.

- \* Ask permission for the focus group to be audiotaped.
  
- \* Inform participants that the time limit for the focus group is one and a half hours.

I'd like to suggest that we follow a few ground rules in the focus group: I would like all of you to participate in the discussion as much as possible; obviously there are no right or wrong answers, and I would like to hear as many viewpoints as possible. As for my role in the focus group, I will facilitate the discussion as necessary but I do not want to take control of the discussion in any way.

Agenda for the focus group:

I have identified six areas of NGO functioning that I consider to be most important in terms of NGOs adapting to the changing environment, and regulating their internal organisational processes. I am focusing only on these six aspects. (Go through the six areas on each flipchart page).

What I would like for each of you to do is to think about each area and jot down on the piece of paper in front of you, what you consider to be ECED's values in terms of each of the six areas. So for example with leadership you may believe that ECED values democratic leadership, or with ECED's relationship with the

government you may believe that it values being a critical voice against the government, and so on.

I'd like you to spend ten minutes doing that - I'm not going to collect the pieces of paper. After you've done that there'll be a general discussion of the values under each of the six areas, and I will jot down your ideas as we go along. While I'm writing the ideas down please add your opinion to whatever is being said. Once all your ideas are listed, we'll have a further discussion about the reasons behind each of the values identified.

1. Participants write down their own ideas.
2. Write up all values onto flip-chart papers.
3. Go over the listed values and discuss each in more detail.  
Probe: can you tell me some more about this one?

#### Closing the focus group

- \* Thank them all for participating.
- \* Organise the interview times.
- \* Make impression notes straight afterwards.

## APPENDIX 2

### RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

- \* Thank participant for giving up their work time and for agreeing to the interview.
- \* Ask permission for the interview to be audiotaped. Assure the participant that the interview material is confidential even though it is being taped.
- \* Inform the participant that the time limit for the interview is one and a half hours.
- \* Clarify that I may take a few notes during the interview. But that they will just be reminders to myself about something they have said that I would like explore - so that I don't have to interrupt them.

For this part of the research, I will be conducting individual interviews with each of the eight people who attended the focus group last week. The content of the interviews is directed at the same six areas that we covered in the focus group. (Name the areas again).

During the interview I am going to ask you to describe a specific experience you have had in relation to each of the six areas. I would like you to discuss one particular *incident* that stands out in your mind, an incident that has occurred anytime over the past two years. Ideally it should be an incident that you feel is fairly reflective of your overall experience in that particular area. But I don't want you to have to think too much about that, just describe an incident that stands out in your mind.

#### Ordering of the Questions

1. Interaction with Other NGOs.
2. Interaction with the government. (The interaction may have been on a district, regional, provincial, or national level, whichever is appropriate to your experience.)
3. Interaction with funders.
4. Approach to service delivery. (If you could describe a particular ECED project that you have worked on.)

5. Approach to human resource development. (If you could describe an incident related to your own human resource development, rather than an instance where you may have actually been responsible for the HRD of other staff members.)
  6. Approach to leadership. (If you could describe an incident where leadership has been demonstrated within the organisation, rather than a situation where you have demonstrated leadership.)
  7. Ask the participant whether she has anything further to add about any of the six areas.
- 
- \* Thank the participant for being part of the research.
  - \* Ask the participant how she experienced the interview.
  - \* Inform participant that I will be writing a report and the organisation will receive a copy.

