

# DECOLONISING PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE OF THE LEMBA PEOPLE



Public Relations Scholars has over the years advocated for the transformation of PR education and research in Africa to include local cultures. Subsequently, the students 2015/2016 students' revolts in South Africa's universities resulted in students demanding for the decolonisation of curriculum amongst other things. This study focused on the decolonisation of PR education in South Africa by looking at the case study of how the Lemba people used indigenous communication to maintain their identity in their PR efforts. This study aimed to explore and describe how the Lemba community, an indigenous group of people sharing the same language with the Venda nation managed to remain autonomous through their indigenous communication efforts. The study was conducted in the Vhembe district, Limpopo Province, where the majority of the Venda speaking vha-Lemba people are located in South Africa. The study followed a qualitative explorative design observing indigenous research methods. A purposive sampling technique identified three leaders of the Lemba Cultural Association and three Lemba elders who are experts in Lemba indigenous communication. Individual semi structured interviews and one focus group were conducted, and data analysis used Creswell's method of qualitative data analysis. Findings revealed that indigenous communication networks offered a wide range of opportunities in maintaining and reinforcing of the Lemba identity. Indigenous communication channels play an important element in the preservation of cultural values in indigenous communities. The findings revealed that there are various causes in upholding the identity of the Lemba according to the indigenous communication system. Oral storytelling is mostly used as a way to pass down their history, values, and cultural practices from generation to generation while songs are often used to express their culture and history. In contribution, the study described the unique communication practices found in the community as executed by the Lemba people. This communication focusses on holistic communication, including internal and external stakeholder communication for the Lemba community and the general public. However, there is a need for further research to valorize the indigenous communication unearthed in this study.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# 2023 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### ROBERTO MABADA

Vhangani Sefoloko MABADA received his Communications Bachelor's degree from the University of FortHare, his Honours in Media and Journalism from Witwatersrand University and his Master's degree in Communications from the University of Johannesburg. He is currently studying towards his PhD at the University of Johannesburg where he lectures undergraduates and supervises postgraduate students. His PhD dissertation explores the role of African indigenous communication system in transforming Public Relations education in South Africa's higher education. His research interests include decolonising the field of communication, with interests on Public Relations curriculum, African indigenous communication, and multilingualism in education. He is also interested in the challenges and opportunities posed by the new media in the African context.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# A RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING THE SUPPORT OF INDUSTRY AWARDS FOR EDUCATION OUTCOMES WITHIN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (TVET)



## INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

This study presents a rubric for evaluating industry-organised award ceremonies and how they contribute to the experience and outcomes of students within a Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) environment. The aim is to support the design of more effective industry awards and also to inspire greater participation and acceptance within formal education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Industry awards can be considered a form of assessment that measures vocational skills and can be associated with the pedagogic strategies of problem-based learning, portfolio development and formative assessment (Yusop et al., 2022). They also follow an equivalent process as formal qualifications, as can be observed in Fig 1. (Mukhtar and Ahmad, 2015 p121).

Additionally, this practice overcomes the inherent disconnect from real-world practice experienced in the classroom and supports students' ability to relate theory to practice in the workplace. Ultimately, awards, when optimally implemented, can support student outcomes by offering unique assessments that prioritize knowledge mastery, intellectual capital development, a progressive attitude culture, and the cultivation of high virtue, ethics, and moral values.



Fig 1: The assessment and reporting process: The importance of evidence.

Despite the obvious value especially within a TVET programme, awards are broadly considered to be extra-curricular and optional. This is also observed within academic literature where few, if any papers have been published that mention the contribution of awards to higher education or employability. There is an opportunity to address this by providing a rubric to assist organisers and faculty in jointly bridging the gap from practice to theory.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# 2023 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**STEPHEN KING**

Stephen (Steve) teaches across three media programmes at Middlesex University's Dubai campus - Journalism and creative Writing, Advertising, PR and Branding, and Digital Media. Over the past eight years, his students have won dozens of industry awards for advertising campaigns, entrepreneurship, academic research and content creation. This includes being named "University of the Year" by the Dubai Lynx in 2019, and being represented in the EUPRERA PR Arena competition, and ICCO University PR World Cup. He has personally been awarded an innovation award in administrative services as a supporter of the Careers and Employability Services function and received the Middlesex University "One Award" for Outstanding Contributions to Putting Students First in 2019. He has been named amongst the top 25 most innovative PR professionals in EMEA by industry journal, PProvoke Media, and has over 15 years of practice experience working with global PR agencies within the networks of Interpublic Group, Publicis, and WPP.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# REFLECTING ON THE ROLE OF MASTERY, QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION IN THE CAREER AND PERFORMANCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATORS



The purpose of the study is to reflect on the competencies and the path to acquiring and practising the competencies of strategic communication.

## Literature review

Strategic communication regarded from the emergent perspective regards strategy development within strategic communication as a process that reflectively shapes the communicating entity through its purposeful enactment (Verwey & Benecke, 2021). Verwey and Benecke further unpack the multi-paradigm approach, as being a reflective, post-modern paradigm. They conclude that strategic communication requires a set of theoretical propositions of a higher level, with the potential to integrate various levels of understanding. This asks for a paradigm shift of scholars and practitioners in strategic communication, focussing on the dialogical abilities of the communication practitioner. The reflectivity approach asks the communication practitioner to have a wide perspective, approach the environment with respect for socio-diversity, anticipate and manage conflict and be responsible as a decision-maker. The ability to purposely co-create, rather than just perform functional tasks, requires the communication professional to be on a continuous path of learning and development in a reflective manner.

## Methodology

A literature review, combined with structured interviews with communication professionals over years of mentoring and developing internship programmes to integrate graduates into the workplace, informed the research study. As a qualitative evaluation of the career path to mastery, the author evaluated global standards as a starting point, integrating practical experience and standards, and theoretical qualifications.

## Conclusion

As a practitioner holding both qualifications and certifications and a number of industry awards, the presenter will focus on unpacking the role of Global Standards and certification in your professional career. Weaved with the aspects of mastery, and what it takes to become a communication master, the author provides practical steps for going from being a foundational professional, to becoming a business leader. The role of academic studies, continuous professional development and the role of professional bodies, are all evaluated from a practitioner's perspective. The author critically evaluates the options for professional development, the African context in view of global trends, and the ability to use cases and other practices to reflectively integrate learning towards mastery.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# REFLECTING ON THE ROLE OF MASTERY, QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION IN THE CAREER AND PERFORMANCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATORS

---



## Practical and social implications

This may seem like a boring topic next to the programme with a talk on artificial intelligence, but as a high-performing communication professional, this should be a fixation to develop your career path. When you search for strategic communication professionals in LinkedIn, you will find more than 30 000 profiles in Africa, yet the IABC holds a membership of 250 communication professionals in Africa, with only 5 certified as SCMPs. Most other professional bodies in associated industries, such as Public Relations and the National Press Club, have reported decline in their numbers. This is a global trend, with professional bodies volunteering capacity and membership bases shrinking annually. The industry is however, working towards professionalisation and that takes collaboration. The strategic communication profession is well on its way with this journey, far from the “we don’t have a seat at the boardroom table” conversations that we had in the 80’s, the conversation has moved to how we add value as a profession in a strategic, consistent and sustainable manner. Following on the understanding of strategic communication as a reflective paradigm, reflecting on the continuous professional development is critical for the practitioners and the students in this subject matter.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# 2023 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**MARI LEE**

Mari is a globally accredited business communicator (ABC), based in Africa, specialising in development communication. She uses the power of communication to positively influence change in individuals, companies, and communities, achieving business results and social impact. Mari and the DevCom team have won more than 45 international awards for her work as a communication professional, including recognition as the Best of the Best by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) on four occasions. She holds a master's degree in Communication Management graduating Cum Laude.

Mari works with a dynamic team of fellow communicators in DevCom, the communication consultancy she founded in 2005. Research and measuring social impact are at the heart of the strategic communication science that Mari has developed into an artful skillset. As a dynamic speaker, Mari unpacked the what, the how, and the why of organisational listening at the IABC World Conference in New York in 2022. As a mom of two teenage boys, she maintains a healthy balance of work and playing in addition to walking every day, spending time with friends, and participating in coaching and mentoring activities; Mari is an active member of her community.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG



# 2023 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



## ELEANOR DU PLESSIS

Eleanor du Plessis adds charisma to every project that she tackles in her role as a Communications Consultant at DevCom. She believes deeply in making impact and creating change to people's lives through the power of communication and is driven by this concept as just one of her goals in life. Her favourite words growing up were: "But that's not fair!" and this is exactly why she chose to specialise in Development Communication - to make people's lives just a little bit easier. Eleanor holds an honours degree in Development Communication and has a versatile, sharp focus on developing compelling content and narratives for strategic implementation. Eleanor is also one of the youngest professionals to certify as a Communication Management Professional (CMP) and believes in doing what you love and learning every day. Family is the centre point of her life and Eleanor thrives on spending time with loved ones in the tranquillity of the bush beside a cosy fire. She enjoys visiting local and unique markets which often ignites and inspires her DIY projects.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG





## Introduction and purpose to the study

The study aimed to address internal communication and leadership competency issues within an automotive group. It sought to improve communication effectiveness and foster a culture of speaking up within the organisation, considering the group's significant regional employment impact and its role in the community's sustainability. Following a crisis, integrity and transparency became crucial, highlighting the importance of internal communication. Communication audits revealed the need for improvement, particularly in trust-building and establishing a culture of speaking up.

To tackle these communication challenges, the goal was to provide targeted communication training to the leadership teams, promoting a culture of speaking up without fear of reprisal. The training aimed to enhance leadership competencies, including organisational listening, proactive issue pursuit, and face-to-face communication skills. The study aimed to evaluate the training program's impact, measuring improvements in leaders' communication skills and confidence.

## Literature review

The literature review for this study primarily emphasized practical aspects of the research topic as the main source of information. However, theories of communication were also employed, particularly in relation to communication audits, surveys, real-life role-playing, communication and leadership competencies, and case studies.

## Methodology

Practical and experiential training sessions were conducted for leaders at various levels. The sessions included interactive exercises, role-plays, and multimedia to engage participants effectively. Understanding each stakeholder group was crucial to provide relevant examples, role-play scenarios, and real-life case studies. Participants had limited prior knowledge and experience with communication content.

To ensure repeat attendance, the training sessions needed to be experiential and highly engaging. Two pilots were conducted: one with unit heads, shift leaders, and supervisors, and another with group leaders and shop stewards. The sessions were face-to-face and lasted 4 hours to minimise disruptions and promote attendance accountability. Adaptations were made for different formal education levels, including technical automotive jargon relevant to each audience. Multimedia and visuals were used, incorporating familiar workspaces and people to capture attention.

The balance between theory and practice varied for each audience, with leadership receiving more data-driven resources and group leaders focusing on practical exercises specific to their units. The messaging emphasized building relationships, creating psychological safety, providing positive feedback, and fostering trust for both leadership and group leaders.

## Results and conclusion

Surveys were conducted at the beginning and end of the training, with results tested for validity and reliability through 16 focus groups. Additionally, interviews were also conducted. Regular feedback was provided during the Production Management Meeting, where concerns were raised and addressed. Teams of leaders also provided ongoing feedback on their leaders' progress.

## Practical and social implications

The research yielded valuable insights regarding the training's effectiveness in improving team communication, trust-building, and fostering a speak-up culture. Participants shared positive personal feedback such as, "If I had done this empathy map earlier, I would have approached managing this person differently and achieved better results," and "I realised through the listening exercise that my explanation skills aren't as good as I thought, even though I believed we were doing fine."

# 2023 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**MARI LEE**

Mari is a globally accredited business communicator (ABC), based in Africa, specialising in development communication. She uses the power of communication to positively influence change in individuals, companies, and communities, achieving business results and social impact. Mari and the DevCom team have won more than 45 international awards for her work as a communication professional, including recognition as the Best of the Best by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) on four occasions. She holds a master's degree in Communication Management graduating Cum Laude.

Mari works with a dynamic team of fellow communicators in DevCom, the communication consultancy she founded in 2005. Research and measuring social impact are at the heart of the strategic communication science that Mari has developed into an artful skillset. As a dynamic speaker, Mari unpacked the what, the how, and the why of organisational listening at the IABC World Conference in New York in 2022. As a mom of two teenage boys, she maintains a healthy balance of work and playing in addition to walking every day, spending time with friends, and participating in coaching and mentoring activities; Mari is an active member of her community.

Supported by:



CAMPUS  
HELSINGBORG

