

A Dissertation Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements Of The Degree Of

MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

BY

**Cornel Gibson-Tessendorf**

January 2005

**An exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and  
transmitting of organizational culture.**

Supervised By

Ms Sarah Fischer

## **Abstract**

Many companies today are using some form of uniforms for employees. This research is an exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. Culture is the experiences and common learning of the organization that results in shared values and beliefs. According to Schein (1985: 14) culture has three levels, namely: artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions. The first level of the culture consists of the physical constructs of the organization, and therefore includes the uniforms, which is the focus of this study. Schein (1985: 223) further proposes that culture can be embedded and transmitted through various mechanisms.

The research was conducted in the constructivist paradigm, at a tertiary institution of higher learning in Eastern Cape, South Africa. To ensure triangulation, three sources of data were used, namely: documentation; observation; and both individual and focus group interviews.

The researcher argues that uniforms played a role in the embedding of the sample organization's three levels of culture, which were expressed in terms of Hofstede's (1991: 07) culture dimensions. Firstly, the use of the different uniforms by different groups, as well as the ranking indicated by the uniforms, played a role in embedding the high power distance culture. Secondly, the symbolism of security portrayed by the uniform played a role in embedding the high uncertainty avoidance culture. Thirdly, it was found that the uniform created unity amongst groups, resulting in greater expression of collectivism. Fourthly, the use of sensible and practical uniforms plays a role in embedding the feminine culture where competitiveness is avoided and relationships are nurtured. Lastly, the uniform plays a possible role in transforming the culture from short-term to a long-term orientation that focuses on the future.

## **Acknowledgements.**

The researcher wishes to thank all the participants in the research for making their time available for interviews and the sharing of information. Furthermore, a sincere thank you goes to my classmates, friends and lecturers who were a great support in the three years of studying, and specifically to my husband, Gavin for his patience and my supervisor, Sarah, for the supervision of the research.

## Table of content

	Page
<b>1. Chapter one – introduction</b>	
1.1. Field of research	1
1.2. The context of the research	1
1.3. Research goal	2
1.4. Methods, procedures and techniques	2
<b>2. Chapter two – literature review</b>	
2.1. Introduction	5
2.2. Organizational culture	6
2.2.1. Levels and dimensions of culture	6
2.2.1.1.The first level of culture: artifacts	6
2.2.1.2.The second level of culture: values	7
2.2.1.3.The third level of culture: underlying assumptions	8
2.3. National culture versus organizational culture	9
2.3.1. Schein’s cultural model versus that of Hofstede	10
2.3.1.1. Power distance	10
2.3.1.2.Uncertainty avoidance	11
2.3.1.3.Individualism – collectivism	11
2.3.1.4.Masculinity – femininity	12
2.3.1.5.Long-term – short-term orientation	12
2.3.2. The relationship between cultural dimensions and uniforms	13
2.4. The development of culture: embedding, articulation and reinforcement mechanisms	15
2.4.1. Primary embedding mechanisms	16
2.4.1.1.Leadership behavior	16
2.4.1.2.Leadership behavior in crises situations	16
2.4.1.3.Role modeling	16
2.4.1.4.Allocation of rewards and status	16

2.4.1.5. Recruitment, selection, promotion, retirement And excommunication	17
2.4.2. Secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms	17
2.4.2.1. Organizational structure and design	17
2.4.2.2. Organizational systems and procedures	18
2.4.2.3. Design of physical space, facades and buildings	18
2.4.2.4. Stories about important people and events	19
2.4.2.5. Formal statements of organizational philosophy, Creeds and charters	20
2.4.3. The interrelationship between the primary embedding mechanisms And the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms	20
2.5. The role of groups in organizational culture	20
2.5.1. Formation of groups	20
2.5.2. The function of groups	21
2.5.3. Groups formation and personal identity	21
2.5.4. Group formation and social identity	23
2.5.5. Identity and culture	23
2.5.6. Social identity and organizational identity	24
2.6. The purpose of clothing	24
2.6.1. The purpose of clothing for the individual	24
2.6.2. The purpose of clothing for the organization	26
2.6.2.1. Distinction between uniforms and corporate wear	27
2.6.2.2. Organizational dress code	28
2.6.3. Aspects that would influence the choice of Organizational dress	30
2.7. Clothing as artifact of culture	32
2.8. Relevance of research	37
2.9. Conclusion	37
3. <b>Research methodology</b>	
3.1. Research approach	39

3.2. Research sample	40
3.3. Nature of this methodology section	42
3.3.1. Research goal 1: an exploration of the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon	42
3.3.1.1.Documentation	42
3.3.1.1.1. Nature of documentation accessed	43
3.3.1.1.2. Analysis of documentation	44
3.3.1.1.3. Validity and ethical considerations	44
3.3.1.2. Observation	44
3.3.1.2.1. Nature of observations	45
3.3.1.2.2. Analysis of data from observation	45
3.3.1.2.3. Validity and ethical observations	46
3.3.1.3.Interviews	46
3.3.1.3.1. Sampling considerations	46
3.3.1.3.2. Nature of interviews	47
3.3.1.3.3. Analysis of interview data	48
3.3.1.3.4. Validity and ethical considerations	49
3.3.1.4.Focus group interviews	49
3.3.1.4.1. Sampling	50
3.3.1.4.2. Nature of the focus group interviews	51
3.3.1.4.3. Analysis of the data from the focus group	52
3.3.1.4.4. Validity and ethical considerations	52
3.3.2. Research goal 2: to determine the importance of uniforms As a secondary articulation mechanism of culture	53
3.3.2.1.Interviews	53
3.3.2.1.1. Sampling for interviews	54
3.3.2.1.2. Nature of interviews	55
3.3.2.1.3. Analysis of interview data	55
3.3.2.1.4. Validity and ethical considerations	55
3.3.2.2.Focus group	56
3.3.3. Analysis of data	56

3.3.4. Chapter Summary	58
<b>4. Results</b>	
4.1. Introduction	59
4.2. Uniforms	63
4.2.1. The purpose of the uniforms	63
4.2.1.1. Neatness and presentability	63
4.2.1.1.1. The use of the uniform to indicate professionalism	64
4.2.1.1.2. Do only western suits portray a message of Professionalism?	64
4.2.1.2. Removing social barriers	66
4.2.1.2.1. The uniform removes social categories: Rich versus poor.	66
4.2.1.2.2. The uniform removes social categories: Administration versus academic	68
4.2.1.2.3. The uniform removes social categories: Male versus female.	69
4.2.1.2.4. The use of uniforms to rank employees	70
4.2.1.3. Group bonding	71
4.2.1.3.1. Conformity versus individuality	71
4.2.1.3.2. Enforcing employees to wear uniforms	72
4.2.1.3.3. Choosing uniforms through consensus: How practical would that be?	74
4.2.1.4. Identification	74
4.2.1.4.1. Uniforms portraying the image of the Technikon	75
4.2.1.4.2. Identifying the individual with a caring organization	76
4.2.1.4.3. Uniform as means of recognition of employment	77
4.2.2. The culture of the Eastern Cape Technikon	78
4.2.2.1. Bureaucracy	78
4.2.2.1.1. Decision-making processes	78
4.2.2.1.2. Inconsistent management procedures	79





5.3. Conclusion	121
<b>6. Conclusion and recommendations</b>	
6.1. Summary of the embedding and transmitting of culture the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon through uniforms.	122
6.2. Recommendations	124
6.3. Limitations and further study	127
<b>7. References</b>	129
<b>8. Appendices</b>	
8.1. Observation checklist	a
8.2. General interview guide – uniforms	c
8.3. Interview guide: individual interviews – Uniform and culture: management	f
8.4. Focus group interview guide	l
8.5. Demographics questionnaire	q
8.6. Summary of documents accessed	r
8.7. List of maximum variation sampling participants	y

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Field of Research: Organizational Culture.

**Title:** Exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture.

#### 1.2 The Context of the Research

Schein (1985: 30) states that culture is, “a shared pattern of thought, belief, feelings, and values that result from shared experiences and common learning”. The role of culture is to build capacity within the organization in order that it may adapt and survive in an external world (Schein, 1985: 50). There are three levels of culture within an organization: artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 1985: 14). The first level of artifacts is the most visible and can include physical constructs such as physical layout, furniture, sound level and the clothing of the employees (Schein, 1985: 26). Schein (1985: 223 - 243) proposes that culture can be embedded and transmitted through primary embedding mechanisms and secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms. Primary embedding mechanisms, known as culture creators refer to leadership behaviors such as allocation of scarce resources and the measurement, control and rewarding of desired behaviors. These are then reinforced through the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms which include how the organization is structured, the systems and procedures used, the formal statements of organizational philosophy, such as the mission and vision statement, as well as design issues, which includes physical space, facades and buildings. It is argued that one type of façade is the uniform worn by employees.

Parker (2000: 87) advocates that clothing can influence the individual’s sense of belonging to the organization or groups within the organization. This is evident within the banking and retail sectors, where it is argued, “clothing influences group identification, affiliation and conformity” (Rose, Shoham, Kahle and Batra, 1994: 17). Thompson and McHugh (2002: 205), however, believe that wearing uniforms does not necessarily influence the internalization of the values of the organization nor promote a sense of belonging to the group. Thompson and McHugh (2002: 339) argue that individuals bring their own identity to the group, which influences the culture of the organization. Chemers, Oskamp and Constanzo (1995: 21) further argue that where employees

Comment [NP1]: 1985: 30

Comment [NP2]: Only use *et al.* from second citing of a reference.

have different language and religious backgrounds, artifacts such as uniforms, have little impact on the individual's assimilation of group values and norms. This argument questions the relevance of uniforms as an artifact of culture within South African organizations given the diverse cultures in the country.

Parker (2000: 01) indicates that managers can manipulate culture positively through activities and symbols, where uniforms are such a symbol. This implies making conscious decisions as to the role and importance of uniforms in influencing culture. This was not always the case, where historically uniforms were introduced for practical purposes such as the blue "overall" for individuals engaged in manual or technical labor. (Downey, 2000: 05). This has led to the distinctive stereotyping of all workers with this particular dress code where blue-collar workers are negatively perceived as lacking sophistication and being less educated than their "white-collar" counterparts (Wikipedia, 2003: 02).

The role of uniforms in contributing to the shaping and maintaining of organizational culture has not been well researched. To date the researcher has been unable to locate research of this specific nature. This research would contribute to our understanding of the role of uniform dressing in embedding and transmitting the culture of an organization. The findings can be used to assist organizations in making appropriate decisions regarding the choice of uniforms such that, where possible, culture can be positively influenced and unexpected and undesirable side effects are avoided.

### **1.3 Research Goal**

The goal of the research is to explore the role of uniforms, as an artifact of organizational culture, in the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. In answering the research goal the following areas need to be explored: firstly, the culture of the sample organization was determined, and secondly, the role of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism was established.

### **1.4 Methods, procedures and techniques.**

This research was conducted in the constructivist paradigm, as the aim of the research is to understand and reconstruct the individual's interpretations of the role of uniforms. This is

consistent with Guba & Lincoln's (1994: 113) perspective regarding the aim of enquiry of the constructivism paradigm where knowledge is created through individual reconstructions. The research was done at the Eastern Cape Technikon, with 386 employees (Eastern Cape Technikon, 2004b: 05), due to ease of access by the researcher to this organization and because uniforms are used extensively by a number of groups within the Technikon, namely, administrative staff and staff from the technical and services divisions. Permission has been obtained from Eastern Cape Technikon to conduct the research.

In order to understand the culture of the organization, the methodology used were as follows: Firstly, documentation as per Smith's (2002c: 03) recommendations was accessed. This documentation related to secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms, (Schein, 1985: 237) such as the Technikon's vision and mission statements, HR policies and procedures, and design issues. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the offices of the Vice Principal Admin and the Vice Principal Academic. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a more rigorous study of perceptions and attitudes (Smith, 2002a: 02) since the interviewer could clear vague responses through probing questions (Welman & Kruger, 2001: 161). Thirdly, a focus group was conducted with representatives of the Institutional Forum of the Technikon. This Forum addresses institutional issues, such as organizational structure, the systems and procedures used, the formal statements of organizational philosophy and policy development and includes representatives from key Technikon structures such as the council and senate, students (past and present) and staff. The Institutional Forum consists of thirty members, of which ten were selected for the focus group, consistent with Smith's (2002b: 05) ideal number per group. Stratified and convenient sampling was used to identify the two representatives from each sub-group of the Forum. This sampling approach is consistent with Welman & Kruger (2001: 55)'s strategy of identifying sub-populations where these exist within a population and when they are sufficiently different to each other. All participants in the research were fully aware of the purpose of the research, and the planned outcomes of the research. Whilst ethically acceptable, convenience sampling decreases the generalisability of the research. However, using data multiple sources ensured triangulation, which, according to Welman & Kruger (2001: 184), enhances validity. Furthermore, as per the recommendation of Carmines and Zeller (1991: 20), the content validity of the interviews was enhanced through use of questions informed by the available literature. The second broad area of the research related to the role and use of uniforms within the organization. Consistent with the objective of triangulation, the researcher used two key data sources to address this second area of the research. Firstly, those

individuals responsible for the introduction of uniforms were interviewed namely, the chairperson of the Secretariat Association (administration staff), Institutional Forum focus group (for academic staff) and the Director of Marketing (all administrative divisional staff). In addition, representatives from the offices of the Vice Principal Academic and Vice Principal Administration will also be interviewed on this issue. Semi-structured interviews were used. Secondly, in order to explore the perceptions and experiences of wearing the uniforms, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with staff using maximum variation sampling as advocated by Seidman (1991: 45). This means interviewing two people each from the following categories: administration, academic, technical division and the three services categories: catering, landscaping and security. Once all the data was collected, the data was systematically coded into categories derived from the research aims as per Thomas' (2003:05) recommendations and analyzed in accordance with methods outlined by Welman & Kruger (2001:195). Throughout the analysis a general inductive approach was followed to ensure that findings emerge from the raw data without constraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2003:02).

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1. Introduction

This literature review aims to identify the available theory on organisational culture and uniforms. Schein (1985: 30) states that culture is, “a shared pattern of thought, belief, feelings, and values that result from shared experiences and common learning”. The role of culture is to build capacity within the organisation in order that it may adapt and survive in an external world (Schein, 1985:50). This culture has to be developed. De Vries (2001: 228) compares the development of the culture of an organisation to that of a nation, where cultural values are learned or transmitted from generation to generation through parents, teachers and influential people in the community. These cultural values shape behaviour and action. Within an organisational context, Schein (1985: 26) explains that behavioural patterns are developed when a number of people behave in the same way, and when such behaviour is treated as normal and expected. This behaviour is also purposeful and patterned, and not mere random actions.

These patterns are identified by individuals for two reasons: firstly the need to avoid anxiety that is created when there is no meaning to behaviour and no predicted behaviour, and secondly, to enable the individual to be presented in a consistent pattern to others. These patterns are initially acted out with, “conscious meaning and intent”, but can turn into, “unconsciously motivated habits”(Schein, 1985: 27).

This research literature review will identify the different aspects of culture and its embedding and transmitting mechanisms in order to identify the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organisational culture. In order to identify the role of the uniform within an organisation, attention is given to the management of the appearance of individuals and groups, and the relation of the individual to the group, as well as the group to the organisation. Schein (1980: 145) defines a group as any number of people interacting with each other and perceiving themselves as a group. Furthermore, a group has contact with each other, thus an organisation is not a group. The management of appearance involves the deliberate

Comment [NP1]: 1985: 30

management of an individual's dress based on the premises that the appearance of such a person communicates a message (Kaiser, 1990: 308). This message may be a message about the culture of the organisation. Individuals may all dress to portray the same message or pattern, either intentionally or unintentionally. A deliberate attempt to portray a certain message or image, is achieved through the use of a prescribed dress code or uniform. The research will look at the role such uniform plays in embedding and transmitting organisational culture.

## **2.2 Organisational culture**

There are various definitions of organisational culture. Bryant (1999: 01) describes organisational culture as the personality of the organisation. This definition is an attempt to simplify a very complex issue. Whilst a variety of theorists e.g. Hofstede, Trompenaar, Quinn, and Schein (Pearce, 2004a: 12) have developed different models on organisational culture, in this literature review reference will be made to only some of these models.

### **2.2.1 Levels and dimensions of culture**

For the purpose of this study, the Schein model of organisational culture was used as a conceptual framework for organisational culture. This model has been selected as the most appropriate model for this research due to the explicit reference to artefacts, which includes uniforms. To understand where uniforms fit into organisational culture, the Schein model has to be explained first. Schein (1985: 14) distinguishes three levels of organisational culture: artefacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions.

#### **2.2.1.1 The first level of culture: artifacts**

The first identified level of culture, namely artefacts, includes the physical and social environment, technological output of the group, written and spoken language, artistic productions, and behaviour of its members. Schein (1985: 26) explains that artefacts are the most visible of the levels of culture and can further include physical constructs, such as physical layout, furniture, sound level and the clothing of the

employees. An example of this would be Schneider's (1998: 01) English department's job candidate who did not get the job due to his green polyester pants. In this case a professor's ability with regard to his occupation was judged on his clothing. Because his clothing was not acceptable to the people who interviewed him, he did not get the job. This research will refer to the professor in this example as Poly G., referring to his green pants. Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Petersen (2000: 75) describe such artefacts as symbols, which provide a tangible expression of a shared reality.

It can be difficult to test the cultural value of certain aesthetic artefacts because national cultural ideas differ about what is beautiful and in good taste. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 75) defines aesthetic experience as the tangible, sensory feature of the organisation. Aesthetics, in its widest contexts reflects three aspects namely, movement, colour and form (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003: 53). These aesthetic aspects are used in various ways within an organisation to portray the physical constructs as the first level of the organisations culture.

Schein (1985: 29) points out that the insiders of the culture are not always aware of the role these artefacts play in the culture of the organisation. This makes researching this level of culture difficult as asking members of organisations about the cultural artefacts will not be the most suitable means of gathering data. Instead, Schein suggests that observation is the preferred method of collecting information about the artefacts. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 74) further suggests that the researcher recognise the symbols or artefacts in their specific context and then "unravels" the interpretations within this context. Multiple members of the specific context area or organisation can then verify the reliability of these interpretations.

#### **2.2.1.1 The second level of culture: values**

The second level of culture is values, or in other words, "the sense of what ought to be" (Schein, 1985: 15). Values are formed when a group has shared an experience. This experience is often a problem for which a solution needs to be found. Once a successful solution has been established the group's shared perception of this success is transformed into a belief. An example of this is Polly G., the professor with the green polyester pants. The English department might have the espoused value of



academic professionalism, but the actions of the departmental members during the interview indicate a different shared perception. The interviewers perceived a successful English Professor to be dressed similar to them. The problem that the English department was faced with was to find a suitable professor. The solution the members of the department had was to judge the interviewees on their style of dressing. If this solution to the problem is successful, the group will accept it as correct, and thus accept the value of judging the appearance of candidates until such time that it becomes an unconscious belief or assumption. Therefore, a shared perception of success transforms a value into a belief (Schein, 1985: 17).

The value domains are less controllable because the taste of individuals belonging to certain ethnic groups cannot be prescribed or changed. Consensus through social validation is possible, but not automatic. Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Petersen (2000: 75) further explains that the influence that aesthetic experiences has on behaviour consists of a complex relationship between the person and the environment. According to Arbuthnot (2004: 05) the process of social validation would require leaders with emotional maturity and strong personal responsibility for their own influential behaviours to ensure the separation of people from behaviours, as this is necessary to reach a point of adopting the same acceptance with regard to the aesthetic matters such as uniforms. Through social validation the group can hold certain beliefs and assumptions for the purpose of maintaining the group (Schein, 1985: 16). This study will question the role the uniform, as an aesthetic matter, plays in embedding culture within the group.

#### **2.2.1.2 The third level of culture: underlying assumptions**

The third level of culture, according to Schein (1985: 15), is the basic underlying assumptions of the organisation or group. This implies that the solution to a problem that works repeatedly is taken for granted, and becomes reality with very little variation within a cultural unit. Schein's (1985: 26) theory states that within a culture there is only one solution to any set problem, and that such a solution is seen as the only acceptable way of solving the problem of the organisation or group, thereby forming a basic assumption. This is illustrated with the example of a group of whom

all members will have the same understanding of acceptable clothing for a given occasion. Comparing this to the example of this research, all the departmental members interviewing Poly G. found him unsuitable for the position based on the clothes he wore to the interview. The author further explains his concept of basic assumptions as that, which guides the behaviour, perceptions, and emotions of the group. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 76) affirms that symbols within the environment also guide people towards appropriate behaviour for a given situation. The authors named uniforms and nametags as example of such symbols within an organisation. Once an individual has become familiar with the organisation's norms and values, the assumption is that such an individual will behave accordingly. The authors found that the presence of symbols, such as the nametags, will bring forth assumptions regarding the organisation, which in its turn influence behaviour. This understanding can be compared to Schein's assumption as the third level of organisational culture.

In accessing and understanding the basic assumptions of an organisation's culture, Schein (1985, 20) suggests that interviews be used to surface assumptions, which in its turn will determine cultural patterns, through which culture is developed.

### **2.3 National culture versus organisational culture**

For the purpose of this research the difference between national culture and organisational culture have to be made explicit. National culture here refers to the influence ethnic orientation has on the culture of the category of people, for example, the Xhosa. Hall (1976: 238) states that individuals of different ethnic cultures who have to work together, experience difficulty because they unconsciously try to control and predict the other person's customs and values. Hall (1976: 241) suggests the solution to this as finding the individual's own identity, and thereby accepting the difference of the other's identity to that of yours. Thus, social comparison takes place, which defines the individual's social identity. Hofstede's (1991: 14) research findings have ascribed certain values to certain nationalities. These value characteristics are discussed in the following section of this research.

### **2.3.1 Schein's cultural model versus that of Hofstede**

Schein's three levels of culture can be compared with Hofstede's (1991: 07) five culture dimensions. A dimension of culture is defined as an aspect of the culture that can be measured relative to other cultures (Hofstede, 1991: 14). One of the differences between the two authors is that Schein focuses on organisational culture while Hofstede focuses on national culture. Schein's levels of culture has already been explained in the previous section of this chapter, therefore the five Hofstede dimensions of culture would now be described, in order to identify the difference between national culture, and that of organisations. Hofstede has identified the following five cultural dimensions: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism, masculinity/ femininity and lastly, short-term versus long-term orientation (Hills, 2002: 10).

#### **2.3.1.1 Power distance**

Power distance is the first of Hofstede's dimensions of national culture. It refers to the inequality that, according to Hofstede (1991: 23), exists in all societies, and the relationship between this inequality and authority (Hofstede, 1991: 13). As practical example Hofstede mentions the decision-making style of the leader or boss, such as an autocratic style, which will result in an increase in power distance. This indicates that people are either all viewed as equal (low power distance), or there would be some with more power than others, depending on their position in society. In a typical high power distance culture, authority will not be questioned and people will be afraid to express disagreement. The low power distance dimension, on the other hand, accepts that authority will improve when questioned, and that it is the responsibility of the individual to question authority. This manager will not consult his subordinates. Furthermore a typical low power distance culture would indicate that authority is informed by its constituents, while the high power distance culture authority figure is expected to know what is best, and should therefore provide what is needed. In a low power distance culture, authority will come with responsibility, while the high power distance culture's authority requires responsibility.

### **2.3.1.2 Uncertainty avoidance.**

Hofstede (1991: 113) defines uncertainty avoidance culture as, “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations”. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance is based on the principle that extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety (Hofstede, 1991: 110). These anxiety levels differ from one nationality to the next. A low uncertainty avoidance dimension of culture indicates that there is greater acceptance for change and decisions are made quickly, even if it is at a risk. The systems and procedures are continuously challenged through debate and communication. On the other end of the continuum, a high uncertainty avoidance culture will indicate that there are many rules that guide behaviour, and the followers of the rules will be less willing to change. Decision-making is a slow process, and risks are only taken if the group agrees. Individuals or groups will not challenge any aspect of the governance of the organization. Such individuals or groups will also feel threatened by unknown or uncertain situations (Pearce, 2004a: 03).

### **2.3.1.3 Individualism – Collectivism.**

Individualism signifies the power of the group over the individual. Individualist societies are those where the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group (Hofstede, 1991: 50). The personal identity of the individualist is different from the identity of the group, and such individuals are not in favour of being classified according to their group membership. Collectivist culture societies are those where the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. In a collectivist culture society the individual has a role to play in the group, and the belonging to the group determines the individual’s worth. In a collectivist culture society, age, importance in society, status in the group, honour and behaviour will ensure respect. The individualist will see accomplishments, competence and contribution to the group as a way to acquire respect. In an individualist culture society, men, women and children have equal rights, while collectivists ascribe more status to adult males. Caring for others in the group is portraying a person’s success in a collectivist society, and the individual is guided from childhood to fulfil his or her specific role in society. In this type of society you also find large “psychological

distances between, in- and out-groups” (Fischer, 2004: 08). In the individualistic culture society these distances are minimised, due to the notion that all are equal. Individualists are brought up to be independent of the group, to be self-sufficient, and to accept that success will bring inner wealth. Material success is accepted as symbols of the success and achievements of the individualist. In a collectivist culture society it is more important who the co-workers are, whether the job is challenging, and if there are training opportunities rather than opportunity for self-expression.

#### **2.3.1.4 Masculinity – Femininity**

Hofstede (1991: 82) defines masculine culture societies as societies with distinct social gender roles, such as men who are tough and assertive and women who are concerned with quality of life. Feminine culture societies are those who have overlapping social roles, such as both men and women being modest and tender. Hofstede (1991: 80) refers to the difference amongst certain nationalities with regard to assertiveness and modesty. The author mentions how Americans are naturally assertive, while the Dutch are modest in nature. To both these nationalities theirs are good attributes, but once the two cultures compete for employment, the Dutch might be seen as a sucker, while the American might be seen as a “bragger”. Assertiveness and modesty are seen as gender cultures, and are learned and not inborn. Assertiveness and competitiveness are seen as masculine, while modesty, politeness and the nurturing of relationships are seen as feminine, although the terminology does not refer to male and female gender (Hofstede, 1998: 11). Masculine culture societies find recognition an important aspect of the work environment, while feminine culture societies value good working relationships, and recognition for accomplishments are not important. In feminine culture societies it is important to have a job that is secure, while the masculine culture society appreciates challenges and personal achievement as a good working environment. This dimension will be referred to again in the discussion on appearance management.

#### **2.3.1.5 Long-term – Short-term orientation.**

According to Hofstede (1991: 263) short-term orientation as cultural dimension, refers to “the fostering of virtues” related to the past and present. This includes

respect for traditions and social obligations. Long-term orientation culture stands for virtues slanting towards future rewards, such as perseverance and thrift, and investing in the future. This orientation also believes that traditions should be adapted and modernized. Further characteristics of the long-term culture dimension are that it uses resources sparingly, and will persevere towards slow results. Short-term culture orientation indicates a tendency to always look for easier options; to expect quick results; to base actions on history and current circumstances; and to keep up with others. This culture will also value the reciprocating of gifts, favours and greetings. These value orientations or culture dimensions as discussed above, are similar to the aspects contained in Schein's third level of culture, namely, the basic assumptions.

### **2.3.2 The relationship between cultural dimensions and uniforms.**

Hofstede's instrument and the resulting interviews enable the researcher to draw value profiles of groups, pointing out the differences and similarities. Schein's (1985: 28) theory on cultural dimensions states that there is only one solution to a given problem, and that such a solution is the only acceptable way of solving the problem of the organisation or group. Acceptance of this solution makes it a basic assumption. To refer back to the example of dress code for specific occasions, it is argued that Schein's (1980: 145) typical organisation or group, will have a certain understanding of acceptable clothing for a given occasion. Hofstede (1991: 15), however, applies the basic assumptions of the group to national cultures by taking all affected ethnic cultures into consideration when looking for a solution to the question, for example, acceptable dress for a given situation.

Schein and Hofstede have thus identified the same dimensions of culture. Hofstede's dimensions are not exclusively for the purpose of organisational culture, but were developed as national culture dimensions. Hofstede (1991: 180), however, points out that organisational culture is affected by national culture, since employees of the organisation have been exposed to a specific nationality and its culture from birth. This indicates that values learnt cannot be changed instantly once such an individual becomes an employee at an organisation. This view is supported by De Vries' (2001: 228) statement that culture is learned through parents, teachers and influential people in the community.

Apart from the nationality that influences a person's behavior, it is argued that clothing will also influence a person's behavior and the individual's identity. The influence of aesthetic experiences on behaviour consists of a complex relationship between the person and the environment (Ashkanasy, et. al., 2000: 75). In an organisation it would be necessary to adopt the same acceptance of aesthetic values. In this way the group can hold certain beliefs and assumptions for the purpose of maintaining the group (Schein, 1985: 16). This would only be possible through discussion and quality dialogue, where participants can give their honest opinions in an open and free manner.

In addition to individualism, the cultural function and meaning of clothes should also be considered, since some tribal people do not wear clothes for two reasons; firstly, due to the climate in which they live, and secondly their nakedness displays equality in relationships with no need for rank distinction, expression of power or violence (Davey, 2003; 06). Veltheim (2004; 01) explains the need for clothing as a way to hide one's own deficiencies, and therefore humans developed a cultural dependency on clothing. This dependency differs from one ethnic orientation to the next.

Generally, Western cultures are embracing individualism more than Eastern cultures, where belonging is rated much higher (Kaiser, 1990: 473). Western cultures here refer specific to the people from France, Germany and the United States, but the definition includes countries that embrace individual freedom. Eastern cultures in this context focus mainly on the Far East, with reference to people from China and Japan. The influence that ethnic orientation has on culture is consistent with Hofstede's dimensions of culture, which refers to Individualistic societies, compared to Collectivist societies. This also explains why some national cultures embrace individualism while others prefer to take on the identity of the group.

To explain the difference in perceptions of acceptable appearances between different cultures, reference should be made to Hofstede's classification of national cultures as either masculine or feminine. Using this classification of cultures, Hofstede assigns certain characteristics to specific nationalities. What is of interest to this study is the discussion of the masculine and feminine cultural qualities in relation to the attention people pay to their appearances. Therefore, if an organisation has employees from

different cultures, the employees will have different viewpoints regarding their appearance. The appearance of the employees is thus a less controllable value domain, because consensus with regard to acceptable dress code is possible, but not automatic and would require a process of social validation to obtain the best solution for the organisation.

According to Rafaeli and Pratt (1993; 55) the style of dress carries valuable symbolic messages of particularly status and power, through its design, colour and material. The combination of these three aspects of the design may also contribute to stereotyping, for example suits, that are stereotyped as masculine and synthetic fabrics that supposedly indicate lower class. To return to the professor with the green polyester pants, might it be that he was stereotyped as lower class due to the synthetic fabric? Or did the green colour of his pants have anything to do with it? According to Johnson (2004: 02), green symbolise masculinity, conservativeness and implies wealth, thus the English professor had contrasting messages conveyed through his pants.

#### **2.4 The development of culture: embedding, articulation and reinforcement mechanisms.**

Schein (1985: 223 - 243) proposes that culture can be embedded and transmitted through primary embedding mechanisms and secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms. Primary embedding mechanisms, known as culture creators, refer to visible and audible behaviour patterns, as part of the artefacts that form the first level of culture. The primary embedding mechanisms signify the role and behaviour of the leaders of an organisation. The secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms of culture indicate the design elements within the organisation, as well as the organisation's values. These mechanisms will now be discussed further.



## **2.4.1 Primary embedding mechanisms**

### **2.4.1.1 Leadership behaviour**

The first primary embedding mechanism is the leadership behaviours, such as what leaders pay attention to, and what they measure and control on a regular basis (Schein, 1985: 226). Meetings and planning sessions are normally an important source of information as the questions leaders ask and how they set their agendas for meetings determine the leader's focal point. Other important signals that employees interpret as evidence of the leaders' assumptions are the matters or areas that do not elicit a reaction. Employees interpret these areas as unimportant.

### **2.4.1.2 Leadership behaviour in crises situations**

The next embedding mechanism that Schein highlights is the leader's reaction to critical incidents and organisational crises, since the employees or groups learn the most when they share intense emotional experiences, such as a crisis situation. The successful solutions to problems shape the values of the organisation. Values were discussed as second level of organisational culture.

### **2.4.1.3 Role modelling.**

Deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching by leaders can also be used as an embedding mechanism to create culture. Since assumptions and values are communicated more powerfully through informal messages, all actions and reactions of the leaders influence employee behaviour patterns.

### **2.4.1.4 Allocation of rewards and status.**

Another primary embedding mechanism is the criteria for the allocation of rewards and status. This includes human resource management aspects, such as promotion criteria, the appraisal of performance and organisational punishment. The way in which these aspects are handled carries messages of what is important to the organisation, thereby shaping the culture. The values and assumptions of what is rewarded can be formed from both the policy documentation and from the actual

practise of procedures. It should be noted that where the two are not consistent the actual practise rather than policy is more informative of the culture of the organisation. Rewards and promotions within an organisation should be consistent with the assumptions of the employees with regard to the important aspects within the organisation. This will ensure that the culture is embedded within the organisation. If there is non-alignment between the values that the organisation aspires to and the reward system, the latter will shape the assumptions and thus the culture will reflect the behaviour that actually gets rewarded.

#### **2.4.1.5 Recruitment, selection, promotion, retirement and excommunication.**

The last primary culture embedding mechanism is the criteria for recruitment, selection, promotion, retirement and excommunication. Schein (1985: 235) states that, “the success of culture lies in the success of the recruitment effort”. This subtle embedding mechanism operates unconsciously in most organisations, as organisations find attractive those candidates that bear a resemblance to present members in style, assumptions, values, and beliefs. These applicants are then perceived to be the best candidates. An example of how the recruitment procedure acts as a culture embedding mechanism is that of Poly G.. Schneider (1998: 01) mentions how different academic institutions in America have different dress styles, for example the South dresses up, while the Midwest dresses down. Although the article does not refer to uniforms, it does indicate that clothing plays a role in your career right from the recruitment stage, and that it can have an influence on the basic assumptions of the individual and the organisation.

#### **2.4.2 Secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms.**

##### **2.4.2.1 Organisational structure and design**

The first secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms are the organisational structure and design, which includes elements, such as the hierarchy within the organisation and the leadership style applied. Organisational structure is closely linked to leadership style. For example, the trend has been to move away from the traditional pyramid structure to new flatter structures due to the increased popularity

of work teams and processes, resulting in flatter structures, where the authority is distributed and people work more independently, with limited use of rules, regulations and procedures (Nel, et. al., 2001: 418). Through the appropriate selection of the organisational structure, leaders have the opportunity to embed their assumptions into the organisation, whilst also being able to articulate the reasons for the specific design of the organisation.

#### **2.4.2.2 Organisational systems and procedures**

The second articulation and reinforcement mechanism is the organisational systems and procedures. These are the most visible part of the organisation, and includes all recurrent tasks, such as reports, forms, procedures and other relevant routines, whether occurring weekly, monthly or annually. The user often does not know the origin of such systems and procedures, but it lends structure and predictability to the organisation. This serves to reduce anxiety within the organisation. Leaders can reinforce their assumptions by implementing systems and routines around them. The systems and procedures used can serve to focus attention on the important aspects of the organisation, thereby reinforcing the primary embedding mechanisms. An example of this is where line managers are fully responsible for their section, while the finances are controlled centrally. This results in conflicting ideas or messages being sent out, namely, that of decentralised responsibility versus the centralised business model. The inconsistent design logic can then create tension between the subculture of the line organisation and that of the finance organisation (Schein, 1985: 240).

#### **2.4.2.3 Design of physical space, facades and buildings**

The third articulation and reinforcement mechanism consists of the design of physical space, facades and buildings, thus encompassing all the visible features of the organisation. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 75) refers to the physical objects as that which portrays organisational life. The design of physical space, facades and buildings all consist of similar design elements, therefore the influence of these design elements would be similar. One type of façade is the uniform worn by employees. Schein (1985: 26) explains how the clothing of the employee is one of the factors giving an

impression to the outsider, of a shared pattern, which constitutes the culture. The English department where Poly G. applied for a position had a specific way of dressing that they perceived as an acceptable pattern to outsiders. Unfortunately for Poly G. he did not conform to the pattern and therefore did not get the job. In the same way the physical environment can reinforce the messages from the leadership, and not merely be the assumptions of an architect or designer. Schein (1985: 240) uses the example of the open office as a design decision for reinforcing communication structures. The open office would enhance informal communication because the office workers will have continuous interaction with each other. The resulting familiarity of the workers with each other will improve teamwork. In this example a decision was made to have an organisational structure based on teamwork. This was then reinforced by the design and layout of the office.

Schein (1985: 242) emphasises the information available on the organisation through such physical constructs, provided that one knows how to interpret the detail, while leaders can also use such physical constructs to communicate. This function of artefacts is supported by Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 79), who indicates that the public interprets symbols and artefacts of the organisation to form an opinion of the identity of the organisation.

#### **2.4.2.4 Stories about important people and events**

The primary embedding mechanisms are further reinforced by stories about important events and people (Schein, 1985: 242). This is possible only once the group has accumulated some history. The history becomes embodied in stories, which reinforces assumptions and teaches assumptions to newcomers, although the communication is somewhat unreliable and the leadership cannot control the stories. In the example of Poly G., the English department also had stories of other people who dressed outside the norm. These stories indicated the incapability of these professors to lecture, and a direct link is made to the way these people dress. Leaders can, however, reinforce stories that contribute positively to the culture of the organisation, while they can also make themselves more visible to increase the likelihood of stories being told about them. However, the leaders do not have much control over the stories.

#### **2.4.2.5 Formal statements of organisational philosophy, creeds and charters**

The last reinforcement method advocated by Schein (1985: 242) is that of formal statements of organisational philosophy, creeds and charters. Here leaders can state clearly the values and assumptions of the organisation. These statements will not include all assumptions, but will serve to emphasise those that lend themselves to public articulation. However, formal statements cannot be seen as a way of defining the culture of the organisation.

#### **2.4.3 The interrelationship between the primary embedding mechanisms and the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms.**

Schein (1985: 245) states that the primary embedding mechanisms are more powerful than the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms, since the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms can be ambiguous. However, the secondary articulation mechanisms can reinforce the primary messages if the leader is able to control them. All these mechanisms, both primary and secondary, communicate culture to newcomers to the organisation, while also serving the purpose of managing the organisation's communication by its leadership.

### **2.5 The role of groups in organisational culture**

Before discussing the individual's identification with groups and the organisation, the meaning of a group should be clarified. Schein (1980; 145) defines a psychological group as any number of people interacting with each other, and aware of each other, while also perceiving themselves as a group.

#### **2.5.1 Formation of groups**

Pertaining to this study, it is important to determine whether people in the same working environment and in the same organisation comprise a group. In answer to this, Schein (1980; 147) states that a department does not necessarily constitute a group, as employees do not necessarily all interact, and are not all aware of each other. However, work teams, subparts of a department and committees are defined as

groups. There are two types of groups within the workplace. The first being formal groups as would be created by managers, and the second being informal groups which exist as a result of relationships forged due to the physical location of people, the nature of their work and other factors, such as time schedules. These aspects would have to be considered when doing research on the influence of uniforms on organisational culture because the affiliation with informal groups will influence the appearance perception of the individuals within the informal group.

Schein (1980; 147) mentions the fact that the informal group often come to serve a “counter-organisational function”, and that such powerful groups can subvert the formal goals of the organisation. Managers often plan the physical space in such a way to prevent such informal group formation. This deliberate planning of space to influence group formation positively compares to the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism referring to the design of physical space, facades and buildings, as referred to under the heading embedding mechanisms. These visible features of the organisation contribute to the establishment of a shared pattern of impressions and behaviour, which results in organisational culture. Therefore, group formation and the reinforcement of culture are interrelated with regard to physical space and facades, which includes clothing and uniforms.

### **2.5.2 The function of groups**

One of the functions of groups is to enhance people’s sense of identity and to maintain their self-esteem. These groups then determine and identify who they are and what their status will be (Schein, 1980: 151). Uniforms and other external manifestations, such as badges of office, can serve as status symbols as it helps to sustain the identity and self-esteem of individuals. Stapley (1996: 59) states that individual identity formation is necessary before integration into a group identity is possible.

### **2.5.3 Group formation and personal identity**

Group formation and integration is a process and membership is often shown through clothing and adornment (Stapley, 1996; 68). The author further discusses the

boundaries needed by individuals and groups, which helps them to make sense of their world. This relates to Schein's (1985: 50) definition of organisational culture as capacity building to survive in the external world. Stapley (1996; 71) further mentions that these boundaries can also be physical constructs, such as rooms. Since rooms are an artefact just like buildings and facades (Schein, 1984: 14), uniforms, as a similar artefact can also be used as such a spatial boundary, with the purpose of making sense of the chaos. Poly G's interviewees were making sense of their situation, by determining that he is not suitable for the job due to the clothes he wore. Therefore, the artefact, his green polyester pants, excluded him from the group. Other boundaries mentioned by the author are the psychological boundaries, which determines who belongs to the group. The psychological boundaries are in its turn based on the assumptions of the combined individuals.

There are two types of identities, namely personal identity and social identity. Personal identity includes aspects, such as the attributes that makes an individual unique; the persistence of the individual to be the same in the past and present; and the evidence used to determine this identity. The different kinds of evidence include the memory, as well as the "bodily" evidence (Olsen, 2002:03), such as Poly G.'s pants. Stapley (1996; 53) discusses the relation between identity and objects, and refers to the body image as a representation of the ego itself. Thus the adornment of the body can be compared with the manifestation of the ego or self-esteem.

Olsen (2002: 07) states that your mental features such as personality, beliefs and memories influence your identity. If your identity is mostly influenced or shaped by the latter, it is consistent with the Psychological Approach, which is a theory of identity that is used to determine an individual's identity. The Psychological Approach is the opposite of the Somatic Approach. This Somatic Approach states that an individual's identity consists in physical relation. The individual's identity, therefore, consists in the identity of the body and its adornment, namely clothing. If this identity theory is considered, it means that an individual who has to wear a uniform is forced to change his or her identity. Poly G's interviewees also used the Somatic Approach in judging his identity. This matter will be discussed again in the section on the purpose of clothing for the individual.

#### **2.5.4 Group formation and social identity**

The other identity model, namely Social Identity Theory, is based on three ideas called the CIC. The first idea of the theory is the categorising of objects and people to understand the environment. The Social Psychology Department at ANU (1999: 01), illustrates these categories with examples such as black, white, Christian, Muslim and various other categories that are useful to describe the context of the group the individual belongs to. The second idea of social identity refers to identification. Humans identify with groups that they consider themselves to belong to. They refer to such groups as “us”, thereby making the group their social identity. This identification takes place because they are identical or similar to the other individuals within the group. The third idea of social identity is that of social comparison. This means that individuals compare themselves with others similar to them to evaluate themselves. Social Identity also links with the Rational Identity model, which refers to the identity of the individual that in it has no significance, but when placed next to or amongst other identities has meaning and identity. To return to the example, Poly G. did not dress similar to the other members of the English Department, and therefore he was not seen to be able to become “one of them”. These different identities all form part of the individual’s self-esteem.

Research has been done on teenage groups and clothing or dressing. Nellis (2001: 01) states that groups help teenagers form their own identity and express their belonging to the group through the way they dress. No research has been found on group dressing of adult groups in direct relation to the workplace and organisational culture.

#### **2.5.5 Identity and culture**

These identity theories are coherent with Hofstede (1991: 50)’s argument that there are two types of personal identities. The first is that of the individualist, who values an identity that is different from that of the group. Such an individual would therefore prefer to dress uniquely. The other personal identity belongs to the collectivist category, where the identity of the group is more important than that of the individual. The individual from this category would strive to dress similar to the rest of the group. This is consistent with the authors Individualism dimension of culture.



## 2.5.6 Social identity versus organisational identity

The individual belongs to a social identity, but not necessarily the same social identity that the organisation belongs to. It is based on this scenario that Chemers, Oskamp and Constanzo (1995:21) state that the use of uniforms will have little impact on the subscription to group values, due to the different social identities the individuals belong to. On the other hand, if the individuals subscribe to the same values, it would be easier to institute uniform dressing as the social identity has already been formulated.

Comment [NP2]: Only use *et al.* from second citing of a reference.

## 2.6 The purpose of clothing

According to Kaiser (1990; 04) clothes are worn for one of three reasons: for protection against the elements of nature; for modesty; or to attract the opposite sex. In addition, Hofstede (1998: 59) identifies that clothing serves as an instrument for personal expression. The way a person dresses can satisfy one of three needs: firstly, the need to be well groomed; secondly the need for status; and thirdly, the need for individuality (Hofstede, 1998: 59). Therefore, the way in which the clothing is selected and combined will make a statement about the person or the situation in which it is worn. Kaiser (1990; 411) states that clothes often institute the cultural divide of the world. Most cultures further divide people according to gender, physical attractiveness, age, social class, and ethnicity. In support of this statement, Parker (2000: 87) mentions that clothing is one of the differentiating factors when people are classified, together with age, dialect, skin colour and gender, into different membership categories. These cultural categories relate to social stratification, or social economical inequality. Hofstede (1991: 17) advocates that gender, generation and class cultures does not constitute groups, but categories of people who only form part of a social system, thus the researcher should carefully distinguish between groups and categories.

### 2.6.1 Purpose of Clothing for the Individual

Hofstede (1998: 59) has found that the bigger the need for power, the more attention is given to the way the individual or group dresses. It is stated that dressing is a way

of “facing a threatening world”. This explains the statement that the establishment of a person’s appearance is a social transaction. Our appearances replace our past and present, and propose an anticipation of what might happen in the future (Kaiser, 1990: 322). Appearance lays the foundation for social transaction and social values. Furthermore appearance is also portrayed in Schein’s first level of culture, namely artefacts. The two concepts of the appearance process consist of the programs, which are the responses made of the wearer by the wearer, as well as the review, which is the interpretation other people make of the wearer. If the program and the review coincide, the appearance is said to be meaningful, as it carries across the message that was intended by the wearer.

The elements of social stratification are status, prestige, privilege and power (Kaiser, 1990; 414). Hall (1976: 193) states that social hierarchies, social grouping and emotion has been part of the human nature for so long, that it would not be easily changed. This notion is supported by Hofstede’s (1991: 23) statement that all societies have a degree of inequality, were some people are given more respect and status than others.

When individuals interact socially with others, the appearance perception program of the wearer is re-evaluated, so that new programs can be established for the future. This constant re-evaluation and programming determines the individual’s identity, and is not affected by fashion changes, or changes in personal situations, as the programs that people initiate will take past reviews of themselves and other’s clothes into account. This is supported by Johnson, (1988: 06) who explains that the clothes a person would choose to wear, indicates the personality of the person, as individuals communicate something about themselves through the clothes they wear. Did Poly G. maybe want to tell people that he does not waste his time thinking of fashion, but that he lives for the subject that he teaches? This form of communication also influences the confidence of the individual with regard to his identity. Kaiser (1990: 150) is of the opinion that individuals will guide their actions to be desirable to others. Individuals, thus strive towards suitable appearances in relation to their cultural, historical, social and ethnic context. The individual’s clothing conforms to that of a specific group to whom he or she relates. This is called “social location” (Kaiser, 1990: 153).

Kaiser (1990: 155) also refers to another type of social location, where the parents will select the clothing for infants, and thereby determining the infants' appearance programs. If one does not choose one's own clothing, it is referred to as "investiture". The individual is thus are placed in a specific context through the use of dress. Choosing clothes for another person undermines that person's personality or individuality through the changing of such an individual's appearance program (Industry Week, 1970: 53). This poses the question as to what happens with the individual's identity when he or she wears a uniform, especially if the individual's identity is based on the Somatic Approach referred to under the section on group formation and personal identity.

Hofstede (1998: 58) further states that fashion is perceived as "foreign", and therefore it can ascribe status to the wearer. The author says that masculine cultures find foreign goods more attractive, and thus will dress more fashionably. Status expresses power, success or position, and is the reason why it relates more to masculine cultures than to feminine cultures. Hofstede (1998: 60) also found that feminine cultures buy cheap watches, while masculine cultures reveal their status through the watches that they wear. Accessorising, therefore, corresponds with the need to wear fashionable clothing and helps to shape the Somatic Approach identity.

## **2.6.2 Purpose of clothing for the organisation**

The purpose of the uniform is to identify individuals as members of the organisation. This is supported by the purposes of uniforms, outlined by Moore (2004: 34), as that of identification and for security purposes. Fussell (2003: 02) explains that uniforms help define who the wearers are, as well as indicate what the wearers believe they are. Officials at IOMA (2003: 02) state that employees who work amongst the public enhance the public's sense of security, as is the case at the Mount Rainier National Park, where maintenance staff and landscapers are wearing uniforms. The sense of protection that is created in this way was proved by a study done at the University of Chicago (IOMA, 2003: 02). The results of the research were that the uniforms reduce illegal activity just by their presence. It was also noted that some employees opposed the idea of wearing uniforms. Kaiser (1990: 362) refers to research done by Nathan

Joseph on organisational culture and clothing norms, where the conclusion was reached by Joseph that a group has to distinguish itself from others before uniforms can be used to portray messages about the organisation. In contrast to Kaiser's reference, Moore (2004: 34) lists building team spirit and productivity as purposes of uniforms, or corporate wardrobes.

### **2.6.2.1 Distinction between uniforms and corporate wear.**

Ashkanasy et. al. (2000: 465) distinguishes between uniforms and company clothing, where the uniforms are the garments worn by organisations that represent state authority, such as the police and fire departments. When people working for the same organisation dress similar, it is referred to as organisational dress, while uniforms are a specific form of organisational dress. Uniformed organisations, according to Ashkanasy et. al.'s definition, are defined through the level of control of the organisation over the individual, as well as the emphasis on hierarchy and authoritarian ideology and a distinct chain of command.

The difference between a uniform and corporate wardrobe is defined in the sense that a corporate wardrobe consists of fashionable, wearable clothing for employees, to ensure employees on all levels are ambassadors for the organisation, while in contrast, uniforms, according to Moore (2004: 32), are the way workers used to dress in similar garments selected due to practical considerations. Uniforms were normally not worn by management. If all employees wear a "corporate wardrobe", it supports the dimension of culture where organisational design is striving towards flat structures to indicate the value of the employees and their contribution to the organisation. If all employees wear a corporate wardrobe, there will not be visible differences in dress codes, unless special uniforms are required for hazardous specialist work. Moore further emphasises the choice of the corporate wardrobe to be consistent with the purpose of the wardrobe within the organisation, while the staff requirements with regard to the uniforms is also important. If an organisation does not have uniforms, a written or informal dress code will exist.

In contrast, Fussell (2003: 03) defines uniforms as what most people prefer to wear. He refers to the "Dark Business Suit" as a uniform along with the "standard dark blue

uniforms worn by police officers” and divides uniforms into two categories: honorific and stigmatic. To explain honorific uniforms, the author uses the example of police uniforms, while the overalls worn by prisoners are used to illustrate stigmatic uniforms. According to Fussell, individuals wear uniforms as prescribed by their occupation or situation, to ensure that they fit in with the group, and not draw attention to themselves. This is because of the interaction amongst people that is based on the perceptions that people form of one another. Schein (1980: 145) explains culture as a solution to a problem. The problem at hand is to identify an appropriate form of dress for the work place. The solution to the problem according to Fussell, is wearing a business suit. If everybody wears this suit, everybody fits into the group, as well as the business occupation category. The culture of the group is then to wear the dress code acceptable to the business environment.

For purposes of this research the term “uniform” refers to the garments worn by employees with the exception of those garments that were selected due to its safety and practical considerations. This is inline with Fussell’s (2003: 03) argument above.

#### **2.6.2.2 Organisational dress codes**

When a large number of people are together, it becomes difficult to control the way they dress, and thus dress codes are normally instituted. This dress code, either written or informal, will vary according to the degree of contact the individual has with the public, the region in which the organisation operates, as well as the cultural and historical context of the organisation. The importance of an organisational dress code for individuals in contact with the customer is supported by Industry Week (1970: 53). This publication has identified the hiring of employees whose attire and grooming resembles that of the customer as an important organisational strategy to enhance the organisation’s business by pleasing customers and clients. This is consistent with Schein’s third level of culture, where assumptions are used to form the culture of the organisation. In this context the assumption refers to the opinion that the customer or client forms of the organisation, based on the physical construct, namely the dress code (appearance) of the employee that are visibly available to the client or customer.

Formal (written) organisational dress codes become problematic when fashion changes (Kaiser, 1990: 366). Gillis (2000a: 02) has a solution to this problem of changing fashion and its effect on dress codes, and states that organisational dress code policies should be revised every year, to be mindful of the latest fashion trends. This is necessary even if the organisation wears uniforms, especially if the Casual Dress Friday is adhered to. Moore (2004: 34), however, mentions that organisations are moving away from the Casual Friday “look”, as it results in the work ethic becoming “casual” as well. Instead, organisations are returning to the formal look, to improve productivity. The dress code policy should also include a non-acceptable list, which is circulated with the Employee Appearance Policy. Gillis further mentions different dress codes for front office staff and field workers, due to the different work performed, and the environment in which they work. The author points out the importance of handling culprits not complying with the dress code very diplomatically, by calling them aside and discussing the matter with them. In another article Gillis addresses the problem by advising leaders to put posters with unacceptable clothing, with the international stop sign superimposed over it, up during the induction of new staff. It is said that this conveys the message without the leader having to focus on the matter too extensively (Gillis, 2000b: 11).

Organisations, however, has found that formal dress codes are not necessary because social control produces conformity, and people take cues from one another with regards to their dress code. This aspect was also highlighted by the Industry Week (1970: 53), where management of organisations relied heavily on example, conversation and peer pressure to shape dress and grooming habits. In large organisations, however, where there is limited personal interaction amongst individuals, dress codes are necessary to ensure that all employees communicate the same cultural message through the way they dress. This is especially important since many business interactions takes place outside one’s own territory. When this is the case, customers evaluate personal appearance rather than surroundings to form an assumption of the type of organisation the employee represents. Large organisations, due to their size, do not have personal interaction amongst individuals, and the interaction that does take place is often on a first –impression basis. Kaiser (1990: 365) further states that the impression that management wants to create with dress codes, is that of seriousness, decisiveness and dependability.

### **2.6.3 Aspects that would influence the choice of organisational dress.**

An aspect that would influence the selection of uniforms for an organisation refers to the interaction of groups with regards to the aesthetic aspects of the uniforms. Individuals within the group might have expectations, with regard to these aesthetic (visual) aspects of the uniform, that differ from those of the group. Group members, however, can exhibit their degree of mutual interests and collective tastes when selecting the design of the uniforms. Such mutual interests include: firstly, the establishing and testing of the shared cultural reality; and secondly, the reduction of insecurity, anxiety and a sense of powerlessness amongst group members. These aspects are addressed by the use of the uniform because it serves a problem-solving function and as a task-accomplishing mechanism (Schein, 1980; 151).

To overcome the degree of variation in the mutual interests of the various groups within an organisation, the four qualities of organisations should be acknowledged: firstly a formality prevails which promotes collective goals, rules, policies and procedures; secondly organisations have hierarchical structures based on positions of influence and power; thirdly, organisations also consist of large numbers of people, who do not all have close interactions; lastly organisations last longer than a lifetime (Kaiser, 1990; 361). With regard to the first quality of organisations it should be noted that a group within an organisation is governed by rules, procedures and traditions (Kaiser, 1990; 361). Companies should, in addition to these rules and regulations, also have rules and policies with regard to dress code.

In large organisations, it is also stated that the ability of individuals are often judged on visible cues, such as appearance. Uniforms not only identify individuals as employees of an organisation, but also identify the individual's rank and status within the organisation (Kaiser, 1990: 362). It is for this reason then that organisations uses uniforms to indicate the positions of power within the organisation. Kaiser (1990: 363) advises that the analysis of uniform requirements should be done with an understanding of why people obey rules and power. She states that power and obedience are not opposites, but that people obey power to be effective, powerful, reliable and accountable. Power and obedience are thus intertwined to effectively

negotiate the organisational reality. To emphasise the different power or status levels within the organisation, some uniforms might symbolise certain status roles.

Another quality of organisations is that they consist of a large number of people. Where such a large number of people are together the identification of employees and the distinction between employees and customers or clients are problematic. Uniforms serve the purpose of identification, visibility, and expression of organisational roles. It also symbolises the develop culture that is linked to the context in which it is embedded. Some organisations adopt symbols through the use of uniforms. Kaiser (1990: 365) uses the example of the Salvation Army portraying a symbol of goodwill through the use of its militaristic uniforms. However, the uniforms were based on the public's image of the military at the time of the inception of the uniforms. Once an organisation has distinguished itself from others and developed a uniform, the uniform serves as a system or code for interpreting the organisation.

The organisation's lifetime is independent of that of the employees. Because of this, the image and message that are portrayed through the image are important, and should be able to be continued, even if the same people are not employed anymore.

Individuals within the organisation have the responsibility to portray the image of the organisation and what it represents. Moore (2004: 33) states that a company's image is shaped through the interaction of the employees with the customers and clients. Consequently, corporate work wear is used to ensure that organisations "stand out amongst the crowd" (Moore, 2004: 33). The author testifies that the company's image is shaped through the interaction of the employees with the customers and clients. Individuals within the organisation, therefore, have the responsibility to portray the image of the organisation, as well as the values the organisation represents. To enable the organisation to achieve this, Moore suggests the use of a corporate wardrobe.



## **2.7 Clothing as an artefact of culture**

As noted by Schein (1985:26) clothing in general, and uniforms specifically, communicates a cultural message. In support of this, Parker (2000:01) indicates that managers can manipulate culture positively through activities and symbols, where uniforms are such a symbol. This implies making conscious decisions as to the role and importance of uniforms in influencing culture.

The interpretation of the appearance happens automatically, though for social interaction the perceiver will consider all the possible meanings of the appearance (Kaiser, 1990: 09). If clothing is thus used as means to communicate, then uniforms, as a type of clothing, can be used within an organisation to communicate a cultural message to the surrounding community. This role of the uniform in embedding and transmitting the culture of the organisation serves as basis for this study.

To further the idea of uniforms to be used as means of communicating organisational culture, Kaiser (1990: 308) discusses the fact that communication involves both appearance and discourse, where appearance is a prelude to subsequent interaction. Appearance is defined here as that which is visual, nonverbal, and non-discursive, while discourse includes both verbal and nonverbal discursive messages. Appearance, therefore, as a visual element, always communicates and gives meaning to the discourse or message, while people are interacting. These messages can be either intentional or unidirectional, in which case it would need the perceiver to use social cognition to interpret the message. This is called “unintentional signification” (Kaiser, 1990: 311) while appearance communication might be considered a by-product of this signification. If, however, the sender of the appearance message wears a typical business suit, and the receiver of the message routinely and automatically processes the message, there is no need for the interpretation of the appearance. A situation like this is referred to by Kaiser as “boredom”, and prevents any need for continuing communication. This means that in a business situation, the focus of the communicators can be on the business at hand instead of on the communication of the clothing. There is also a need for social construction through communication when a) there is a need to identify individuals, and b) when there is a need to identify and /or negotiate a situation, while in other situations the appearance is more routine. Thus,

appearance influences the perceptions we form of people, and thus guide our interaction with others.

Individuals within the organisation occupy certain positions within the organisational structure, and advancement in the individual's career would indicate an upward advancement in the ranks of the organisational hierarchy. Kaiser (1990: 376) states that the ability of individuals in large organisations is judged on visible cues, such as appearance. Employees are thus evaluated based on their appearance. Therefore personal appearances influence upward mobility of the individual within the organisation. The author refers to the situation where upward mobility within the organisation is achieved through individuals who dress for the next higher position, but ensure that they do not outshine the superior of such an individual. This reflects the role of clothing in Schein's (1985: 228) primary embedding mechanisms of culture, namely the allocation of rewards.

Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 75) highlights that uniforms affect both individuals and organisations, as it ensure that individuals comply with their prescribed occupational roles. It furthermore communicates organisational values and helps non-members of the organisation to identify members. This is supported by Kaiser (1990; 370) who states that uniforms can serve to remind employees of their primary allegiance to the organisation, while presenting a consistent image to customers. While employed by an organisation, individuals are performing a specific role. Stapley continuously refers to the roles assigned to individuals in different circumstances. Wearing a uniform reinforces a specific role that the individual is expected to perform. The adoption of uniforms thus eliminates role confusion, while the social context within which the uniform is perceived influences the need for a specific impression (Kaiser, 1990; 376).

Appearance management is used to express or resist identification with a specific cultural category. Furthermore, appearance management can be used by the leadership of an organisation to assist in group formation and identity of the organisation. This is possible if the employee conforms with the values of the company, like the description in Chowdhury (2001: 125) where the author describes his appreciation of the organisation, American Food's, customer focus values in the

following way: “I was surprised to feel like an eager recruit, chomping at the bit to put on the uniform.” This reflects the author’s association of wearing a uniform to express identification with the values of the organisation.

Positions people occupy and the clothing they wear is often stereotyped based on perceptions. Stereotyping has an influence on the history of uniforms, as well as on power dimensions within organisations. Uniforms were introduced for practical purposes such as the blue “overall” for individuals engaged in manual or technical labour. (Downey, 2000:05). This has led to the distinctive stereotyping of all workers with this particular dress code where blue-collar workers are negatively perceived as lacking sophistication and being less educated than their white collar counter parts (Wikipedia, 2003:02). Stereotyping can also occur within bigger organisations to characterise certain groups and subgroups (Kaiser, 1990; 373), and the design attributes of the garment can be used as such a stereotyping divide (Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993; 55). Industry Week (1970: 50) mentions how managers in the seventies used dress codes to be able to stereotype their work force, thereby ensuring conformity.

Typical perceptions include examples such as that of the sales rep, stereotyped as “crisp and hard-hitting” who has to make favourable first impressions to enable them to sell the product, compared with the engineers making the product who are perceived as thoughtful and methodical, and thus too preoccupied with their thoughts to concentrate on their dress. Kaiser further points out that when such stereotyping takes place, the emphasis is not on whether the stereotyping is true or not, but the consequences are important. Such stereotyping influences the perceptions formed by the employees and leaders of the organisation, as well as the customers.

Because of human’s tendency to stereotype individuals according to their position or occupation, certain expectations are created. If appearance expectations are not met, it results in inconsistent impressions, with the resulting distorted pattern of culture. As example of this is Keenum’s (2004: 01) research at the University of Tennessee on the clothing the patients expected to see the doctors wearing. The research indicated a preference for white coats. Keenum attributed it to the fact that patients want to be comfortable with their doctor’s image, which is conveyed by what he or she wears. Patients expect doctors to be in white coats. The author further states that if patients

are comfortable with their doctors, it improves the patient doctor communication, which theoretically improves the treatment. This example identified by Keenum highlights the importance of appearance and indicates that if the appearance expectations that the customers or other employers have of an individual or group are not met, it results in inconsistent impressions. These impressions distort the portrayed patterns of organisational culture.

Expectancies with regard to an individual's appearance are linked to the individual's role within the organisation, as well as the organisational philosophy and type of organisation to which the individuals belongs. The way appearance is used in organisations thus differs according to the organisation's culture and sense of reality. Kaiser (1990: 369) thus warns against using clothing as symbolic manipulation to convey an insincere message, as the contrast between the reality and the impression created by the clothing will be noticeable. For example, economic organisations, such as retail stores, should dress neatly and fashionable to suit the store image. The goal of retail stores is to make profit. In these types of organisations, the uniforms worn affect both the employee and the customer. The employee interacts with the customer (the outsider), as well as fellow employees, and these two groups have conflicting interests. To avoid employees identifying more with customer needs than with the employer needs, uniforms are used as a role definer. This purpose of uniforms to define the role that an employee has within the organisation is consistent with the purpose of the uniform, as outlined earlier.

In contrast to retail organisations, service organisations do not have a profit motivation, and thus a different image is conveyed to the public. Neatness and competence are the important appearance factors, while it is important that the employee does not dress too extravagantly. Kaiser (1990: 373) refers to the incident where a municipal director was accused of using public funds to support his lavish appearances. In contrast to this, a retail store might want to portray their success through their appearance management. Kaiser (1990; 377) expresses the purpose of the uniform as suppressing individuality, where personal interests and values become subordinate to organisational goals.

Hofstede (1991: 18) defines organisational culture as follows: “the psychological assets of an organisation, which can be used to predict what will happen to its financial assets in five years’ time”. This indicates that culture has a financial bearing on the organisation. The process of choosing the uniform or corporate wear for the group as highlighted by Moore (2004: 34), is crucial to ensure the assumptions of the group or team is addressed with regard to the uniform. When the aspect of the role of uniforms as secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism is addressed, comments like that of Welch (2001: 384) stating that values, such as informality, are not about “first names, unassigned parking areas or casual clothing”, but rather based on the assumptions of the employees. The author, however, states that the lack of “epaulettes on the shoulders” portrays the value of the organisation that everyone counts. This refers to the use of dress code where the different aspects of the clothing indicate rank and status. As counterargument against the viewpoints of Kaiser, Schein, Stapley and Parker, Thompson and McHugh (2002:205), believe that wearing uniforms does not necessarily influence the internalisation of the values of the organisation, nor promote a sense of belonging to the group. They state that wearing certain items of clothing will not change the way you feel and behave. Furthermore, Thompson and McHugh (2002:339) argue that individuals bring their own identity to the group, which influences the culture of the organisation. This sheds some light on Kaiser’s (1990: 379) warning that enforcing uniforms on employees can be more detrimental than the diversity that emerges from freedom of choice. It is thus suggested that uniforms be introduced through a negotiation process where advantages and disadvantages are identified.

In support of Thompson and McHugh, Chemers, et. al. (1995:21) further argue that where employees have different language and religious backgrounds, artefacts such as uniforms, have little impact on the individual’s assimilation of group values and norms. This argument questions the relevance of uniforms as an artefact of culture within South African organisations given the diverse cultures in the country. Kaiser (1990: 386) indicates that further research is necessary, especially where global organisations with multi-cultural employees are implementing dress codes. The author also mentions the lack of research on the psychology of clothing in Africa. Kaiser (1990: 478) further identifies the influence of ethnic origin on clothing decisions and appearance management as an area for further study.

**Comment [NP3]:** Only use *et al.* from second citing of a reference.

## **2.8 Relevance of the research**

The role of uniforms in contributing to the shaping and maintaining of organisational culture has not been well researched. To date the researcher has not been able to locate research of this specific nature. However, research has been done on related topics, such as the research done by Nellis (2001: 01) on teenage identity and group formation and how it is influenced by the way they dress. There was one reference to previous research done by Nathan Joseph (Kaiser, 1990: 362) on organisational culture and clothing norms with the focus on group formation. Joseph's findings indicated that uniforms do not distinguish group members from other individuals outside the group. The research, however, did not investigate the ability of the uniform to embed and transmit culture.

There has been evidence of studies done on the influence of uniforms on the public's sense of security, such as the University of Chicago's (IOMA, 2003: 02) research done at the Mount Rainier National Park where maintenance staff and landscapers wear uniforms. The purpose of these uniforms was to reduce illegal activity within the park. In a similar way the University of Tennessee (Keenum, 2004: 01) conducted research to determine the type of clothing patients expected doctors to wear. The answer to the research was: white coats. In both these instances, the emphasis was on what the customer expected from the service provider.

This research will contribute to our understanding of the role of uniform dressing in embedding and transmitting the culture of an organisation. The findings can be used to assist organisations in making appropriate decisions regarding the choice of uniforms such that, where possible, culture can be positively influenced and unexpected and undesirable side effects are avoided.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The culture of an organisation consists of three levels, namely artefacts, values and underlying assumptions (Schein, 1985: 14). Uniforms are included in the artefact level of culture and therefore form part of the culture of an organisation (Schein, 1985: 14). These levels of culture are embedded in the organisation through primary

embedding mechanisms and secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms (Schein, 1985: 236). Uniforms form part of the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms, because of its visual relation to the physical space, facades and buildings. Uniforms thus have an influence on the communicating and strengthening of the organisation's culture. In doing this, the role of appearance perception for the individual and group are identified, as it has a direct impact on the uniform type and purpose (Kaiser, 1990: 308). The selection criteria and process for the introduction of the uniform influences the message communicated by the uniform, and should be carefully planned to ensure the organisation's culture is articulated and reinforced by the uniform (Kaiser, 1990: 376).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research approach**

This research was conducted in the constructivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994: 109) define the constructivist paradigm as an alternative research enquiry paradigm based on the assumption that there is a shift from ontological realism to ontological relativism. The authors explain ontological realism as the form and nature of reality and thus indicate what can be known about the reality. These realities are captured in the type of socially based mental constructions that are local and specific in nature. These realities are all true, but some are more informed or more sophisticated than others. Because of this, these mental constructions are subject to change as the reality of the situation changes. Furthermore, these realities depend on individual persons or groups for its form and content (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110). In contrast, ontological relativism is where knowledge is created through individual reconstructions shaped through social interaction. For the purposes of this research, an ontological relativism approach was used which implies that the researcher interacted with individuals within the organisation in order to create the findings, resulting in transactional or subjective knowledge being generated, as this was influenced by the situation and the organisation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 109).

This approach is consistent with Guba & Lincoln's (1994: 113) perspective regarding the aim of enquiry of the constructivism paradigm. Exploring the role of the uniforms on an organisational culture demands a consideration of the purpose of the uniforms as noted in the literature review of this research. As a result, this exploration would differ from one organisation to another. Therefore, informed by Guba and Lincoln's (1994: 111) discussion on the constructivist paradigm, the social and mental construction that took place in the research was made more sophisticated through the interaction between the investigator and the respondents. Through this continuous process the constructions of culture and the role of uniforms were "compared and contrasted through a dialectic interchange" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111). This purified the consensus construction, resulting in a more informed and more sophisticated construction.



This research paradigm can be compared with Van Maanen's (1988: 02) research approach in researching and writing Ethnography. Van Maanen defines Ethnography as a meaningful display of culture, where fieldwork is used as means of understanding others. Within this paradigm, knowledge is created through the understanding of other cultures, transforming the investigator and improving his/her understanding of the other culture. This creates an understanding of the activities within the culture and the context of the research. The same understanding of activities can be created with regard to organisational culture. These "self-transforming" understandings of the specific culture are expressed through writing and reporting on the cultural findings, contributing to the body of knowledge available on the specific culture (Van Maanen, 1988: 03). Using this paradigm and that of Guba and Lincoln's notions of the constructivist paradigm, within this research resulted in a more sophisticated social construction of the organisational culture and of the role of uniforms in transmitting and embedding culture.

As regards validity considerations, a limitation of the constructivist paradigm is that it presents the researcher as the research instrument through the use of interviews, thus the researcher's perspective shapes the findings (Clark, 2004: 06). In this research, this was minimised through triangulation by using multiple data collection tools. Clark further emphasises the goal of qualitative research as that of understanding, and not explaining, as is the case with quantitative research.

### **3.2. Research sample**

The research was done at the Eastern Cape Technikon situated in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This organisation has been selected due to ease of access by the researcher and because uniforms are used extensively by a number of groups within the Technikon, namely, academics, administrative staff and staff from the technical and services divisions. As such, a combination of convenience and purposive sampling (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 62) was used to identify the sample for this research. This Higher Education institution has 386 employees working on four different campuses namely: the Butterworth main campus; the Queenstown satellite campus; the Umtata satellite campus and the East London satellite campus (Eastern Cape Technikon, 2004: 05). The staff demographics are illustrated in the table 1

below. For the purpose of this research only employees on the Butterworth campus were accessed, as this is where the researcher works. This method of sampling is called convenience sampling (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 62).

**Table 1: Staff Demographics of Eastern Cape Technikon.**

	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Support Staff</b>
<b>Female</b>	82	86
<b>Male</b>	124	94
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Black</b>	183	129
<b>Indian</b>	8	4
<b>Coloured</b>	7	13
<b>White</b>	8	34

For the purposes of this research and as outlined in the literature review, only employees who wear uniforms for reasons other than practical or safety purposes were accessed. Within the Eastern Cape Technikon, female administrative employees make extensive use of uniforms (and were therefore included in the study), while uniforms are optional to the academic employees and were therefore not include in this study). Male staff members do not wear uniforms. Employees of catering, security and landscaping services also make extensive use of uniforms and were also considered to be part of the total population to be sampled in the research. Some uniformed employees of the technical service division were not included in the research as their uniforms were for practical and safety purposes.

As regards the ethical considerations, permission was obtained from Eastern Cape Technikon to conduct the research. Also of concern is that the researcher is employed by the sample organisation, which according to Welman and Kruger (2001: 185), may pose the possibility of the participant and researcher roles to be related to such an extent that the situation is not reported naturally. In accessing participants in the research, they were all made fully aware of the purpose of the research, and the

planned outcomes of the research, (Remenyi, 1998: 111). This was also clearly identified in the agreement with the participating organisation.

As regards the validity considerations of accessing one sample organisation, Smith (1998: 02) states that generalisability is allowed to be local and case specific within the constructivist research paradigm. Clark (2004: 06) supports this statement by stating that constructivist findings are generalisable with regard to the fact that “people rely upon common symbols to communicate”. This is consistent with the goals of this research.

### **3.3 Nature of this methodology section**

This research has two distinct but inter-related goals and the methodological considerations of research design, sampling, research methods and analysis will be discussed in relation to each goal.

#### **3.3.1 Research Goal 1: An exploration of the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon.**

This research had two interrelated main goals. The first was to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon, while the second was to determine the role of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture. This goal involves four phases: firstly, the accessing of documentation; secondly, the observation of the physical constructs within Eastern Cape Technikon; thirdly, the interviewing of key staff and fourthly, the conducting of a focus group.

##### **3.3.1.1 Documentation**

In order to understand the culture of the organisation, the first data collection tool used was that of assessing the documentation of the Eastern Cape Technikon. Smith’s (2002c: 03) recommendations for the use of documentation as sources of data were used and included the selection, matching and comparing of a wide range of documents to ensure that a true picture of the situation was reflected.

According to Clark (2004: 05) data collection is a discovery process for the constructivist research paradigm. In this paradigm, no hypotheses is set, because a predetermined hypotheses will possibly change as more information is gathered in the context of the study. Clark highlights this advantage of the paradigm, as the researcher can adjust the interview instrument continuously as theories are learned and developed until such time that the research results in a hypotheses, which can be used for the purposes of further research.

### **3.3.1.1.1 Nature of Documentation Accessed**

In this research, the documents accessed were numerous. Firstly, documentation relating to the organisational structure and design was collected from the Human Resource office of the Technikon. Although, the Eastern Cape Technikon Organogram was available from the Human Resource Department, decisions pertaining to design in this regard proved difficult to locate. This was the case because minutes of the meetings of Eastern Cape Technikon Senate and the Human Resource Committee of the Technikon Council were of limited use in clarifying this aspect. As a result, the researcher identified that this would have to be explored through the interviews. Secondly, documentation pertaining to the leadership style was obtained from publications with messages from the office of the top management. Thirdly, other documents, such as Technikon policies and documented procedures, which were obtained from the Human Resource, Central Administration, and Finance departments of Eastern Cape Technikon has been accessed. It is argued that these documents as well as the organization's systems and procedures gave insight into the articulation and reinforcement mechanisms as advocated by Schein (1985: 226). This included all recurrent tasks, such as reports, forms, procedures and other relevant routines, whether occurring weekly, monthly or annually. The documents that were used included the Eastern Cape Technikon Prospectus, the Technikon Organogram, the Performance Management Policy, the Academic Achiever Policy, the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Promotion Policy, and the relevant Head of Department policies. These documents allowed the researcher to assess the leaders' reinforcement of their assumptions through the systems and routines implemented in the organization (Schein, 1985; 240). Fourthly, the last reinforcement method advocated by Schein (1985: 242) is that of formal statements of organisational philosophy,

creeds and charters. Here leaders can state clearly the values and assumptions of the organisation. Accordingly, the Eastern Cape Technikon's philosophy and creed, which articulates its mission and vision, as well as the institutional values stated by the Technikon, was accessed through the institution's prospectus. Fifthly, documentation in the form of minutes of the Physical and Spatial Planning Committee of Council was accessed to consider the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms of culture, which include the design of physical space, facades and buildings. Thus, all the visible features of the organisation as outlined by Schein as the first level of culture (1985: 240). The reason for accessing these documents are to determine whether any deliberate decision has been taken by the management of the organisation to reinforce culture through the physical environment.

### **3.3.1.1.2 Analysis of documentation**

The same qualitative approach to the analysis of the data will be adopted for all data sources and this is discussed later in this chapter.

### **3.3.1.1.3 Validity and ethical considerations**

In terms of the validity of documentation as a research method, Carmines and Zeller (1991: 20) notes that the advantage of using documentation is that it is more credible than interviews because of the absence of the researcher effect on the data source. The researcher addressed the ethical considerations with regard to these documents, such as confidentiality and access through close liaison with the Technikon secretariat and management. This process will also ensure the authenticity and accuracy of documents in this research, as is consistent with Welman and Kruger's (2001: 144) advice.

### **3.3.1.2 Observation**

Schein (1985: 242) proposes that observation is the best way to determine the influence of the physical environment on the culture of the organisation, whether it is planned or not. For this research the researcher was a complete observer, as is consistent with Smith's (2002f: 01) roles the researcher, due to the researcher's

employment at the Eastern Cape Technikon. This is consistent with the Schein's definition of a complete observer as a full member of the group. The observation method is only relevant to one section of the research, namely the physical constructs of Eastern Cape Technikon, including the buildings, layout, furniture, and uniforms.

Schein (1985: 242) advises that observation is the best way to determine the influence of the physical environment on the culture of the organisation, whether it is planned or not. The detail, therefore, available through documentation on physical constructs was verified through observation by the researcher at Eastern Cape Technikon.

#### **3.3.1.2.1 Nature of the observation**

Structured methods were used for the observation in this research. This is a more formal technique where the observer determines beforehand what will be observed (Smith, 2002f: 04). Although this method is mostly used in the positivistic research paradigms, the researcher deems this the most appropriate method due to the time constraint of the research and the complete observer status of the researcher. Purposive sampling was used as sampling method for the observation method of this research. The artefacts, including buildings, furniture and clothing, and its influence on the culture of the organisation, on the Butterworth campus were observed. The selection of these artefacts for observation was guided by the available literature on artefacts and its role in embedding and transmitting culture. Consistent with the structured method of observation, a checklist was used to record the relevant information. A copy of the checklist is available in Appendix 1. The items on the checklist is consistent with the items as highlighted by the available literature in chapter two (2) of this research.

#### **3.3.1.2.2 Analysis of data from observation**

Data analysis for the observed information would be the same as that used for the other data gathering methods.

### **3.3.1.2.3 Validity and ethical observations**

Welman and Kruger (2001: 164) states that during observation, the researcher is both human and researcher, and therefore has to make a conscious decision as to the extent to which his/her humanness will influence his/her observation. Furthermore, structured observational research has no standardised measuring instrument. Since the researcher in this research was a complete observer a decision was made to not make emotional observations that could not be supported by the available literature and the interviews. This is consistent with the triangulation as discussed in section 4.1.4. However, only artefacts were observed in this research.

### **3.3.1.3 Interviews**

After the relevant documentation and observation data from Eastern Cape Technikon had been collected and analysed, interviews were held with various people from the organisation. This was because this data was used both as guideline for the interview questions as well as to add to the knowledge gathered from the interviews. The reason for this is that it follows the advice of Smith (2002c: 02) who states that documents are valuable starting points when collecting new data.

This is consistent with the constructivist research approach, which makes use of qualitative research methods (Clark, 2004: 01). Qualitative research methods include interviews, observations and focus group discussions. The extensive use of interviews ensured that the researcher investigated the meanings of statements made by participants, and by doing so ensured that the respondent and the researcher had the same understanding of statements and phrases used. This strategy also attempted to ensure that the issue of over reporting desirable behaviours and under reporting undesirable behaviour was minimised, as the interviewers are able to minimize the contradictions made by the respondents.

#### **3.3.1.3.1 Sampling considerations**

Ideally the first people to be interviewed should have been the Principal Administration and the Vice Principal Academic. These two individuals were

sampled because they are representative of the academic and administration employees respectively, and were in a position to address the issue of the organisation's culture. This is consistent with Welman and Kruger's (2001: 63) recommendation on purposive sampling. However, due to work pressure, these individuals were not available for the interviews, and representatives from their offices were interviewed.

### **3.3.1.3.2 Nature of the interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Such interviews, according to Welman and Kruger's (2001: 187), lend themselves to an in-depth study of perceptions and attitudes. In terms of researching culture, Schein (1985, 20) suggests the use of interviews to surface assumptions, which in turn determine cultural patterns, through which culture is developed.

Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a more rigorous study of perceptions and attitudes (Smith, 2002a:02) since the interviewer can clear vague responses through probing questions (Welman and Kruger, 2001:161). In contrast, the structured interview does not allow the researcher to probe for clarity. Semi-structured interviews make use of open-ended questions and probing phrases to encourage the interviewee to tell the researcher more about the topic and in doing so, clarifying vague responses. Questions can be added or omitted during the interview at the discretion of the interviewer. The responses of the interviewee, therefore, cannot be standardised in the classical sense.

Semi-structured interviews instead of unstructured interviews were selected as the most suitable interview method for this research because of the explorative nature of the research (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 160). Although unstructured interviews are also suitable for this type of research, it is normally only used when it is impossible to compile an interview guide. In this research an interview guide was compiled from the information from the available literature and the documents accessed, as well as the observation done on the Butterworth campus. The interview guide and observation checklist is based on the aspects identified as possible influencers on the embedding



and transmitting of organizational culture. These aspects were identified when the available literature were reviewed.

In this research, the interview guideline for the semi-structured interviews used in this research, was informed by the literature review and the relevant data accessed from Eastern Cape Technikon documentation. The interview guideline was established especially for the purpose of this research and is available in Appendix three (3) of this research report. This is consistent with the advice of Welman and Kruger, (2001: 226) and ensures that the interview guide is subject to validity testing.

The topics addressed by the interviews were as follows: Firstly, the organisational philosophy, creeds and values. Secondly, the systems and procedures within the organisation, in particular those not documented. Thirdly, leadership behaviour and style were determined. Fourthly, the design of physical space, facades (including uniforms) and buildings of the organisation were observed. Here the relationship between the physical environment (including uniforms and dress codes) and the leaders' assumptions of the culture and values of the organisation were interrogated as well as aspects considered when instituting uniforms.

Other considerations, as suggested by Welman & Kruger (2001:156) that the researcher has taken into consideration was: to pilot the questions for the interviews beforehand to ensure clarity; to ensure the relevance and meaning of the question guide; to ensure the venue setting and seating arrangements will not influence power dynamics and to ensure privacy

#### **3.3.1.3.3 Analysis of interview data**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. This allows the interviewer's undivided attention during the interview session, without having to transcribe during the interview. The same qualitative approach to the analysis will be adopted for all data sources and this is discussed later in this chapter.

#### **3.3.1.3.4 Validity and ethical considerations**

Working within the constructivist paradigm, no two interviews are expected to be the same, but the contextual factors influencing these interviews were recorded to ensure that the responses from participants are interpreted correctly within the given context. This is on the advice of Clark (2004: 05).

Using interviews has the limitation of one's status influencing the interview relationship (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 187). The researcher did not experience such a situation. However, this was minimised by allowing the participants in the interviews to review the interview transcriptions and to modify where needed.

The validity of the interview has been maximised because this guide was based in part on the available documentation from the organisation regarding the different levels of culture and then linked to the observations of the researcher. This enhances the content validity of the interviews (Carmines and Zeller, 1991: 20). Validity was further enhanced through member checks (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 184) where the various participants validated the data and interpretation. The use of multiple data sources ensured triangulation (Smith, 2002d: 05) and minimised personal bias on the part of the researcher, which is a danger in the constructivist research paradigm.

Whilst ethically acceptable, purposive sampling, as used in this research study, decreases the generalizability of the research. The use of multiple data sources, however, ensures triangulation (Welman & Kruger, 2001: 184). Furthermore, as per the recommendation of Smith (2002a: 02) it will be enhanced through the use of questions informed by the available literature.

#### **3.3.1.4 Focus group interview**

Further adding to the body of knowledge on the culture of the organisation, a focus group interview was conducted.

#### **3.3.1.4.1 Sampling**

The focus group interview was conducted with representatives of the Institutional Forum of the Technikon. The Institutional Forum consists of thirty members. These thirty members are comprised as follows: three members from council; three members from top management; nine members from senate; five members from the staff union; eight members from the student representative council; and two members from the Technikon convocation representing former students (Eastern Cape Technikon, 1999: 02).

From this group ten people were selected for the focus group, consistent with Smith's (2002b: 05) ideal number per group. Smith states that larger groups result in some people not participating in the conversation, thus requiring more facilitator involvement with regard to the control of the group. This is not always desirable, as the aim of focus groups is to let the participants expand on the topic through interaction (Morgan, 1988: 37). On the other hand, if the group is too small, Smith warns that "expert-domination" can take place, which will result in individual dynamics and lack of cooperation by the other participants. This will defeat the purpose of the focus group interviews, as it is based on the systems theory where, "the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts" (Smith, 2002b: 01).

Purposive and convenient sampling was used to identify the representatives from the Forum. In terms of convenient sampling, individuals available on the Butterworth campus were approached. In terms of purposive sampling one member of council, two members from top management, two members from senate, two members from the staff union, two members from the student representative council, and one member from the Technikon convocation, were approached. According to Welman and Kruger (2001: 63) purposive sampling is a strategy to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a way as to ensure representation of the relevant population, in this case the stakeholders and members of the Institutional Forum of the Eastern Cape Technikon. Identifying exactly who will participate for each sub-group took place by convenient sampling because the individuals need to be prepared to participate. This is important because the focus group contributions are shared amongst the participants within the group, which is an important ethical concern. For the focus group, two

members from senate, one member from the staff union, one member from the council and one member each from the student representative body and student convocation participated.

#### **3.3.1.4.2 Nature of the Focus Group Interview**

According to Welman and Kruger (2001: 189) a focus group interview is a way of generating group discussion that will interpret both agreement and diversity in meanings on a specific topic. Focus groups are similar to interviews, but the role of the researcher is different because the researcher only facilitates discussions on a given topic (Smith, 2002b: 01). The researcher, therefore, arranged for the council chamber of the Butterworth campus as suitable venue where the group will not be disturbed and where the noise levels are minimised. Furthermore, this venue has a rectangular table layout, which has been identified as the most suitable seating arrangement by Smith (2002b: 07). The researcher was seated at the head of the table, with an observer (seated at the opposite end) who noted the speakers for the purpose of transcription.

In conducting the focus group, the researcher gave a general introduction to the topic of the research, stating the purpose of the focus group, where after the ground rules for the interview session were determined. Participants were requested to fill in the demographic questionnaires, as included in Appendix five (5), to enable the researcher to record the participants' information. The demographics were needed because it may have a bearing on the results emerging from the contributions. Each participant was then given an opportunity to share his/her view on the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. This led to the discussion that followed. The researcher followed up with probes (based on the discussions) from the interview guide, which was compiled as guideline for this specific interview session. In this focus group interview, the researcher addressed institutional issues, such as organisational structure, the systems and procedures used, the formal statements of organisational philosophy and policy development. See Appendix four (4) for the interview guide used. After the discussions the participants were asked to make a final summary statement, and statements of interest to the research were followed up with individual interviews. Two days after the focus group interviews all participants were phoned

and thanked for their participation. At this time they were also invited to make additional contributions, which were followed up as well.

For the purpose of this research, the focus group interviews supplemented the one-on-one interviews, document analysis and observations as data gathering methods. The contribution of the focus group interview to this research was that it enabled the researcher to gain large amounts of information on a topic in a limited period of time, while also resulting in less data with fewer transcripts. Furthermore, consistent with Welman and Kruger's (2001: 188) statement, it was a convenient way for the researcher to interact within an organisation, in this case Eastern Cape Technikon. The group selected for this focus group interview shared a common purpose and normally talk to one another. This made the discussions and contributions in the focus group to be more open and honest.

#### **3.3.1.4.3 Analysis of data from focus group**

The audio recording from the focus group interview, together with the notes from the observers were transcribed, as was the case with the individual interviews. In addition the interpretation of the data focuses specifically on the following aspects: the difference between what participants find interesting; the way questions were asked since this would indicate thought processes; how participants agree or disagree; and the process of consensus building and understanding of participants experiences or perspectives (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 190).

The same qualitative approach to the analysis of this focus group data was adopted as for all data sources and this is discussed later in this chapter.

#### **3.3.1.4.4 Validity and ethical considerations**

Although the focus group interviews are based on the premise that the researcher is only the facilitator, an interview guide was used to keep the interviews on the topic. As with the individual interviews, validity of the interview guide was maximised as this guide was based in part on the available documentation and observation from the organisation regarding the different levels of culture and then linked to the one-on-one

interviews and the available literature. This enhances the content validity of the interviews (Carmines and Zeller, 1991: 20). The use of multiple data sources ensured triangulation (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 184) and minimised personal bias on the part of the researcher, which is a danger in the constructivist research paradigm. Validity was further enhanced through member checks (Welman and Kruger, 2001: 184) where the various participants validated the data and interpretation. This process further ensures triangulation, which enhances the validity of the research. Other considerations that were taken into consideration have been mentioned in the paragraph on individual interviews.

During the focus group interview, information is not only shared with the researcher, but also with the fellow participants (Smith, 2002b: 04). This can lead to invasion of privacy issues that can have ethical implications in research. The researcher highlighted this aspect to the participants in the invitation to participate, while also disclosing the list of fellow participant names. People who objected, therefore, could be replaced with other participants from the represented groups. However, the fact that the focus group members know each other and normally work together ensured that the group members were at ease with each other.

### **3.3.2 Research goal 2: To determine the importance of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture.**

The second goal of the research did in some instances, run concurrently with the first goal of the research. Specifically, when the interviews and focus group was conducted (as described in point 3.3.1.4 above), data for this second goal was also collected. For this goal, there were two sources of data namely, interviews and focus groups. This is again consistent with the objective of triangulation.

#### **3.3.2.1 Interviews**

As with the first research goal, semi-structured interviews were used, and for the reasons as outlined in section 3.3.1.3.2.

### **3.3.2.1.1 Sampling for interviews**

The chairperson of the Secretariat Association was interviewed, as she was instrumental in the introduction and acquisition of the uniforms for the administration staff. In addition, representatives from the offices of the Vice Principal Academic and Vice Principal Administration were also interviewed on this issue. These two individuals were selected due to their positions as leaders in the Academic and Support Staff respectively.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of staff from all uniform wearing divisions on the Butterworth campus of Eastern Cape Technikon. Purposive sampling was used to identify the groups or divisions within the Technikon to ensure that such groups are representative of all groups within the Technikon. This is consistent with the advise of Welman and Kruger (2001: 63). The identified groups for the second goal in this research consisted of two people, each from the following categories: administration, academic, technical division and the three services categories, namely, catering, landscaping and security. The disadvantage of this type of sample is that researchers will not always identify the categories for the sample in the same way. However, the identified categories, or unit of analysis of this sample in this research are all employees of Eastern Cape Technikon and therefore the researcher was confident that the sample is representative of all employees of this organisation.

Within these groups, individuals were accessed by convenience sampling but also by maximum variation sampling. The idea of convenience sampling has already been discussed. Maximum variation sampling, as advocated by Seidman (1991: 45), aims to sample purposely the widest variation of possible participants within the case. According to D'Onofrio (2003: 01) maximum variation sampling, as sampling method of convenience sampling, captures the widest range of individuals to ensure heterogeneity through the intentional sampling of elements that are different from one another. This ensures the heterogeneity of the sample, as a homogeneous sample would be useless given that it will only portray the central tendency of the population and thus not allow for emerging theories to be established. The establishment of emerging theories are central to the constructivist paradigm.

The maximum variation sampling serves to enhance the exploration of the understanding of both the typical and atypical people and phenomena of a situation. This type of sampling is often used for qualitative research, since the aim of the research is for a rich description of the insider's view of the research area (D'Onofrio, 2003: 02). It is argued that the research sample reflected both typical and atypical people of the research situation, as indicated in the list of participants in Appendix seven (7).

#### **3.3.2.1.2 Nature of interviews**

As with the first goal, semi-structured interviews were used. Please see the guide for this interview in Appendix two (2) of this report.

The interview guide addressed issues such as: the identity of individuals through appearance; the perceptions that are formed of people based on their appearance; the relationship between appearance and status and its relation to hierarchies and social grouping; the relationship between appearance, identity and self esteem and how it is influenced by wearing a uniform; dress codes within the organisation; whether the wearing of a uniform is compulsory or voluntary, and who decides on the uniform; stereotyping of uniformed workers; the relationship between uniforms and other artefacts within the organisation; and lastly, the articulation and reinforcement of the organisation's culture through the use of uniforms.

#### **3.3.2.1.3 Analysis of interview data**

The same qualitative approach to the analysis will be adopted for all data sources and this is discussed later in this chapter.

#### **3.3.2.1.4 Validity and ethical considerations**

As outlined in section 3.3.1.4.4, maximum variation sampling aims to get the widest variation of possible participants within the case to ensure heterogeneity through the intentional sampling of elements that are different from one another. This, together with the triangulation and other issues as discussed in section 3.3.1.4.4, ensures



validity. With regard to the ethical concerns, similar concerns as those discussed in 3.3.1.3.3 above, were considered.

### **3.3.2.2 Focus group**

The second group of individuals accessed were the members of the Institutional Forum focus group, as the Institutional Forum is the appropriate structure to deal with issues, such as the introduction of uniforms for all staff members at the Technikon.

This group was the same as that used for the first goal of the research and a similar methodology was used. See Appendix three (3) for the interview schedule. The same qualitative approach to the analysed will be adopted for all data sources and this is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### **3.3.3 Analysis of data**

According to Welman and Kruger (2001: 194) there are two basic approaches with regard to qualitative research. The first being the ethnographic summary of the data obtained. The ethnographic approach relies on direct quotation of discussions. The second data analysis approach is that of systematic coding through content analysis. Content analysis involves the recording of the relative incidence or frequency of themes to enable the researcher to report the findings in a quantitative way. The latter approach will not be suitable in this research as the emphasis is not on the strength of the theme emerging but rather on the role of the theme within the context of the organisational culture and its embedding and reinforcement mechanisms.

Therefore, the ethnographic approach was used, as Welman and Kruger (2001: 195) also deemed it the most appropriate method of reporting and analysing the constructivist paradigm. Smith (2002e: 01) supports this, but indicates that the data be sorted into broad categories to enable the researcher to uncover themes that recur across the categories. Once this is done Smith suggests that an interpretation of the meaning of the data can be given. In following Smith's advice the data of this research was interpreted using the available literature as guidance.

When writing up the findings using the ethnographic approach, Van Maanen (1988: 27) explains that the researcher writes the research report with a specific reader in mind. The purpose and end use of the research findings should, therefore, ideally be determined beforehand. The purpose of this research is to determine the role of uniforms in embedding and transmitting culture, and the findings would be used to guide Eastern Cape Technikon in its decision-making with regard to the implementation of new uniforms for the employees. However, if the researcher wants to include a wider audience for the findings, Van Maanen (1988: 30) suggests that the reader ensures the statement of facts to satisfy the social science reader, while providing interesting material for the general readers who find the topic of interest. This advice of Van Maanen was followed in reporting the research findings as the researcher is still developing a social construct, which should ideally be followed up with further research on the topic. Further research would include other organisations and the intended use of such further research findings would be to establish a guideline for the implementation of uniforms.

Using this general inductive approach, there are underlying assumptions that need to be stated clearly, as is consistent with the advice of Thomas (2003: 03). The first assumption is that the findings are derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher and findings arising directly from the analysis of raw data. The second assumption is that the mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into a framework that describes key themes, which the researcher deems important. The third assumption is that different researchers will produce findings with non-identical components due to the role the researcher plays in identifying the important data. The last assumption is that the trustworthiness of the findings can be accessed by either independently replicating the research, or triangulation or feedback from research participants, as well as feedback from users of the research findings. This is consistent with the recommendation of Clark (2004: 06), who states that validity can be tested by asking if the study is thorough, coherent and comprehensive whilst the findings also have to make sense. Furthermore, the findings must be useful. The author's final validity test determines if the interpretation is provocative enough to generate further enquiry.

### 3.3.4 Chapter Summary

This research was done in the constructivist paradigm and had two interrelated main goals. The first was to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon, while the second was to determine the role of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture. The Eastern Cape Technikon has been identified as the research sample organisation due to the ease of access to the researcher. In order to explore the culture of the Eastern Cape Technikon, relevant documents relating to Schein's three levels of culture was accessed. The type of documents accessed was informed by the available literature on the topic. To ensure triangulation the documents were followed up with interviews with representatives from the offices of the Vice Principals. Semi structured interview methods were used and an interview guide, as informed by the available literature on culture, guided the interview questions. The interviews on culture were further supplemented with semi-structured focus group interviews with representatives from the Institutional Forum. The documentation and interviews were a suitable method of data collection for the second and third levels of culture, namely values and assumptions. Artefacts, however, as first level of culture cannot successfully be analysed using only interviews and documents, thus structured observation was necessary to collect additional data.

To address the second goal of this research, semi-structured interviews were held with staff members of Eastern Cape Technikon. Maximum variation sampling was used to select these participants, to ensure heterogeneity. A focus group interview was held with members of the Institutional Forum, since this forum handles matters such as uniforms and culture.

In analysing and reporting the research findings, an ethnographic approach was used. The data was sorted into broad categories, which enabled the researcher to uncover themes that recurred across the categories. The available literature was used as guidance in interpreting the findings of this research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this research the role of uniforms on embedding and transmitting culture is explored with the aim to add to the body of knowledge available from the related literature. Although this research had two distinctly different sub-goals; the first being to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon, and the second sub-goal being to determine the importance of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture, the findings of the two goals are closely associated in the discussion. This enables the researcher to discuss the findings of the main overarching goal of the research, namely the exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture.

The discussion of the research findings refers to the literature, which has been discussed in chapter two, as well as the research findings, which was discussed in chapter four. The literature is based on Schein's (1985: 14) culture model that distinguishes three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, values and basic underlying assumptions. The first level of culture, namely artifacts, includes the physical and social environment, technological output of the group, written and spoken language, artistic productions, and behavior of its members. Schein (1985: 26) explains that artifacts are the most visible of the levels of culture and can further include physical constructs, such as physical layout, furniture, sound level and the clothing of the employees. The second level of culture is values, or in other words the "sense of what ought to be" (Schein, 1985: 15). Values are formed when a group has shared an experience. This experience is often a problem for which a solution needs to be found. Once a successful solution has been established the group's shared perception of this success is transformed into a belief. The third level of culture, according to Schein, is the basic underlying assumptions of the organization or group. This implies that the solution to a problem that works repeatedly is taken for granted, and becomes reality with very little variation within a cultural unit.

Schein's theory states that within a culture there is only one solution to any set problem, and that such a solution is seen as the only acceptable way of solving the problem of the organization or group, thereby forming a basic assumption. Uniforms, as a type of clothing can therefore, in terms of Schein's model, be termed an artifact of culture. Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Petersen (2000: 465), as well as Moore (2004: 32), distinguish between uniforms and a corporate wardrobe, also called company clothing or corporate wear, where the uniforms are the garments worn by organizations that represent state authority, such as the police and fire departments and corporate wardrobe consisting of fashionable, wearable clothing for employees. Although this research is in fact an exploration of the role of the corporate wardrobe, according to the above classification, the term "uniform" would be used because that is how the sample organization refers to its corporate wardrobe. That is, however, consistent with Fussell's (2003: 03) definition of uniforms as to what most people prefer to wear. He refers to the "Dark Business Suit" as a type of uniform. According to Fussell, individuals wear uniforms as prescribed by their occupation or situation. This is the case at Eastern Cape Technikon where the five divisions wear uniforms that are suitable to their occupations.

Schein (1985: 223 - 243) also proposes that culture can be embedded and transmitted through primary embedding mechanisms and secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms. Primary embedding mechanisms, known as culture creators, refer to visible and audible behavior patterns (Schein, 1985: 223 - 243). The primary embedding mechanisms signify the role and behavior of the leaders of an organization; how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises; how resources are allocated; role modeling, teaching and coaching; criteria by which leaders allocate rewards and status; as well as criteria by which leaders recruit, select, promote, retire and excommunicate the employees of the organizations. The secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms of culture indicate the design elements within the organization, as well as the organization's values. The first secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms are the organizational structure and design, which includes elements such as the hierarchy within the organization and the leadership style applied. The second secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism is the organizational systems and procedures.

The third secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism consists of the design of physical space, facades and buildings, thus encompassing all the visible features of the organization. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 75) refers to the physical objects as that which portrays organizational life. The last reinforcement method advocated by Schein (1985: 242) is that of formal statements of organizational philosophy, creeds and charters. Both primary and secondary mechanisms were assessed in Eastern Cape Technikon, South Africa, and the data of the findings were used in the analyses of the culture of the Technikon, as well as in determining the role of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture. These findings were stated in the results (Chapter four) of this research. This discussion of the research findings and literature argues the researcher's point that uniforms can serve as embedding and transmitting mechanism of culture, based on the messages concerning the values of the organization as portrayed by the uniform as an artifact of culture. The message of the uniform communicates the underlying assumptions of the organization.

Because the role of the uniforms is explored in relation to the culture of the organization, the discussion will be taking place with the culture of the organization as starting-point. Therefore, the organization's culture will be analyzed and discussed, together with the role of the uniforms on the specific aspect of the culture. Although Schein's model has been used for this research, the findings in terms of the culture of the sample organization, as well as the role of uniforms are discussed in terms of Hofstede's dimensions of culture. The reason for this is because it enables the researcher to describe the type of culture with reference to an acknowledged set of five culture dimensions, compared to Schein's culture levels with a vast array of elements within each level. The latter model makes it more difficult to determine and label the existing culture of the organization, hence the use of the Hofstede model for discussion.

## **5.2 The culture of Eastern Cape Technikon and the role of uniforms in the embedding and transmitting of the culture.**

Hofstede's (1991: 07) culture dimensions is based on the deduction that a dimension of culture is defined as an aspect of the culture that can be measured relative to other cultures (Hofstede, 1991: 14). Hofstede used this instrument in his research on the basic value dimensions, and has identified the following four dimensions: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism/ collectivism, and lastly masculinity/ femininity. However, Hills' (2002: 10) use of the Hofstede culture dimensions adds another dimension, namely short-term versus long-term orientation, which would be included in this research as fifth culture dimension.

Before discussing the cultural dimensions, and the role uniforms plays in embedding the culture dimensions, it should be highlighted that the management of Eastern Cape Technikon plays no role in the introduction and implementation of uniforms at the organization. This is in diverging from Kaiser's (1990: 365) claim that managers use dress codes to instill a culture of seriousness, decisiveness and dependability. It also deviates from Parker's (2000: 01) indication that managers can manipulate culture positively through activities and symbols, where uniforms are such a symbol. Following Parker's advice implies making conscious decisions as to the role and importance of uniforms in influencing culture. It is then argued that Eastern Cape Technikon's management has the opportunity to influence the culture of the Technikon, but to date have not made use of the uniform to transmit or embed culture.

### **5.2.1 High Power Distance**

Power distance, refers to the inequality that, according to Hofstede (1991: 23) exists in all societies, and the relationship between this inequality and authority (Hofstede, 1991: 13). It is this degree of inequality between people within the society that is reflected as a dimension of culture. It is argued that the Eastern Cape Technikon has a high power distance based on certain artifacts, values and assumptions identified during the course of

the research. These will be discussed in the light of the characteristics of high power distance cultures, as defined by Hofstede.

Firstly, similar to organizations with high power distance, the Eastern Cape Technikon in terms of its values does not generally question authority, as is the case with the autocratic decision-making with regard to the Finances and Human Resources of the Technikon. However, the stakeholders of the organization do not approve of this situation. This is portrayed through numerous comments by research participants about the individual's who have more power as a result of their position, "It is obvious that the institution is ruled by two individuals. No matter what we decide, the final decision lies with them." There is thus a tendency to question authority. This tension between the high power distance dimension characteristic, and the need to question authority stems from the fact that the organization's value statement indicates the importance of participative management. However, not all stakeholders share the same perception of the application of participative management in an organization and therefore the current management practice at the organization is viewed as bureaucratic. This might possibly explain the tension regarding the questioning of authority, because the Technikon has various forums where it could be argued that stakeholders are offered the opportunity to participate in decision-making, but the roles of the representatives within these forums are possibly unclear and not performed successfully. Therefore, the representatives might not fulfill their role, and because of the high power distance they are not taken to task by the groups that they represent, leading to the tension and uncertainty. This reluctance to question the representatives and to hold them responsible supports the notion that the Technikon has a high power distance.

Secondly, it is argued that the high power distance at Eastern Cape Technikon results in stakeholders holding certain assumptions such as that the power of the individual's within the Technikon influence the way in which finances are handled, and this also creates tension within the Technikon. Although the stakeholders have raised the focus on the organization's financial stability as a concern, "You don't know who runs this institution: Prof [the principal] or the director finance. We are saving money at the expense of our



customers: the students; the government, and the industry”, nobody has challenged the issue with a constructive counter proposal. This supports the argument that Eastern Cape Technikon has a high power distance. A further possible explanation for the reluctance of staff to challenge authority might lie in the research participants’ indication that the tension at the organization is not addressed in a constructive way, but rather blamed on management in general, “... Management is scared to deal with employees. Well, they also do not care about employees.” This might be further evidence of the high power distance dimension at Eastern Cape Technikon as it is consistent with the viewpoint of Hofstede (1991: 23) regarding organizations with a high power distance dimension where management is expected to know what is best for the organization, and therefore should provide what is needed. The issue of tension at the organization, and the need for relieving this tension through compromises, will be discussed in the section on ‘high uncertainty avoidance’.

Thirdly, the artifacts from this research, and specifically the uniforms, could be argued to bear witness to the high power distance dimension of the organization’s culture. However, the message portrayed by the uniforms, is inconsistent. Some categories of employees, such as the security, shows that supervisors wears the same uniform as the other employees in an attempt to create equality, and thus removing power distance, although there is a rank distinction through epaulettes, which counteracts the attempt to remove power distance. This ranking, according to Kaiser (1990: 362), indicates positions of power. Other categories of uniformed employees at Eastern Cape Technikon, such as the catering and gardening divisions, have a situation where all the employees, and managers wear uniforms. The participants in this research indicated that they appreciate it if their immediate superiors wear uniforms, “My supervisor is also wearing a uniform and I like that because it shows that we belong to the same company.” This can be argued to indicate a desire for a low power distance dimension. On the other hand, this might also be indicating another purpose of the uniform, namely team building. The latter argument is supported by the fact that the uniforms worn by these managers differ in design from that of the employees, and would therefore indicate a high power distance.

This situation is not always the case, as with the administrative employees. In this division, all female employees in the administrative building, including directors, wear exactly the same uniform, with no distinction in design or style, while none of the male employees wear uniforms. This brings forth two questions, firstly, is there no power distance between the females in administration, and secondly, is there a high power distance between male and female employees, regardless of the rank within the organization? The first question is answered by the indication that employees prefer that everybody, including managers, wear uniforms. However, the proposal of the participants of the research was that the uniforms should indicate the seniority of management. “I think there should be different uniforms, I don’t see myself wearing the same uniform as [a superior], at least it might help [to have] something different from the others and directors, so they can be identified.” This supports the high power distance dimension. Managers, both male and female, however, indicated that they would not want to wear uniforms, thus a possible explanation is that they prefer to keep the power distance. The second question raised, regarding the a high power distance between male and female employees, regardless of rank, will be discussed in section 5.2.3 of this chapter where collectivism is discussed.

Hofstede (1998: 59) indicates that one of the needs addressed by clothing is the need for status and this can be linked to issues of power distance. The notion of the employees that managers should have different uniforms to that of the employees, thus ascribes status to the managers. A possible explanation for the indication that uniforms should display the rank of the employee may be in that it can result in social stratification. Social stratification is the process whereby power, status, prestige and privilege are ascribed to an individual as member of a group (Kaiser, 1990: 143). It could be argued that because respondents indicated a preference for some form of ranking with regard to the clothing or uniform worn by employees, it serves to entrench the concept of Eastern Cape Technikon’s high power distance. This is consistent with Kaiser’s (1990: 363) statement that the purpose of clothing, and specifically uniforms, is to serve as an element to emphasize the power and status levels of the wearer. Thus the research agrees with the author, because the findings indicate that there is a need to indicate the prestige ascribed

to the different seniority positions through some form of symbol, in this case, the uniform.

The findings of this research agree with the statement of Schein (1985: 242), Hofstede (1998: 59) and Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 750) that artifacts can transmit culture. Uniforms form part of the artifacts of Eastern Cape Technikon and this research argues that uniforms transmit the high power distance culture that is prevailing at the organization, through the way that different divisions have different uniforms. Another argument in favor of this finding is the indication at the organization that there is a request from participants to indicate rank within the organization through the uniforms. The indication of ranks amongst employees and managers would further embed the high power distance.

### **5.2.2 High uncertainty avoidance**

Hofstede (1991: 113) defines uncertainty avoidance as, “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations”. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance is based on the principle that extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety (Hofstede, 1991: 110). This research indicated that there is possibly a general lack of control on various aspects within the Technikon, in terms of the artifacts, values and assumption levels of the culture. Examples of this are, the lack of consistent application of rules and regulations, the ad hoc promotion of staff, and the continuous changing of procedures and policies, which sends a message that the organization has inconsistent values. It is further argued that the underlying assumptions that are made by the stakeholders create tension and conflict amongst employees, and between employees and management, which leads to anxiety amongst all stakeholders of the organization. Another argument in favor of a possible high uncertainty avoidance culture at Eastern Cape Technikon is that change is not accepted easily, as would be the case in organizations with a high uncertainty avoidance culture. It is also indicated in the perception of employees that the management of the Technikon lacks the ability to lead the employees in periods of unknown circumstances.

The artifacts, as level of culture of the Technikon also reflects the high uncertainty avoidance culture because the research has found that the uniform signifies stability amongst employees. The uniform was not initially implemented to serve as a symbol to ease anxiety, but those wearing the uniform have interpreted the uniform as a source of stability during the uncertain times. This symbolism attached to the uniform points to the employee's need to avoid uncertainty, and in doing so transmits the culture of uncertainty avoidance at Eastern Cape Technikon. According to Rafaeli and Pratt (1993: 55), power is displayed through a symbolic message of clothes. It could therefore be argued that the uniform of Eastern Cape Technikon employees serve as symbol to ascribe to the wearer the power or the ability to deal with the uncertain circumstances. This symbolism of stability attached to the uniform can be argued to indicate five possible messages relating to the culture of high uncertainty avoidance, namely: firstly, the symbolic message of stability; secondly, the symbolic message of competency; thirdly, the symbolic message of organizational wealth and image of the organization; and lastly the symbolic message of physical and psychological safety and security.

Firstly, the uniform, serving as symbolic message of stability, embeds the high uncertainty avoidance culture of the organization. This culture is noticeable in the inconsistent way that policies and procedures of employment are applied. This uncertainty with regard to employment possibly caused employees of the organization, and specifically those in lower paid positions, to see the uniform as a means to ascertain their employment with Eastern Cape Technikon. It is therefore argued that the uniforms serve as symbolic message of the wearer's employment status, " [Wearing a uniform] is for identification. It means that I am employed...." A possible explanation for this is that uniforms might be a mechanism to ease the levels of anxiety that are experienced within the organization with regard to employment, "I feel great because it shows that I am employed and working for a company." Thus, the uniform is tangible evidence of the employment of the individual. The high importance ascribed to this symbolism might be understood if the high unemployment rate in the area of the organization is observed. This notion of viewing uniforms as a symbol of social stratification, which includes financial means, is inline with Kaiser's (1990: 322) viewpoint of using appearance as

means of social transaction. The uniforms are thus a symbol of the employment status of the wearer, which shapes the identity of the wearer, and places him or her in a social category.

Secondly, the Uniforms as symbolic message of competency, was highlighted by the dependents with the specific example of SAA's air hostesses, who are perceived as highly competent in their work due to their exceptional neat appearance. According to Kaiser (1990: 25), uniforms can give an indication of the individual's professional ability, especially when the organization has many employees. Thus, the appearance of an individual or group can be managed in such a way to ensure that the individual communicates a message of professionalism, as was the case at Eastern Cape Technikon, "... But there has to be a dress code especially for secretaries because sometimes we work with the community, so one needs to be presentable." Kaiser (1990: 09) explained that communication consists of appearance and discourse. The appearance is dependent on interaction amongst the employee and the customer, whether internal or external. Through the appearance of the employee and the discourse, which is the non-verbal and verbal communication, the employee thus communicates a message. The employee, therefore, dresses in such a way to already convey a message of professionalism, which is enhanced by the employee's behavior and the verbal communication between the employees, employers and customers. This is in agreement with Moore's (2004: 33) opinion that corporate clothing, or uniforms, communicate an image to the customer. Based on this analysis, it can be said that the secretaries' forum has decided on a uniform to convey a certain message of professionalism to the customer. Kaiser's explanation above might explain the participant's responses to this research indicating that they feel proud to wear their uniforms, because it emphasizes their contribution to the Technikon as a whole. It can therefore be argued that if the employee is convinced about his or her contribution to the Technikon, it can most likely create a sense of security with regard to future employment.

Furthermore, respondents also indicated that they are motivated to deliver exceptional performance in their jobs when wearing their uniforms. This is consistent with

Ashkanasy et. al.'s (2000: 75) statement that employees will comply with industry expectations and occupational roles easier when wearing a uniform. Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 76) affirms that symbols within the environment also guide people towards appropriate behavior for a given situation. The authors named uniforms and nametags as example of such symbols within an organization. The uniforms and nametags used by employees of Eastern Cape Technikon have the possibility of guiding the wearer's actions towards that which is acceptable to the organization. The wearers of the uniforms mentioned that the uniforms motivate them to perform excellent service, as well as ensuring that those whose behavior is not appropriate will be disciplined, "I think [wearing a uniform] would be alright, because then it would be easy for us to be identified that we work at the Technikon. And if the people are doing something bad then they will know." The uniform of the sample organization, however, possibly serves as symbol to transmit the message of competency of the wearer and in doing so might reduce the anxiety of the employees. This anxiety is possibly caused by the lack of consistency with regard to employment issues. A possible explanation for the argument that uniforms will reduce this anxiety is that good appearance boosts a person's self-image, which results in better work performance. At Eastern Cape Technikon the uniform, which is perceived by the research participants as improving their appearance, has improved the self-image of the employees: "[Wearing a uniform] makes me feel good, special and different." This confirms Stapley (1996: 59) and Schein's (1980: 151) claim that external manifestations, such as uniforms, serve as status symbols which maintains self-esteem. This high self-esteem is argued to improve work performance, which in turn ensures the employee of the Technikon's need for his or her service, resulting in reduced anxiety about future employment.

A further possible explanation, for the symbolic message of competency attached to the uniform, is Kaiser's (1990: 376) explanation that, the ability of individuals in large organizations is judged on visible clues such as appearance. Eastern Cape Technikon is such a large organization. Kaiser further states that personal appearance influences upward mobility of the individual. If Kaiser's statement is true, good appearance should result in upward mobility of the employee within the organization. At the sample

organization, the assumption is that excellent work performance will not necessarily be rewarded by the Eastern Cape Technikon, due to the lack of control with regard to the promotion and reward policies and practices. Instead, people are promoted on an ad-hoc basis, "Admin people get promoted after so many years of service. They have no policy or criteria. You just hear in the corridors that people are promoted." A possible explanation for this might be that Kaiser's statement is true, and that employees at Eastern Cape Technikon are promoted based on their appearance. Establishing if this is true, was however not the aim of the research, and further research would be necessary to establish a reliable finding. Schein's (1985: 245) advice can be accepted, namely that if the primary embedding mechanisms, in this case the allocation of rewards, and the secondary transmitting mechanisms, in this instance the uniform as physical construct, are in conflict, the primary embedding mechanism is more powerful. If this is assumed to be the case, it might explain why uniforms or the appearance of the individual serves as symbolic message to relieve anxiety. If true, the vast support for the uniform amongst employees would then support the argument that uniforms embed the high uncertainty avoidance culture of Eastern Cape Technikon.

The third perceived symbolic message of the uniform, namely organizational wealth and image, refers to the relationship between the group and the organization. In this research there were five groups identified according to the uniform that they wear, namely administration, catering, security, maintenance and gardening employees. From these five divisions, the administration employees were of the opinion that their appearance represents the image of the Technikon due to the front line duties that they perform. This would be consistent with Gilles's (2000a: 03) belief that front line employees and field workers does not need to dress the same. This was also the viewpoint of the Technikon management' "One of the reasons ... is that we, ... do very different types of work... " The other four employee divisions were of the opinion that the fact that the organization supplies them with uniforms indicates the success and status of the organization. A couple of respondents also referred to the financial status of the organization, and the interpretation of the respondents were that the fact that they are issued with uniforms, indicates that the organization is financially stable enough to provide the employees with

uniforms, even though the employees pay a percentage towards the cost of the uniforms. This perceived symbolism of the uniforms possibly reassures the employees of their jobs, and might relieve the potential anxiety found amongst employees given the lack of control at the organization. Another possibility is to compare the situation with the Technikon's current budget, where the service operations, such as security, grounds and gardens, student catering and crucial maintenance, are the first priority with regards to the budget of the organization. This most probably explains why the uniforms of these sections have not been affected by the Technikon's strategy to curb expenses. On the other hand the administrative employees indicated that they do not wear the uniforms so often anymore because the uniforms issued in 1999 were now old and in need of replacement. The Technikon, however, cannot subsidize the uniforms again, due to the financial impact that the uniforms will have on the Technikon's budget. Thus, it could be argued that the uniforms, as well as the other artifacts of culture, namely the buildings and gardens, are all showing signs of the financial strategy and its high priority at the Technikon. These aspects might possibly increase the general feelings of uncertainty at the organization.

Lastly, it is argued that the uniform can portray a symbolic message of safety and security, as was the case in the study done by IOMA (2002: 02) that indicated that the wearing of uniforms contributed positively to a greater feeling of physical security and safeness amongst employees and customers. This aspect was also highlighted in this research by the respondents from the security division, where it was indicated that uniforms help to identify "culprits" who are not belonging on campus. The uniforms thus possibly help to eliminate criminal activity on campus, which will most likely reduce anxiety. It is also argued that the uniforms in this research also symbolize psychological security. Most of the respondents from the individual interviews with employees indicated that the uniforms signify to them the fact that they are employed. This might explain the immense pride that the uniform instill to its wearers. Wearing a uniform thus indicates that a person is employed and that such a person is earning a salary. A possible explanation as to why the uniform is such an important aspect to the employees is that it might ascribe status to the wearer, and in doing so it possibly also improves the self-



esteem of the individual. It is further argued that the uniform also improves the social stratification of the individual, because the individual is ascribed a certain privilege to be amongst the few who are employed. This notion of viewing uniforms as a symbol of social stratification is in line with Kaiser's (1990: 322) viewpoint of using appearance as means of social transaction. Furthermore, this should also be seen in the light of the fact that the area in which the Technikon is situated, namely rural Eastern Cape, has a high unemployment rate, therefore perhaps explaining the value that the employees place on being employed.

The uniform is thus perceived as a possible symbol to portray messages of the wearers' ability to deal with the uncertain situations at the Technikon, through improving self-esteem; enhancing the wearer's social stratification within the group; instilling a feeling of both physical and psychological security; and portraying a image of professionalism. All of these aspects are argued to portray a message of stability, which can possibly reduce anxiety in times of uncertainty. It is therefore argued that the uniform transmits the high uncertainty avoidance culture of Eastern Cape Technikon.

### **5.2.3 Collectivism**

According to Hofstede (1991: 50) individualism and collectivism, two opposite dimensions on a continuum, signifies the power of the group over the individual. Individualist societies are those where the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group. The personal identity of the individualist is different from the identity of the group, and such individuals are not in favor of being classified according to their group membership. Collectivist societies are those where the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual.

The findings of this research indicated that the importance of relationships at the workplace differ from rank to rank. The employee's perception is that management at Eastern Cape Technikon has an individualistic approach, while the unionized employees and students have a collectivist culture. However, management stated that they have a

collectivist management approach, as they are acting in such a way to ensure benefit to all stakeholders of the Technikon.

The demographics of Eastern Cape Technikon's employees indicate a strong African representation, and according to Kaiser (1990: 473) it is traditional for Africans to have a collectivist culture. However, this is a broad generalization, and individuals within ethnic groups may have different cultural dimensions, either collectivist or individualist. This is the case with the top management of Eastern Cape Technikon, who have a predominant individualistic culture, although they are all black and mostly Xhosa speaking. Hofstede (1991: 14) points out that organizational culture is affected by national culture, since employees of the organization have been exposed to a certain national culture from birth, and would thus carry the values learnt from childhood into the workplace. This might explain the collectivist culture that prevails at Eastern Cape Technikon. It can therefore be said that the organization, namely the Technikon, tends to mime the predominant ethnic culture represented within the employee demographics. This could also be a possible explanation to the need identified by the participants of the research to wear uniforms, as wearing the same clothes will portray and enhance the collectivist culture, while also serving to unite the individual members of the group with each other.

It is therefore argued that the artifacts, namely the uniforms transmit certain values that are predominant amongst the stakeholders of the Technikon. One such a value is gender equity, and the respecting of the roles both males and females have to fulfill in society. For example in the service division, only men wear uniforms. The researcher interpreted this as possible proof of the collectivist culture, where males have certain roles to fulfill. In a typical collectivist culture, males and females have distinctly different roles within the community, and these roles are rarely interchanged. In an individualistic culture females would easily perform male roles and vice versa. A possible example of such a specific role is found in the maintenance division, where males would typically perform the manual, labor intensive work. It is also argued that the administrative uniform is another example, due to it only being worn by female administrators. The research respondents were divided with regard to this, with some saying that it is discriminating

that only one sex wears uniforms in a work division, thus an individualistic approach where men, women and children should be all equal. Other respondents to this research felt that males should be treated differently from females due to their different roles in society, which is a typical collectivist approach. It can be argued that this inconsistency is a result of the transformation that is not only taking place at the organization, but in South Africa in general. As part of the transformation there is a strong drive towards equality, especially between male and female. It is therefore argued that the organization considers it crucial to align itself with the national transformation that is taking place, hence the uncertainty regarding the male and female uniform.

Further evidence pointing to the Technikon's collectivist culture is found in the demographics of the management team, consisting of mostly male members. This conclusion from the research is consistent with the typical collectivist culture where adult males are usually given more status (Hofstede, 1991: 187). Female employees at the Technikon normally occupy the more traditional positions, typically in the administrative areas. This situation is in contrast to the Technikon's value statement, which subscribes to equal opportunities. The value statement is aligned to the national transformation drive that has been discussed in the previous paragraph. However, it is argued that the Technikon has not yet reached transformation at this level. The stakeholders of the institution accept the status quo and there is no evidence from the research to indicate any plans to change the situation. Therefore it is argued that the value of gender equality has not yet become a basic underlying assumption of the culture of the organization. This finding is consistent with Schein's (1985: 245) advise that when there are two conflicting culture mechanisms, the primary mechanism, in this case the employment practices, are more important as embedding mechanism than the secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms, in this case the organizational value statement. Therefore, male employees dominate the management positions, indicating a collectivist culture.

In contrast to the finding that Eastern Cape Technikon has a collectivist culture, where belonging and working in a group is important, the research found a lack of formal structures being put in place to motivate teamwork, although it is one of the values that

the organization subscribe to. The operations at the Technikon are following a departmental approach, and the procedures that are prescribed make it very difficult for teamwork to take place across departmental boundaries. However, departments do share and exchange expertise on an informal basis. This reluctance to work in teams might be a symptom of the high power distance dimension of the organization. Normally this culture does not challenge the system, but rather follows the given structure of departments, obeying the set rules, that guide the procedures. It is argued that if Eastern Cape Technikon want to embed its collectivist culture through the value of teamwork, individuals will have to be integrated into the group first, before the group's values and beliefs are accepted. Possibly only then will the group and all its members have a collectivist culture. This integration happens through the establishing of the individual identity, where after the social identity can be established. The formation of groups and the development of identities are discussed in section 5.2.3.1 of this chapter.

This section has made reference to two of the three levels of culture, namely values and assumptions. The role of the other level of culture, artifacts, which includes uniforms, will now be discussed in relation to the collectivist dimension of culture. In typical collectivist cultures, it is found that the identity of the group is valued more than individual identities and dress styles. The participants in this research indicated clearly that although they do not have anything in common with their colleagues on a social level, they deem it important to dress in the same manner to indicate the common purpose that the employee share with regard to their service to the Technikon community. The uniforms worn by employees of Eastern Cape Technikon have been implemented in an attempt to manage the appearance of the employees: "I think it says something, because if you look at ... those ladies, you see them at work they are so neat, ..." However, the administrative employees emphasized in the research interviews, the importance of showing their collective purpose of service to the employer through the uniforms, while the other participants referred to it to a lesser degree. This might be explained by the fact that the administrative uniforms are worn voluntarily, and have been selected through a consultative process. It is then argued that the uniforms plays a role in embedding the collectivist culture, but that the first contributing factor in the collectivist culture is the

formation of groups, where close working relationships and continuous consultation possibly plays an important role. The formation of groups is discussed in the next section.

#### **5.2.3.1 The establishing of individual, social and group identities within Eastern Cape Technikon**

There are three aspects regarding identity that are noticed with regards to the cultural dimensions of Eastern Cape Technikon. They are firstly, the role of the uniform in establishing a social identity; secondly, the role of the uniform in establishing a group identity; and thirdly, the possibility that uniforms contribute positively to group membership if the group were involved in the inception of the uniform. It is then argued that the role that the uniform plays in the group establishes it as mechanism to embed the collectivist dimension of culture.

The first aspect regarding identity is evident in the research because participants feel that the uniform indicates their employment. Therefore it is argued that it indicates the employee's identity within the organization. This analysis is based on the somatic approach to identity formation, as advocated by Olsen (2002: 07). In this approach the importance of the physical aspects of the individual indicates the individual's identity. Olsen goes on to say that once the individual has determined his or her own identity through and within the group, a social identity is established through social stratification. Social stratification is the process whereby power, status, prestige and privilege are ascribed to an individual as member of a group. In the process of social stratification many various member categories are created. These categories include aspects such as age, race, gender, qualifications and financial means. Depending on the individual's membership of the different categories, the member is socially located in specific social strata. At Eastern Cape Technikon, an individual may most probably be a Xhosa (race) women (gender), working as secretary (holding a national educational qualification) in an academic department of the Technikon. Her employment would also indicate her financial means.

Parker (2000: 87) mentions clothing as one of the differentiating factors when people are classified, together with age, dialect, skin color and gender, into different membership categories. These cultural categories relate to social stratification, or social economic inequality. This is a possible explanation for the need expressed by the secretaries and other groups to strive towards equality within the different categories. In this research, the respondents spoke about everyday clothing as distinguishing them in this way, particularly with regard to financial means. It was also for this reason that uniforms were introduced, as noted by one respondent, “I promote the [wearing] of uniforms because you cannot identify the poor person from the others.”

Therefore, if Parker’s statement is true, and uniforms are seen as a form of clothing, the findings of this research contradict what Olsen suggested, as respondents saw the uniform playing an “equalizing role”, where the financial means of staff were less noticeable if they wore a uniform, as with the uniform of the administrative staff. The secretaries’ uniforms, which have been adopted by all administrative employees doing admin work, were implemented to ensure those who cannot afford to dress like the rest of the group, would not be excluded from the group. Thus, it is argued that if the group wears uniforms, they are all dressed the same, and therefore the category enlisting financial means is removed from the membership categories, giving all secretaries equal membership opportunities to the group, despite their financial means. Therefore, possibly, because of their uniforms, the secretaries all have the same status, regardless of their financial situation, which ideally results in them all having equal power, prestige and privilege. The uniforms thus sustain the identity of the secretary within the group, and boost her self-esteem. However, if the uniform only removes the financial inequality, there would still be other membership categories, for example age and race, that differentiate between the secretaries. The aspect of age categories has been discussed in section 5.2.5. This aspect will further be discussed in the section on the second aspect of identity formation, relating to the establishment and maintaining of groups.

Olsen (2002: 03) states that clothing serves as bodily evidence of an individual's ability to perform a specific function. This was evident in the research, where it was stated by the respondents that the uniform shows their competency with regard to their work. This aspect has been discussed in the section on the high uncertainty avoidance culture at Eastern Cape Technikon. With regards to the establishing of identity, this research agrees with Schein (1980: 151) who advocates that artifacts, such as clothing, helps to sustain identity and self-esteem that has been enhanced through group membership. Thus what you wear on the body will shape your identity and self-esteem, because the individual compares him or herself with the group, and the status of the group is then ascribed to the individual.

The second aspect of identity formation relates to the establishment and maintaining of groups. Because of the High Power Distance culture of the organization, the individual's identity is established within the group, who is equal amongst them, but accepts inequality to other groups. In fact, the group strongly voiced their desire to be distinguished from other groups, through wearing different uniforms. This phenomenon where the research participant group members desire equality, while accepting the high power distance of the organization when compared to other groups, might be explained with Schein's definition of a group. According to Schein (1980: 147), a group consists of people who interact daily and who are all aware of each other. In addition, teams and committees also comprise a group. Groups can be created by managers and are known then as formal groups. Informal groups are forged due to physical location, nature of work and time schedules.

Although management did not create the secretarial group, the group has a formal structure that members belong to. This group meets regularly and has a strong identity. The individual members, therefore, have a group or social identity established through the social stratification of the group. The research argues that it is within this group that equality amongst members is aspired to through the use of uniforms, but the group has a different identity and social strata to other groups such as, for example, the management group. The administrative employees, and especially the secretaries, identified a need for

a uniform way of dressing to enable the group to manage their appearance more successfully. Although the group of secretaries used to guide each other on the appropriate dress for work, the members of the group felt that the interpretation of the guidelines by individuals did not always result in the neat and presentable appearance that was desired. This is consistent with Kaiser's (1990: 153) notion of social location. This notion underpins the individual's conformity to the norms of dressing of the specific group to which they belong. The fact that the uniform of the administrative employees were initiated by the secretaries' forum is significant in the sense that the group has already had their own identity, and has already had a forum where they could interact. There was clearly a strong bond amongst the secretarial group, who saw the uniform as bonding element unifying the team. The secretarial group, however, felt strongly that their uniforms must be different from the uniform of other groups within the organization. All respondents from the research agreed that the uniforms enhance their group's team spirit. The research, therefore agrees with Schein (1980: 153), Moore (2004: 34) and Kaiser (1990: 373) who say that the uniform enhances team spirit and disagree with the statements of Thompson and McHugh (2002: 205) that wearing a uniform will not bring about a sense of belonging to the group.

The research results also indicate that the secretaries prefer to have a different uniform from other professions within the Technikon environment, firstly, due to the nature of their work where they have front line contact with the public, and secondly, because they see themselves as a group with a unique identity, which can be labeled as their social identity, as may be agreed with Nellis (2001: 01). In doing this the secretaries in all probability ascribe uniqueness to their profession, and also their group. It is claimed that they then create a member category for themselves through their appearance. Hall (1976: 238) calls this process social comparison, and the result of such social comparison is a unique social identity. It is most likely due to this process that the group of secretaries indicated their need for a unique uniform that would be different from that worn by other occupational groups within the Technikon. This might contradict the notion that the uniform of Eastern Cape Technikon serves as mechanism to ensure equality of all employees, as well as portraying the collectivism of the individuals as Eastern Cape



Technikon employees. However, the fact that all secretaries want the same uniforms, shows their collectivism as a group, while the fact that the group wants a unique uniform, that is different from the other groups within the organization, indicates the group's individual identity. The unique identity of the secretarial group is important to the members, another argument supporting Schein's (1980: 151) viewpoint that identity, and also group identity, enhances self-esteem.

Thompson and McHugh (2002: 205) states that the individuals within the group brings their own identity to the group, and that the identities of the individuals will shape the culture of the group. Furthermore, these authors, as well as Chemers et. al. (1995: 21), advocate that the wearing of uniforms will have little influence of the individual's assimilation of the group values and norms. Chemers et. al. (1995: 21) explained their statement further by saying that uniforms will play even a lesser role within groups with diverse language and religious backgrounds. This research found a counter argument against this of Chemers et. al., which is due to the demographics of the secretarial group that is vastly diverse, yet the secretarial group accepted and ascribed to the norms and values of the group. This then agrees with Kaiser (1990: 377) who states that the uniform suppresses individuality and that personal interest and values become subordinate to organizational goals.

In support of the third statement made by the researcher regarding the possibility that uniforms contribute positively to group membership if the group was involved in the inception of the uniform. Kaiser (1990: 379) proposes that the uniforms be introduced through a process of negotiation to ensure that the groups within the organization all support the uniforms, as was the case in this research, where the secretaries had a long process of negotiation and participation before the uniforms for their group was decided upon. This might also explain the pride and ownership that was shown by the group when discussing their uniforms, despite the diversity of the group. Other groups that participated in the research were mostly homogeneous with no language or religious differences, but despite that, did not experience an overwhelming team spirit. The possible explanation for this might rather be the fact that these groups did not have an

input into the uniform, and did not have the same degree of team spirit and pride in their uniforms, as the secretaries who participated in the introduction of the uniform. Such a conclusion might be supported by Kaiser's (1990: 379) statement, as highlighted above, emphasizing the process of negotiation when implementing uniforms, as discussed below.

While the secretaries volunteered as a group to wear uniforms, the other uniformed employees did not specifically choose to wear uniforms. Investiture, according to Kaiser (1990: 153), is when an individual are not given the opportunity to select his or her own clothing. This was the case with the services sections of the administrative employees, namely, the catering, security, maintenance, and gardening employees. Their superiors selected the uniforms of the catering, security, maintenance, and gardening employees, without any input from the employees. These employees do not have an option as to what they want to wear and when they want to wear it. The uniforms are compulsory, and the uniforms were not selected through a consultative process.

Considering the fact that this research determined that the employees of Eastern Cape Technikon use the Somatic Approach to identity formation, thus the appearance of individuals shape their identity, this means that the identities of these employees who did not have an input with regard to their uniform, might have been altered. Research responses, such as, "I don't feel comfortable about that, because we were not given a chance to choose it", "... you can't really determine... for people what ...to wear to work" and "I think what uniforms do is, they tend to alter individuality..." indicate how strongly participants expressed their feelings about being forced to wear something. In this research the deduction is made that the investiture that took place with regard to the services divisions, has a negative influence on the relationship of the individuals within the group. To avoid altering people's identities, Kaiser (1990: 379) states the importance of the process of consultation with regard to clothing, or uniforms in this case, should happen through discussion and quality dialogue, to ensure that all individuals can express their identity. Without these aspects social validation cannot take place. Social

Validation is the process that strengthens the individual's relationship with the group, to ensure greater connectivity (Kaiser, 1990: 473).

The finding that participants in the research were opposing the "investiture" is significant when the findings are compared to the collectivist culture of the organization. However, these groups are found to be prepared to wear the uniform for the sake of behaving correctly, which is a collectivist cultural trademark. Kaiser (1990: 363) advises that the analysis of uniform requirements be done with an understanding of why people obey rules. Furthermore, the catering, security and gardening sections, who did not have an input in the introduction of the uniform, experience the uniform more as a way to fit into the group from a visual point of view. For these groups the uniforms have other meanings and symbolism, such as the fact mentioned in section 5.2.1.2, that the uniform signify that the wearer is employed. The research findings agree with Fussell (2003: 03) who explained that the uniform could make the individual fit into the group, as is the case with the above groups in the research. On the other hand, the secretaries' association has been established for a period of time before the uniforms were introduced, so the group was formed first. Thus, the uniform did not influence the group formation either. However, the uniforms have influenced the group's morale and team spirit.

Stapley (1996: 68) states that clothing can facilitate group formation and integration. This was discussed in section 2.1.4 of this chapter. Opposing Stapley and Hofstede's notion that clothing indicates group membership, Chemers et. al.'s (1995: 21) viewpoint is that uniforms will have little impact on the group values due to the social identities of the individuals being different. The respondents to this research, however, indicated that they want to dress the same, as it will enhance the group identity and affiliation. The respondents also indicated that the work environment is enough to group people together, and therefore it is maintained that the relationship amongst the group members is strengthened through wearing uniforms or corporate clothing. This aspect has been discussed in length in a previous section of this chapter.

In this research it is argued that the uniform plays an important role in group formation, but not merely as artifact to identify the group's members, but the implementation of the uniform can possibly also be used as a process of group formation, as was the case with the secretarial group at Eastern Cape Technikon. The various aspects of the uniform, including the consultation during the implementation process, can possibly serve as instrument to embed aspects of the individualist or collectivist dimension of the culture of an organization. It is also argued that there might be different orientations with regard to this culture dimension amongst different groups within an organization, as was evident in the collectivist employees and individualistic management. The use of the uniform, or lack of use thereof, however, embedded the collectivist or individualist culture of the specific groups.

#### **5.2.4 Femininity**

Hofstede (1991: 82) defines masculine societies as societies with distinct social gender roles, such as men who are tough and assertive and women who are concerned with quality of life. Feminine societies are those who have overlapping social roles, such as both men and women being modest and tender (Hofstede, 1991: 80). From the interviews, it was determined that the organization has mostly a tendency to be modest about its achievements and also in its dealing within the organization and with counterparts, indicating a feminine culture. Furthermore, masculinity and femininity of this dimension are not opposites, but rather cultural traits on a continuum. An organization such as Eastern Cape Technikon can therefore have more characteristics from the one end of the continuum than the other. It is argued that the strong emphasis on relationships from the employee side, as explained in previous sections, indicates that Eastern Cape Technikon has a strong feminine culture. This deduction made by the researcher is further strengthened by the fact that there is a lack of control at the organization due to the rules not being implemented and obeyed, and there being no culture of accountability, since the disciplinary policies are not applied. Thus the lack of discipline possibly indicates a tender culture.

The research argues that the uniform does embed and transmit the femininity dimension of the organizational culture at Eastern Cape Technikon, and there are three aspects that support this viewpoint. Firstly, Hofstede (1991: 185) explains that the masculine culture dimension is related to the attention people pay to their appearances. The more fashionable and extravagant the clothing that are worn, the more masculine the culture. In the research it is found that people at Eastern Cape Technikon pay attention to their appearance. The appearance of a person is, according to Ashkanasy et. al. (2000: 75), an aesthetic environment that influences behavior, due to the complex relationship between the person and the environment. The authors further state that individuals' perception of suitable appearance is shaped through ethnic culture. If true, the different cultures on the Eastern Cape Technikon campus should be reflected by different views on appearance. However, observation indicated a contradiction to Ashkanasy et. al. 's theory, because there is no set pattern with regard to clothing and ethnicity. According to Hofstede (1998: 11), masculine societies, which are those societies that are more assertive, dress more fashionably because fashion ascribes status to the wearer. Status expresses power, success and position. These are all masculine characteristics. At the Technikon employees and management dress comfortable and practical, and there is no evidence of power dressing or dressing fashionably, but rather sensibly. A possible explanation might be Kaiser's (1990: 369) opinion that service organizations who do not have a profit motivation, dress to convey a message of neatness and competence, rather than to be fashionable. This strengthens the deduction of the researcher that the Eastern Cape Technikon has a feminine culture indicated through the practical and sensible appearance of its employees.

Secondly, the request from employees to wear uniforms also indicates a feminine culture. This deduction is made based on Hofstede's (1998: 59) statement that people from different nationalities will have different viewpoints regarding their appearance. This is closely linked to the section under collectivism, where the differences between people from the different ethnic backgrounds are discussed. An organization like Eastern Cape Technikon, having different ethnic cultures, as well as different nationalities, would possibly need to go through a process called social validation to arrive at a solution

acceptable to all, when dealing with the matter of how to dress for work. The responses of the participants of the research, which indicate that all employees should wear uniforms, might therefore imply a willingness to participate in the social validation process and to ensure that competition amongst employees, even on the level of dressing, is eliminated. Competitiveness is a masculine trait and therefore the attempt to do away with competition amongst groups such as the secretaries emphasizes the feminine culture of the Technikon.

Thirdly, it is argued that the wearing of uniforms also indicates a willingness to improve relationships amongst employees. Such a deduction is strengthened when considering Stapley's (1996: 68) statement that clothing can often be used to indicate group formation and integration. As discussed in the previous section, the administrative employees already had a group, and no group formation took place, while the other employees wearing uniforms were integrated into existing groups. In this research the inception of these groups could not be determined in this research, due to the fact that these latter groups have been in existence for a long period of time. Therefore it is argued that Stapley's argument with regard to group formation cannot be validated in this research. In this instance, the assumption might be that these group members were integrated automatically through the uniform that was worn. Participants stated repeatedly that the uniforms made them feel part of the group or team, even though the team members did not share a social life outside the Technikon. It is thus assumed that the Technikon with its feminine culture enhances relationships amongst employees when individuals are included in the groups through the clothes that they wear. However, the lack of management support for the notion of wearing uniforms might be in contrast to the employees needs to effect social validation to ensure inclusion into the group of employees.

In this research, it is argued that the uniforms worn by the employees of Eastern Cape Technikon embed the feminine culture of the organization. A possible explanation is that the uniforms are sensible and practical, while more extravagant dressing with possibly no uniforms would have indicated a masculine culture. Furthermore, the willingness of the

employees to go through the process of social validation through the use of uniforms, possibly indicate the emphasis of the organization on relationships. The uniform is also mentioned to remove competitiveness (a masculine trait) amongst employees. The important role that the uniforms seem to play in the group identities might be a further indication that the uniform embeds the feminine culture of Eastern Cape Technikon.

### **5.2.5 Short-term Orientation**

There are three distinct findings regarding the values level of the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon that indicates the short-term orientation of the organization. These three findings include, firstly, the respect for traditions; secondly, the adherence to social obligations; and thirdly the emphasis on the past and present. However, it is argued that the uniform, as artifact of culture, does not transmit and embed the short-term orientation culture of the Technikon.

Firstly, with regard to the short-term orientation, according to Hofstede (1991: 263) short-term orientation as cultural dimension refers to respect for traditions and social obligations, as is evident in the researched organization's tendency to uphold traditions from the local ethnic groups. Apart from the maintaining of ethnic traditions with regard to ceremonies, such as the praise singer that performs at the academic opening and the graduation ceremonies, and the slaughtering of a cow at the graduation ceremony, Eastern Cape Technikon has various other ethnic traditions which are adhered to, such as the respect that the younger employees have to show for elders. Age, as category of membership in the process of social stratification to determine identity, is referred to in section 5.2.2 in the discussion on the influence of uniforms in group formation. Some respondents felt strongly that there should not be a distinction with regard to the age of employees: "...They expect us to respect our elders. ... They just expect us to do all their work, because they are older than us. It is nonsense. This is a place of work. We are all professionals. Us young people do not have to be ruled by those African Cultures of obeying your elders." However, if the respecting of elders is such a deeply rooted African tradition, and facing the predominantly short-term orientation of the Technikon culture,

the age category of the social strata might not be overcome by uniforms. On the contrary, some respondents even highlighted that there should be uniform styles catering for young people, and others for more mature people, which would further emphasize the age difference between different employees. This supports the research deduction that the organization is reluctant to change. Other ethnic traditions include the reciprocating of gifts, which are observed on a day-to-day basis in normal operations. These customs and rituals, according to the respondents, are deeply rooted in the Xhosa tradition, which is the dominant ethnic culture in the surrounding areas of the Technikon and the Technikon deems it its social responsibility to maintain these rituals and traditions as a form of respect to the community. Overarching both the culture and the uniform of the Technikon, is the strong drive from management to maintain, strengthen and develop the culture of the Technikon to be in line with the ethnic culture of the region in which the Technikon is situated, namely the Xhosa culture.

Secondly, this ingrained respect for customs and traditions, as explained above, as well as the tendency towards fulfilling social obligations, as resulting from the collectivist dimension, all indicate a short-term orientation (Hofstede, 1991: 263). Short-term orientation links closely with the fact that obligations, and respecting these obligations, are directly linked with the social identity of the groups (Hofstede, 1991: 265). Therefore, a short-term orientation will indicate a belonging to a social context in order to value the social obligations to the society. This possibly explains the research respondents' desire to have a "traditional uniform" as well as the western business suit as uniform. The traditional uniform in this sense refers to the traditional ethnic clothing worn by the Xhosa people in the area surrounding the Technikon's main campus. One respondent indicated that the marketing department makes extensive use of traditional clothing when visiting schools. It is argued that the use of traditional clothes by the Technikon may show that the organization identifies with the community and respects the traditions of the community.

Thirdly, Hofstede (1991: 263) explains short-term orientation as cultural dimension "the fostering of virtues" related to the past and present. This includes examples from the



research, such as the praise singers. Short-term orientation also indicates a reluctance to change the way things have been done in the past, as have been pointed out in the previous discussions on the other dimensions of the Technikon's culture. Long-term orientation stands for virtues slanting towards future rewards. Such virtues are perseverance and thrift. The short-term orientation of Eastern Cape Technikon also indicates the emphasis on the past and the present, as is consistent with Hofstede's (1991: 263) opinion. Although the Technikon's orientation is short-term, the ideal that the Technikon stakeholders aspire to is to have a long-term orientation. However, there are no plans in place yet as to how this change in the organization's culture will be instigated.

An opposing finding, is the fact that the artifacts of the organization indicate a long-term orientation, due to the notion not to waste money. Schein (1985: 242) argues that physical constructs portray a message about the organization. This is supported by Ashkanasy, et. al. (2000: 750) who refers to the buildings of an organization as portraying the organizational life. In this research, the poor design of the available space, the poor functionality of the buildings, the lack of recreational facilities, as well as the lack of respect for the facilities, all reflected the institution's visible features of culture. These particular physical constructs contributed to an organizational culture where financial imperatives superceded others and where this situation is accepted as necessary management strategy to curb expenses in order to make the institution financially viable. Hofstede (1991: 263) pointed out that when resources are used sparingly it indicates a long-term orientation. This might pose the question if the values and behavior, which are argued to indicate a short-term orientation, would have been supported by the physical constructs if the financial situation of the Technikon were different. It is argued that the emphasis on financial viability is rather a transition towards a long-term orientation, because the Technikon has been showing a financial surplus for the last two years, compared to deficits in the previous periods. Nevertheless, this availability of extra money has not changed the spending patterns at the institution. This aspect where a long-term orientation culture uses resources sparingly will be discussed again in section 5.2.5 of this chapter.

Schein's theory states that uniforms form part of the artifacts of culture. It is therefore argued that the uniforms of the Technikon portray the same message regarding the culture of the Technikon as the buildings and other physical constructs. This is possibly also explained by the focus group who stated that their only concern with regards to uniforms was the cost to the Technikon, therefore supporting the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon that has been identified as an unbalanced concern with financial stability. In addition to this, is also the supposition that the uniforms of the administrative employees are no longer in use due to the discontinuation of the financing of the uniforms. Therefore, this research finds that all the artifacts of Eastern Cape Technikon portray a possible message of a long-term orientation, while the behavior and other aspects of the organization indicate a short-term orientation.

With regard to the uniforms of Eastern Cape Technikon, there are also two opposing viewpoints that are related to the Long-term – Short-term orientation as dimension of culture. To understand these viewpoints, Kaiser's (1990: 322) theory should be highlighted that when an individual wears clothing, the appearance of the individual can replace the past and present in anticipation of the future. Suppose it is argued that the same is true for a group, it means that wearing a uniform can replace the group's past and present in anticipation of the group's future. In the focus group, the employee's representatives indicated that the Technikon should have a long-term orientation to ensure development and growth of the Technikon. If then what Kaiser says is true, and clothing can replace the individual's past and present, it is claimed that uniforms can replace the group's past and present. Schein (1985: 30) states that culture is "a shared pattern of thought, belief, feelings, and values that result from shared experiences and common learning". It may therefore be argued that when a group is given a uniform to wear, it can create a new, shared experience, resulting in a new "shared pattern" of culture. This argument thus maintains that uniforms can be used to change the old patterns and values, and instill new values and beliefs. For this to be possible the management of the organization needs to be leading the implementation process of the uniforms to ensure the desired culture are embedded.

Comment [NP1]: 1985: 30

Unfortunately, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the management of Eastern Cape Technikon does not play an active role in the management of the uniforms used at the Technikon. If the uniforms can be manipulated to indicate a long-term orientation it might transmit and embed the desired long-term orientation culture of the organization. However, representatives from management, in the individual interviews done for this research, voiced their preference for employees to wear traditional Xhosa clothing. It is argued that this is an attempt to embed the emphasis on the value of local ethnic traditions on the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. Respondents indicated that clothing is used extensively in the Xhosa tradition to indicate the individual's position in society. This is a typical example of what Kaiser (1990: 153) refers to as "social location". Opposing this wish for traditional ethnic uniforms, the employees indicated a preference for the business suit of the first world. One of the reasons stated for this preference, was the need to shape the behavior of senior employees and managers to that of professionalism, compared to that of "respecting the elders", as referred to earlier in this section. The respondents' strong need for professional western uniforms indicated a need to change their social location from that of their ethnic origin, to that of the profession that the individual practice. It thus argues a changing of the past and present for the future anticipation, while also changing the short-term orientation to a long-term orientation. This change in orientation through the use of a specific type of clothing should be possible because Hofstede (1998: 60) indicated that "foreign" clothing, ascribe status to the wearer and also express the power of the wearer. The business suit is such a foreign item of clothing to the Xhosa culture. This phenomenon of ascribing status to a person through the clothes such a person wears, is especially noticeable when identity is formed through a Somatic Approach, as has been argued earlier in this chapter to be the case with Eastern Cape Technikon. Therefore, apart from just indicating a tendency to change the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon from a short-term to a long-term orientation, this desire to dress in a business suit might also be an indication of the employees' need to ascribe status to their employment, which is embedding the high power distance culture, and enables the employee to deal better with the high uncertainty and tension, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

It is thus argued that the uniform has played a role in the attempt to embedding the desired long-term orientation as culture, through removing certain categories of social stratification, such as age, because such a categorization strengthens traditional behaviors. However, the expressed desire to have both ethnic and western uniforms indicated the culture that is in transformation from short-term orientation to the long-term orientation. This further supports the argument that the uniform embeds this cultural dimension, together with the fact that the uniform portrays the message of using finances sparingly, which has been determined to be a long-term orientation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The core of this chapter is based on the findings of the research that the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon was embedded and transmitted through the use of the uniforms by the organization's employees. This indicates that Schein (1985: 223) is certainly correct in saying that the visible features of an organization can serve as embedding mechanism of culture. It can be argued that uniforms are one such a physical feature, as indicated in the literature review, chapter 2, section 2.4.2.4. This chapter has categorized the culture of the sample organization, Eastern Cape Technikon, and discussed the way the uniform embedded and transmitted the prevailing culture. The culture was discussed based on the Hofstede dimensions of culture. In the next final chapter these findings are summarized, and the possible value of the findings are highlighted. The researcher also makes recommendations for practice as well as future research, while also pointing out the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this research an attempt was made to explore the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. Obtaining the data included, firstly, the accessing of documentation; secondly, the observation of the physical constructs within Eastern Cape Technikon; thirdly, the interviewing of key staff and fourthly, the conducting of a focus group, including all stakeholders of Eastern Cape Technikon.

There are five different categories of uniforms that are worn on the four Eastern Cape Technikon campuses. The first uniform is that of the Administrative staff; the second of the catering staff; the third the uniform of the security personnel; the fourth category of uniform is that worn by maintenance and technical services staff; and lastly the category of uniforms worn by the gardeners. The uniforms used by administrative employees are consisting of fully lined business suits with white shirts. The colors of fabric, namely: gray, red, navy, and lime reflect the colors of the logo and other Technikon symbols. Only females wear uniforms in this division. The catering personnel wear black skirts or pants and white shirts with a logo on the pocket. Both male and female wears the same uniforms. The security staff wear black denim pants and long sleeved denim shirts. Together with this, boots and berets are worn. As with the catering uniforms, both male and female security staff wear the same uniforms. The maintenance staff who are not wearing blue overalls for security and safety purposes wear denim pants and t-shirts with the Technikon logo on the back. Only males wear the uniform. Female employees in this section wear the clothes of their choice. The male and female employees from the gardening section wear green overalls. From the five types of uniforms, the origin of only the administrative uniforms is known.

Although the uniforms are different, the emerging themes with regard to the wearing of uniforms are similar, and therefore the findings are discussed in an inclusive manner. The themes identified from the research, have been grouped into clusters, as indicated in figures 1 and 2 on pages sixty one (61) and sixty two (62). Figure 1 indicates the culture clusters and themes, while figure 2 indicates the uniform clusters. The clusters indicate the main themes that emerged from the research results, with the expanding themes resulting from the clusters, explaining the cluster groupings. Figure one (1) and two (2) schematically represent the cluster and theme groupings that emerged from this research.

**Figure 1: A Schematic presentation of the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon in terms of clusters and themes that emerged from the results.**

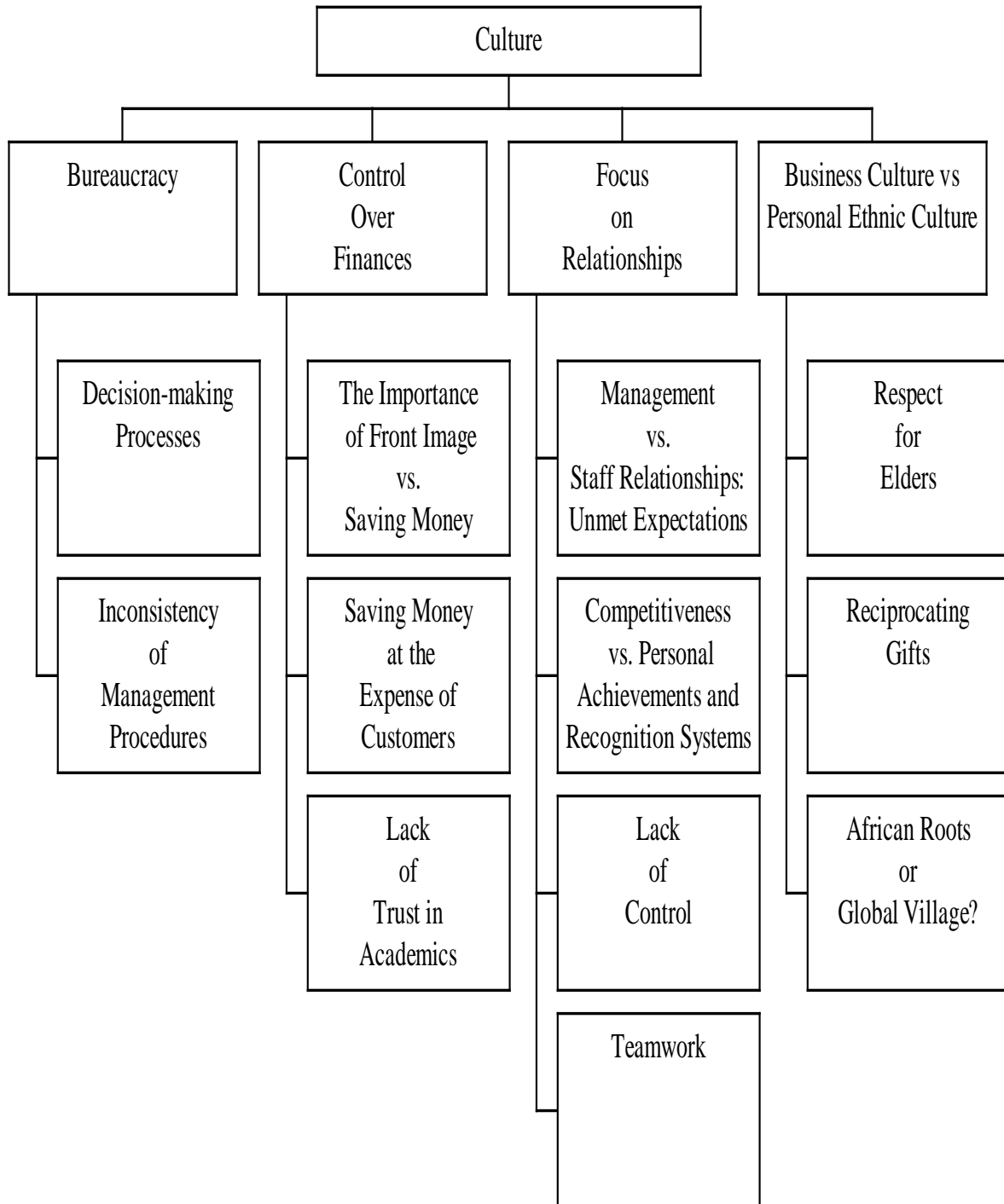
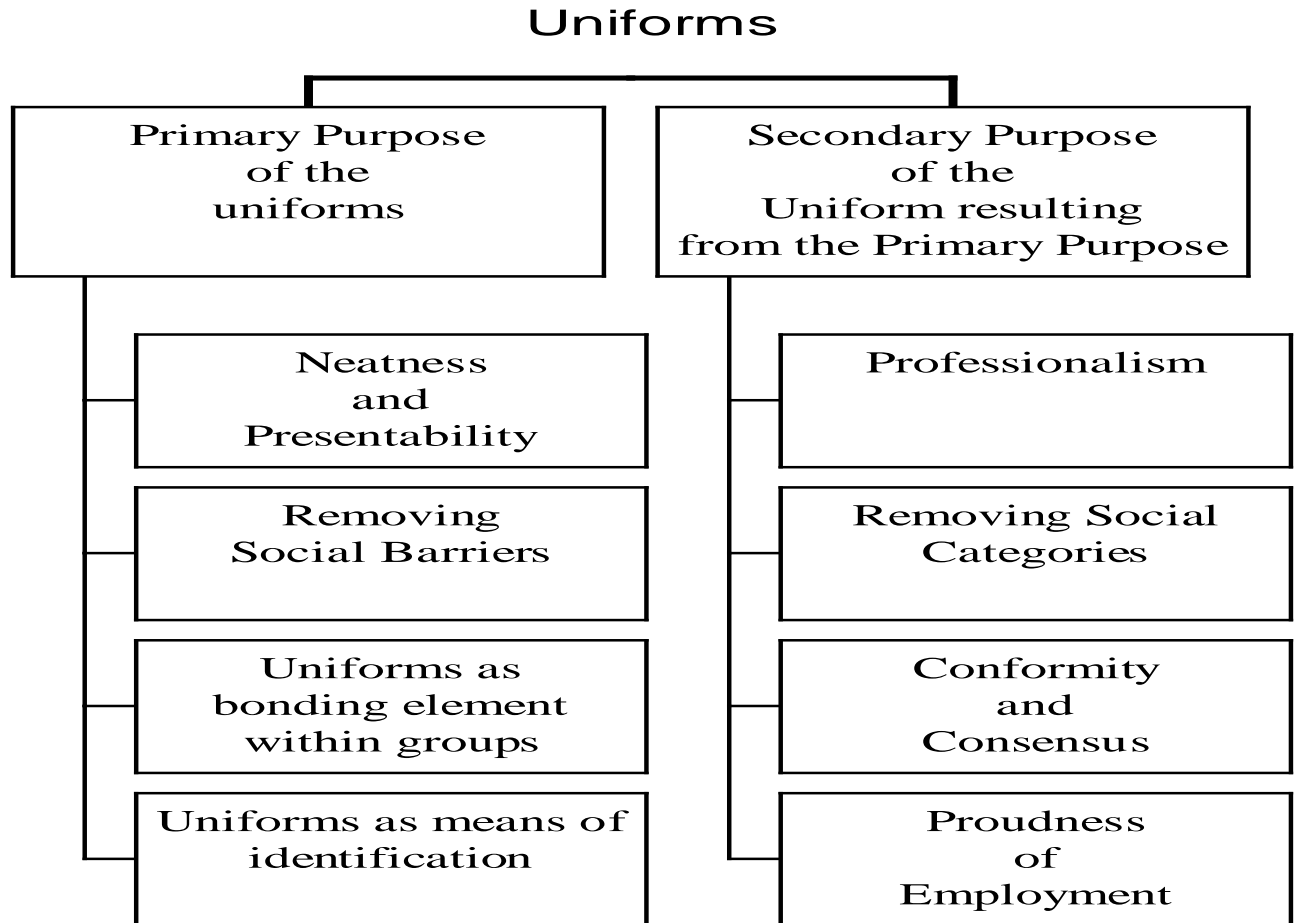


Figure 2: A Schematic presentation of the purpose of Uniforms at Eastern Cape Technikon in terms of clusters and themes that emerged from the results.





## **4.2 Uniforms**

### **4.2.1 The Purpose of the Uniforms**

#### **4.2.1.1 Neatness and Presentability: the need for a uniformed way of dressing**

Eastern Cape Technikon has a Secretarial Association, with a membership of about forty (40) secretaries from all campuses. During meetings the members often discuss appropriate dress for the workplace.

“... But they told us at the secretary’s forum. Sis XXX, the chairlady, advised [us about] the way we should dress, she told us what to wear on certain days.”

The members of this forum also guide each other on what to wear to work.

“... We have got the committee for secretaries, we usually teach each other how to wear clothes as a secretary.”

Although the chairlady guides, especially newcomers to the institution, on how to dress, she felt that the secretaries needed a uniform way of dressing to ensure every member would afford to dress neatly and be presentable.

“... One day they told us we are not supposed to wear ... short clothes, or something with short sleeves. One day they told us we must wear clothes that look nice and neat.”

Dressing in a uniform way would ensure that all secretaries look neat and presentable, without individuals having to try and interpret the guidelines that are given to the secretaries’ forum members.

With regard to the other uniformed divisions at the Technikon, the general feeling amongst employees was also indicating that uniforms were ensuring that all employees look neat.

“I think everybody should wear the uniform so that you can be presentable.”

#### **4.2.1.1.2 The use of the uniform to indicate professionalism**

The secondary purpose of the uniforms that was acknowledged with regard to the neatness and presentation of the employees, is that the neatness of the uniform played a role in the perceived professionalism of the employees.

“I think it [uniforms] says something, because if you look at the South African Airways, those ladies, you see them at work, they are so neat, you know it is like they know their job.”

The majority of participants in the research expressed the opinion that the wearing of a uniform makes the employees feel important and emphasize their contribution to the organization as a whole. Most respondents indicated that wearing a uniform is motivating them to deliver excellent service, which has a possible influence on the professionalism of the person.

“Yes. It shows that the company is growing and it also motivates the employees positively in their job.”

The research indicated that not all respondents had the same opinion on what constitute professionalism, as indicated in the interview quoted below:

“...If you take my department ...[the] staff member who is out and about mostly [visiting] the schools and government ... is always very smartly dressed for work. He doesn't ever wear casual clothes; he is always in a jacket, tie and shirt with polished shoes. Where as another staff member, ...a journalist by profession and training, ... is more of a creative person, ... often wears denim jeans and open neck shirts, a more 'vibey' look, which is fine, because it suits what he is doing.”

#### **4.2.1.1.3 Do only western suits portray a message of professionalism?**

Some respondents felt that the use of suits, as uniforms, were not always suitable for the Technikon environment and the types of work those individuals perform.

“If it is nice, it must not always be formal, like formal suits only, it must also be casual.”

An equal number of respondents have however indicated that they prefer the business suit.

“I prefer a business suit, to wear the same suit would be effective, you know, for the rest of the staff.”

The respondents of this research indicated that there should be some aspect of the ethnic culture of the area portrayed in the uniform. Some even suggested that the uniform selected should make provision for both ethnic costume and western suits, and that the employees can then wear the appropriate uniform, depending on the situation.

“Then on other occasions it [ethnic wear] fits, we took the best of both worlds. I do think it has got a very positive effect, ...”

Respondents also indicated that the western business suit is not suitable for the South African climate, and that an ethnic dress form would be more suitable.

“I think ... what has changed in society is that the ... traditional or ethnic clothing has become more acceptable as a form of dressing... I think we should be wearing things that express our culture and are suitable for the weather.”

All the respondents from the individual interviews indicated support for the uniform, as it is perceived as a way to unite specific groups of people in a specific field of work. Furthermore it is also perceived to portray the group’s work as professional. Despite this, it was also felt that individuals should be able to express their profession through the way they dress, as it was indicated that different industries dress differently.

“Unless we can be different in the form of grays [color], like I cannot wear the same uniform as the people that is working for instance in finance.....so I don’t think that would be good for us. The secretaries must wear the same uniform, if the other people want to wear a uniform, they must wear their own uniform.”

This statement indicated that there is a need to be associated with the individual’s profession of choice.

#### **4.2.1.2 Removing Social Barriers**

It was evident from the research respondents' contributions to the research findings that the uniforms are viewed as a mechanism to remove social barriers. One such a social barrier is the divide between the rich and poor, which can be observed in the way these two categories dress. This was also clearly indicated as the contributing factor to the implementation of the Administrative uniforms. The idea of the uniforms for administrative employees originated from the Chairlady of the Secretaries forum.

The chairlady of the secretary's forum is passionate about uniforms, as she recalls how the use of school uniforms has protected her from the social divide amongst the school children.

“I am passionate about uniforms. I want to write to the minister of education not to ever do away with school uniforms. When I was a child my family was very poor, and my mother tried her best to provide for our needs. Our school uniforms were [consisting of] black skirts and white shirts. I remember my mother used a black umbrella, and carefully unpicked it. Once she had the material loose from the wire, she made a skirt for me. In that way I did not look out. The umbrella material was not perfect, and it was cold in winter, but at least I looked like the other kids. I was very proud of my uniform. “

##### **4.2.1.2.1 The uniform removes social categories: rich versus poor**

Most respondents were of the opinion that the wearing of uniforms removes the social divide amongst employees that was created by the clothes employees wear. This social divide was created due to the difference in disposable income amongst employees, which was directly reflected in the way people would dress.

“I promote the dressing of uniforms because you cannot identify the poor person from the others.”

“Because women, most of the time, are on a fashion show, and that is not good for those who cannot afford fashion.”

Opposing the notion of uniforms removing the social classification categories regarding financial means is the fact that having uniforms within an organization has financial aspects that have to be considered. The first aspect to consider would be whether the organization or the employees are to pay for the uniforms, while the second aspect is concerned with the way staff perceive uniforms if they have to pay for it. What about the employees who does not have the financial means to pay for the uniforms? These two aspects were strongly voiced by all the respondents from the interviews.

The wearing of uniforms for the catering, security and gardening employees are compulsory. The administrative employees and the technical services employees are not forced to wear uniforms, and it was observed that these uniforms are not worn often. The main reason for these seems to be the financial aspects of the uniforms.

“... Have a uniform, so eventually it was implemented and it ran for about a 2 to 3 year period and then the finances was not renewed for the clothing, therefore the uniform system only lasted about for 3 years and then it became too old, so we don't have it in fact, anymore.”

When respondents were asked about their feelings on paying for the uniform, most respondents were not in favor of paying for a uniform, while others felt that the uniform was saving them money, due to the fact that they did not have to buy work clothes.

“I have got my clothes. Instead, I am paying for a uniform that I cannot use when I leave the company.”

“...Our salaries do not allow us to pay things like uniform, we are getting little money.”

“Firstly, I think it would save my money, because each and every time it is boring to wear the same clothes all the time. Secondly, I think it is good to wear it just because you are going to represent that institution, ...”

Two respondents are of the opinion that uniforms are used as a tool to promote the organization, and therefore uniforms should be supplied at no cost to the employee.

“Yes. I think the reason behind was to advertise the company”

It was found that there is some inconsistency amongst the uniformed employees, as some paid for their uniforms while others did not. As example, when uniforms were first introduced for the Administrative staff, the possibility to obtain uniforms for the secretaries were discussed in a Secretarial Association meeting in 1999, and the matter was widely supported. The chairperson and the executive of this forum investigated the matter of obtaining funding for the uniforms from the Technikon. The Secretariat Association executive members approached the director of marketing, communication and development for advice on how to go about approaching the Technikon management to pay for the uniforms. The Secretariat Association felt strongly about the fact that the Technikon has to pay for the uniforms, and this was reflected in the interviews with the respondents.

“They should, but then we have to pay a part of it and then the Technikon pays the other part.....”

The Director of Marketing, Communication and Development has compiled a proposal that has been forwarded to the finance department and the top management. No copy of this document is available in the Technikon archives, and the researcher had to rely on the director’s recollection of the processes and procedures followed.

“When I started here in 1999 I was approached by the members of admin staff and they had been wanting to introduce uniforms to the administrative staff for some time. So I helped them to put together a proposal, it was obviously mainly the financial impact that concerned the organization. The Technikon eventually paid for the uniforms where after 25% of the cost of the uniform of an individual was deducted from the person’s salary over a period of two years.

#### **4.2.1.2.2 The uniform removes social categories: admin versus academic**

Some respondents indicated that the uniforms for the administrative employees might have created new dividing categories amongst employees. The first category that was referred to was the issue of administrative employees versus academic employees.

“Some Academics also wanted uniforms. It became an equal rights issue. I think that academic vs. administrative - divide is something that higher education is inheriting throughout the world. Does a uniform have any further effect on it? ... I think it does, it has given the administrative staff a lift, and it made them feel more important perhaps. I know that when the staff got the uniform they wanted photographs taken of groups and that sort of thing and we did publish a story in our newsletter. I think it made them feel that they were important.”

The Technikon employees are divided into academic employees and administrative employees. The services employees are also categorized under the administrative employees. Academic employees do not wear uniforms. However, some academic respondents feel that it is important to have some guidelines for academics.

“It is important to have a dress code for lecturers too, because sometimes they can embarrass the department with the way they attend meetings.”

The administrative respondents indicated that they are not against the academics wearing uniforms as well.

“Well, really I don’t know the fact that the academics don’t wear it. Maybe they were also informed about it but didn’t show any interest in wearing it...”

#### **4.2.1.2.3 The uniform removes social categories: male versus female**

Another dividing category that was viewed by respondents as being highlighted by uniforms was the issue of male versus female. Some respondents have, however, mentioned that it is discriminating to only have uniforms for one of the gender categories.

From a male respondent: “It is not fair to have only ladies wearing uniforms. I would also like to wear a uniform.”

From a female respondent: “I think male clothing is predominantly pretty much standard, it doesn’t have the great range that women’s clothing has...thus no need for a uniform. On the other hand, it might be discriminating...”

The employee group where the alleged “discrimination” was most obvious was in the administrative employee uniform division. The researcher posed the question of only female employees in the administration division wearing uniforms, and typical responses were that it is more important for females to wear uniforms due to the nature of their work and the variety of female dress styles that are available to women.

“I think the reason is that most of time women [are] always in the front line in the companies so they have to look nice and presentable.”

#### **4.2.1.2.4 The use of uniforms to rank employees.**

In opposing the strong feeling amongst the respondents to remove the social barriers to equity, namely financial means and gender, an interesting phenomenon was raised. Respondents expressed the need to indicate, through some form of ranking, the individuals who held positions of authority.

In the interviews with individuals and management it was clearly identified that all employees may wear uniforms, but that there should be a level of distinction between the uniforms of the different levels.

“I think there should be different uniforms, I don’t see myself wearing the same uniform as [a superior], at least it might help [differentiate them] from the others and directors, so they can be identified.”

Although everybody interviewed was of the opinion that there should be some distinction with regard to the uniform to allow for the different job levels, most respondents indicated that they would appreciate it if management also wore uniforms, as this would create unity amongst all employees.

“My supervisor is also wearing a uniform and I like that because it shows that we belong to the same company.”



### **4.2.1.3 Group Bonding**

The introduction of the uniforms of the administrative employees was as a result of this groups' team spirit, as highlighted by this quote from an interview:

“... It came from the secretary's forum, they are quite a large group who tend to bond together, so it was the secretaries forum that kind of drove the whole process. I think then they felt like they belong here more quickly having the uniform, I also think it brought new recruits into the folds more rapidly.”

Apart from the administrative employees, other respondents mostly indicated uniforms as a means of identifying with a group. The group extends beyond the immediate group, to that of the organization. Uniforms are also seen as a way of building loyalty within the group.

“Yes, it [the uniform] does create team spirit, if we have the uniform on we look and feel like a team.”

“I think, yes, I think for certain sectors of an organization it is an important bonding element. It has got advantages and disadvantages, for instance in administration, people with certain job types enjoy the unification that the uniforms bring. I think it has definitely built a loyalty to the institution, it builds pride, [because] because [people] all look the same, they feel more unified in things like service delivery, pride to the institution, ...”

#### **4.2.1.3.1 Conformity versus individuality**

Opposing the support for the uniforms to unite groups, some respondents have pointed out that uniforms enforce a certain style on them, which might not be the style of their personality.

“I think what uniforms do is, they tend to alter individuality and I think that is the danger of using a uniform in other cultures, it makes everybody the same, so you don't get anybody expressing their personalities through their dress, it can be a good or a bad

thing. Depends who the company is and what they want to achieve, everybody looking the same makes it a kind of robotic thing.”

Only respondents under the age of twenty-six indicated that they wear clothes that are the same as that of their friends, and confirmed their preference to dress similar to other people. All respondents twenty-six years and older indicated that they do not dress similar to their peers, and appreciate their own individual style. However, this group clearly stated that they find it rewarding to wear a uniform due to the fact that it creates team spirit and unity amongst employees, who has little in common outside of the workplace.

“And you can’t really determine... to people what ...to wear to work.”

In support of this statement the Technikon has no formal dress code. The management’s reply to this matter indicated that there is a reliance on the professionalism of the different groups within the Technikon to ensure appropriate dress. Opposing the stance of management, are the employees who feel that a formal dress code will ensure that some form of control is possible.

“... But there has to be a dress code, especially for secretaries because sometimes we work with the community, so one needs to be presentable.”

Furthermore, management stated that the work situation and environment of employees differs vastly within the organization, which would make it difficult to apply a dress code.

“If you think of the technical services department it is essential for those people to have a uniform, because they are perhaps what you would call re..... and the uniform is protected, it is a protective garment. So there is lots of different groupings in a large organization.”

#### **4.2.1.3.2 Enforcing employees to wear uniforms**

All respondents agreed that enforcing a uniform on a group creates tension amongst the group, while the uniform might not be suitable for the work that the group has to perform.

“ I don’t feel comfortable about that. Because we were not given a chance to choose it.”

Nevertheless, employees are prepared to wear such a uniform if it is for the betterment of the group and the Technikon as a whole.

“So I think it definitely has a positive impact on institutional culture, but not for everybody...”

A secondary purpose of the uniforms, resulting from the primary purpose of uniting groups, indicated a need for consultation and consensus amongst groups when implementing uniforms. From this research, there was a continuous thread indicating the respondents’ view that employees should not be forced to wear a specific uniform. However, all the respondents from the individual interviews indicated support for the uniform, as it is perceived as a way to unite a specific group of people in a specific field of work, provided that they have an opportunity to make an input with regard to the type of uniform to be selected.

“Yes, [I will wear a uniform] as long as we can be given a chance to choose what we want to wear.”

Participants indicated that reaching consensus could be a lengthy process, as experienced when the administrative uniforms were selected.

“Really, some people might and some people might not like it, but I think it is better if we wear the same clothes.....”

The most important aspect when reaching consensus is communication. There was evidence of continuous miscommunication when the administrative uniforms were introduced.

“You know it is a story, because the problem was when you go to Queenspark and you fit the uniform not knowing that when you get something that suits you, it’s yours, because you thought maybe, you go and see and when you come back you tell the Technikon that okay I went to Queenspark and I found this and this. What happened is, I went to Queenspark and they sent a quotation here to the Technikon and the Technikon

paid, but I got the letter from the finance department telling me I've got a uniform, but I went to fit, not to buy."

#### **4.2.1.3.3 Choosing uniforms through consensus: how practical would that be?**

The one aspect regarding the administrative uniforms that indicated that wide consensus has been reached, was the Casual Friday practice.

"No, that one is necessary, because I think that some people they come to work knowing that after work they will be going somewhere, like a party. And another thing is: we don't work the whole day on a Friday, we only work half of the day."

However, the focus group raised a concern about the fact that people interpret Fridays as a casual day on which it is not compulsory to work.

"A Fridays is a normal working day. It should be treated like that in all respects. On Fridays the parking lot is empty – that should not be tolerated."

The reason why the respondents would like to have a say in the type of uniform introduced, is articulated in the statement below.

"One of the reasons ... is that we... do very different types of work... Most of our staff had uniforms, but only used them on certain occasions, they looked quite interesting, but felt it in our case necessary to express individuality throughout, so we used the uniforms when we felt they'd be useful, but left them when we were doing other things, like for instance, when receiving visitors from overseas, some of our staff would then dress in ethnic clothes."

#### **4.2.1.4 Identification**

This research has found that uniforms play an important role in identifying employees at Eastern Cape Technikon, and for two reasons. Firstly, the uniform identifies the employees that are permitted in certain areas. The interviews highlighted this aspect of uniforms, where it can identify employees, and in doing so also indicate non-employees.

This is important in restricted areas where security is crucial. The uniforms thus create a safe working environment.

”I think it [uniforms] helps to identify people who do not belong in the Technikon, so that it should be easy to identify culprits.”

“I think [wearing a uniform] would be alright, because then it would be easy for us who work at the Technikon to be identified. And if the people are doing something bad then they will know.”

Secondly, the uniform identifies employees to visitors on campus. Identification is especially important to employees performing front desk duties, as they are the first contact of visitors to the organization.

“I think it is nice for front line staff to have a standard uniform. People walking in can see whom they can approach.”

All the respondents listed identification as most important purpose for wearing uniforms. Identification in this sense refers to the fact that the employee can be identified with the institution by the garments that the person wears.

“ [Wearing a uniform] is for identification. It means that I am employed. My perception is that they [people wearing uniforms] belong from the same company.”

#### **4.2.1.4.1 Uniforms portraying the image of the Technikon**

Secondary to the purpose of identification of uniforms is the image that uniforms portray regarding the organization. All respondents agreed that uniforms contribute to the positive image of the Technikon, especially with regard to front line employees, who deal with the public directly.

“I think it is very important, I think it does a lot to build the front line image of the institution. If a guest or visitor walks into an organization and at the front line desk everybody is smartly dressed and I think that image is really a very good business front

image that can be portrayed. Where as not with individual staff dressing the way they want to and you have a very wide range [of different styles of clothing].”

In addition, some respondents referred to the perceptions that are created by the outside world with regard to the infrastructure, financial strength and governance of the Technikon.

“The outside world, it identifies the infrastructure of the institution [when looking at our uniforms]. The fact that we are supplied by a uniform it means that our company is not poor.”

A number of respondents indicated that the uniform signifies the success and the status of the Technikon. The uniform is then perceived as ascribing the same status to the wearer. Furthermore, people from the community admire the wearers of the uniform, and being employed within the organization portrays success and achievement, as was stated in the response of one of the former students of the Technikon.

“What I noticed when I was a student, I was always admiring people that were wearing that [the uniform], I was always thinking to myself that one day I will also wear that uniform simply because the uniforms were so nice so I think it is very good for us to have a uniform.”

#### **4.2.1.4.2 Identifying the individual with a caring organization**

Another interesting secondary purpose that the uniform fulfills, emerged when most respondents from the services division referred to the fact that their organisations cares about employees, and shows this through the uniforms that they provide.

“My perception is that the company is loyal, respects, and is working hand in hand with its employees. I feel proud because it identifies that a certain company employs me.”

#### **4.2.1.4.3 Uniform as means of recognition of employment**

The previous finding leads to another interesting finding, where a majority of respondents clearly highlighted the fact that it is important to be identifiable as employee of an organization, as it reflects your employment status.

“Yes, you must be able to be identified e.g. you have to wear work-wear. When I am wearing a uniform I feel like a working person, and I look different than when I am not at work wearing, casual clothes.”

“I feel great because it shows that I am employed and working for a company. “

Most respondents indicated that the uniform made them feel important in terms of the contribution they could make to the Technikon in being professional in their activities. As such the uniform was a means of enhancing the employee’s self-worth.

“[Wearing a uniform] It makes me feel good, special and different.”

The uniforms also brought about an expressed proud ness amongst employees. A number of employees mentioned that they always receive compliments when wearing the uniform.

“Because it identifies me of the place where I am employed and most of the people outside are always complimenting my company.”

All but one respondent from the individual interviews indicated that they are proud to wear their uniforms. The respondent explained her reasons for not being proud of the uniforms as follows:

“No, I didn’t, because when we got the uniform they were not wearing it, the staff wasn’t wearing it, maybe sometimes they were wearing it when they were going to funerals, they weren’t wearing it for work. So that is why I don’t wear it.”

However, all the other employees were proud to be seen in their uniform.

“I feel proud to wear the uniform. Yes I do. Because I feel safe and identifiable.”

## 4.2.2 The Culture of the Eastern Cape Technikon

Various themes emerged in the focus group discussion with regard to the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. Table two (2) below indicates the demographics of the participants to the focus group. Figure one (1) on page sixty-one (61) indicates the relationship between the themes and clusters identified as part of the findings of this research. These themes were supported by the documentation that was accessed and the observations made by the researcher. The findings that are following are therefore a result of the triangulation between the three sources of data.

**Table 2: Demographics of the focus group participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Designation represented in Institutional Forum</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>Age Group</b>
1	Management Executive	Director	Female	White	56 - 65
2	Senate	Institutional Planner	Male	Black	26 – 35
3	Council	Institutional Forum Chairperson	Male	Black	26 – 35
4	Student Representative	SRC Executive	Male	Black	18 – 25
5	Senate	Head of Department	Male	Black	36 – 45
6	Convocation	Student Councilor	Male	Black	26 - 35

### 4.2.2.1 Bureaucracy

All data sources indicate that the Technikon has a bureaucratic management style. The symptoms of this bureaucracy are long decision-making processes, lack of consultation and lack of transparency.

### 4.2.2.2 Decision-making processes.

According to the focus group extensive consultation takes place with regard to decision-making, however, a few individuals, not necessarily within the Rectorate, make the final



decisions. Wide consultation normally only takes place with regard to minor issues. Eastern Cape Technikon's Institutional Values highlight the fact that the organization ascribes to participative management, but as pointed out by management, this only applies to issues that directly concern the individual. The reporting structures and official communication lines are very hierarchical, which further contributes to the slow decision-making processes.

“Hey, it takes long to get things done.”

#### **4.2.2.3 Inconsistent Management Procedures.**

The data accessed highlights the fact that there is a lack of consultation resulting in transparency as ongoing development that has lots of room for improvement. Furthermore, crises situations are only discussed with the Technikon Management Committee Executive, which is not even an acknowledged Council Committee. The stakeholders interpret this as a lack of transparency.

“It is obvious that the institution is ruled by two individuals. No matter what we decide, the final decision lies with them.”

“There is no transparency.” This is a phrase that is often heard at Eastern Cape Technikon. The focus group stated that transparency is limited with regard to the event or decision, and that it is relying heavily on the goodwill of representatives from the various constituencies within the Technikon to ensure the dissemination of information.

A theme that was emerging continuously was the matter referring to the lack of consultation before policies and procedures are changed or introduced. The problem with procedures and forms are that they do not get approved by any acknowledged structure, and are normally generated within a department. Furthermore, these forms and procedures change without prior notification, and result in animosity and confusion. It also creates unnecessary tension between the academic employees and the administrators.

“We do not know where these rules are coming from. The procedures change from day to day. Somebody sits in his or her office and decide on the process.”

The bureaucracy at the Technikon results in the continuous changing of procedures, which frustrates the employees of the Technikon.

“Too many people have to approve, by the time that last person signed the procedures has changed already and you start afresh.”

Although various rules and regulations exist, the Technikon rules are often broken. The focus group indicated that this is as a result of the lack of appropriate management, which also brings about the fear of the unknown and resistance to change.

“No matter what you do, if you are friends with the right people you will get away with it. You can even find that your boss is scared to apply the rules, because, he is also breaking them.”

The data also indicated that there is lack of responsibility amongst staff at the Technikon, due to rules not being implemented in a consistent manner.

#### **4.2.2.2 Control over Finances**

The attention of Technikon systems and procedures are focused on the control over finances.

##### **4.2.2.2.1 The importance of front image vs. saving money**

Physical evidence highlights the fact that the Technikon is concerned with its image although only the areas that are accessible to outsiders and visitors, thus front image, are maintained and beautified. The rest of the buildings and grounds are neglected as part of the money-saving strategy that the institution has embarked on for the last three years.

##### **4.2.2.2.2 Saving money at the expense of customers**

The focus group student and union representatives voiced a concern about the extent to which the Technikon focuses on saving money, instead of on its key performance areas that are determined by the academic faculties. The interviews with the representatives

from management indicated that the management does not see this aspect as negative, but rather as good business sense. A member of the focus group, made it clear that this situation is fuelling the emotions of the academics.

“You don’t know who runs this institution: Prof [the principal] or the director of finance. We are saving money at the expense of our customers, the students, the government and the industry.”

#### **4.2.2.2.3 Lack of trust in academics**

The perception of both management and the focus group is that the rules and procedures are necessary due to mistrust amongst the Technikon’s internal stakeholders. The fact that most rules concern financial procedures and apply to the academic staff, created the impression amongst academic staff that the administrative managers do not trust them. This is evident through the fact that operational administration is decentralized, but decision-making and finances are highly centralized.

“The departmental secretaries do all the work, forms, checking on ITS, everything. Then finance must approve – and it gets sent back for reasons not even explained to us. It is very frustrating.”

This also links closely with the matter raised by the forum group that there is no transparency, and that people have no idea why or where decisions have been taken, as discussed under the heading ‘consultation’. This creates uncertainty, as the academic departments are entirely responsible for their operations, but do not have control over the availability of resources to support the operations.

#### **4.2.2.3 Focus on Relationships**

##### **4.2.2.3.1 Management vs. Staff Relationships: Unmet expectations**

Relationships amongst the stakeholders of Eastern Cape Technikon are deemed very special. However, the nature of the relationships and the resulting trust differ from rank to

rank within the institution. Amongst the unionized employees and students, the focus is also more on relationships rather than personal achievement. This culture has been strengthened over the years, but it should be noted that it is most obvious on the lower ends of the hierarchy. However, in contrast to the notion that relationships are important at Eastern Cape Technikon, it was evident that the employees do not perceive management to care about relationships. There is a general perception amongst Technikon stakeholders that the management does not care about the relationship between management and stakeholders.

“You hear singing, they run away. Management is scared to deal with employees. Well, they also do not care about employees.”

In reply to this allegation, Management feels that they would rather go and work on important matters, such as documents that have to be submitted, during crises situations. Employees perceive management as regarding employee-matters as “unimportant”, with too much emphasis being placed on the administration of the institution. The focus group interviews debated this matter from all angles, and the management representatives stated that they find it important to keep up to date with their admin work, instead of dealing with staff issues.

“I am not going to stand and listen to union complaints while I have documents to prepare.”

It was evident that this matter was sensitive, and the discussions surrounding the matter could not reach any conclusion. What was evident is that the employees do not perceive management’s handling of crises situations per se to improve the working relations amongst all stakeholders on campus.

#### **4.2.2.3.2 Competitiveness versus. personal achievements and recognition systems**

At Eastern Cape Technikon competition is viewed negatively and thus not promoted or supported. On the other hand job security is very important to the Technikon employees. However, interviews with representatives from management indicated that the value of relationships does not exclude behaviour to favour the individual’s own agenda for

personal gain. This tendency is more focused towards the management levels than at the unionised employee level. Although the Technikon's employees value relationships and have low competitiveness, there is immense unhappiness about the promotion policy and other recognition systems. The Performance of academic staff members is measured with regard to teaching, research and community outreach. The reward for this would be a performance based increase. However, this creates tension amongst employees, because there is no performance management system in place for administrative employees.

“It is only academics who have to meet FTE criteria, and our performance gets measured. Nobody takes the support staff's performance into question”

In addition to the performance management system, the Technikon also has an Academic Achiever Policy. The policy is also only applicable to teaching staff, and there is no similar policy with regard to the administrative and support staff. This creates tension between administrative and academic staff, as the one group feels that they are evaluated, while the other group's performance is not tested. This then contributes to the perceived divide between Administrative and Academic divisions, as highlighted by the focus group interviews. Neither the Academic Achiever Policy, nor the Performance Management System has been implemented. This lack of implementation of the existing policies are perceived by academics that their contribution to the Technikon is not valued, while the lack of similar policies for the administrative employees lead to the same sentiments on the administrative employees' part.

#### **4.2.2.4.Lack of control**

In addition to the two policies mentioned above, the Technikon's Promotion Policy stipulates the promotion criteria for academic staff. However, according to the focus group interviews, administrative employees are promoted without any preset criteria that has to be met.

“Admin people get promoted after so many years of service. They have no policy or criteria. You just hear in the corridors that people are promoted.”

The above statement was followed up, and there were no policy on the promotion of administrative staff. This supported the perception of the employees that there is no control over policies and procedures.

Recognition systems, such as the above, contribute to the general feeling amongst the stakeholders of the Technikon that the focus has moved away from the core business of the Technikon, being teaching and learning.

“ The whole Senate agenda is only concerning admin issues. There is nothing about teaching and learning that gets discussed. Our core business and our customers are not important to management.”

The representatives of management denied these statements, and said that teaching and learning are ongoing as core business of the organization, but that the management function is crucial to support the core business.

#### **4.2.2.4 Teamwork**

It was determined that there are no teams within the Technikon with regard to the normal operations, however special projects are dealt with in teams. Supporting this is the fact that staff has individual offices that are not conducive to teamwork. Most of these offices, however, were not planned as individual offices, and available space was converted into offices through the use of dry walls. Management maintains that the operations are free to work in teams, and that it is not necessary to structure the whole organization in that way.

“Teamwork is a mindset. There is a lot of team work behind the scenes.”

A reply from an Institutional Forum member regarding teamwork:

“ Where is it? Show me that team work...we are all operating in our own pockets.”

### **4.3 Business Culture vs. Personal Ethnic Culture: Potential Conflict.**

Due to the Technikon's location in the rural areas of Eastern Cape, there are many ethnic cultural traditions that are still upheld by the surrounding community. This results in the influence of these traditions on the employees and students of the Technikon. The focus group raised the issue of employees who are expected to adhere to certain ethnic cultural traditions of the surrounding area.

#### **4.3.1 Respect for elders**

One of the aspects of personal culture is that some ethnic groups expect young people to respect their elders. It was found that younger respondents were not in support of such practices, and they felt that it was unjustified. Employees are expected to adhere to ethnic cultural traditions such as the following:

“You know, people think this is their home. They expect us to respect our elders. Like Sis YYY and Sis ZZZ, they just expect us to do all their work, because they are older than us. It is nonsense. This is a place of work. We are all professionals. Us young people do not have to be ruled by those African Cultures of obeying your elders.”

#### **4.3.2 Reciprocating gifts**

Most of the employees of the institution value greetings, gifts and favours and it is difficult to maintain day-to-day operations without reciprocating gifts.

“If you want your XXX requisition approved, just give Bro XXX a roast chicken...”

The reply from Bro XXX:

“This lady does not understand how things work here. You have to show some appreciation. It will open doors!”

Although both the focus group and the management representatives acknowledged that situations like the above example do occur, it is not the type of organisational culture that they would like to support.

### **4.3.3 African roots vs. global village**

#### **4.3.3.1 Global institution**

The Technikon's Annual Reports (Eastern Cape Technikon, 2004g: 06) put a lot of emphasis on its international linkages, and it strives towards being globally competitive. However, there are mixed feelings amongst the participants of the focus group.

“The first Engineers were from Africa, namely the Egyptians. Africa was once the world leader in technology, we should become it again.”

“We can only do that if we become globally competitive. We have to prepare the students for the global village and the global market.”

#### **4.3.3.2 African institution: Hampering Student Aspirations?**

The management of the Technikon feels that is important for the institution to embrace its African heritage, and use all efforts to develop Africa.

“This is an African institution. We must concentrate on Africa.”

Students raised their concern in the focus group in favour of the establishment of a global culture, where they will be able to compete with the rest of the world from the same footing as other students. Students emphasized that the Technikon should strengthen relationships with other countries, without emphasizing the African aspect, to ensure that students can make use of all opportunities.

“As students we would like to be able to exchange with students from Canada, Germany and Texas. We are no longer stuck in Africa. We, as the youth, can go anywhere!”



## **4.4 Conclusion**

### **4.4.1 Uniforms**

While there are five (5) different categories of uniforms that are worn by the employees of Eastern Cape Technikon, there are also different rules and procedures applying to the different categories of wearers. The introduction process of the administrative uniforms is known, and limited consultation took place before the uniforms were implemented. The decisions regarding the implementation of the other uniforms are not known. However, these wearers indicated that they would have preferred to be involved in the decision-making process.

Respondents mostly indicated uniforms as a means of identifying with a group. Uniforms are also seen as a way of building loyalty within the group, and for identification. Most respondents indicated that wearing a uniform is motivating them to deliver excellent service, and they are proud to wear the uniform. All respondents agreed that uniforms contribute to the positive image of the Technikon, especially with regard to front line employees, who deals with the public directly.

The wearing of uniforms for the catering, security and gardening employees are compulsory. The administrative employees and the technical services employees are not forced to wear uniforms, and it was observed that these uniforms are not worn often. Various reasons were stated for not wearing the uniforms, including the lack of funding to purchase the uniforms, as well as the need for less formal uniforms.

This research has found that all uniforms were partly funded by the employer, but there has been inconsistency with regard to the level of financing provided by the employer. This was a point of concern to the employees. When respondents were asked about their feelings on paying for the uniform, most respondents were not in favor of paying for a uniform, while others felt that the uniform were saving them money, due to the fact that they did not have to buy work clothes.

All respondents agreed that enforcing a uniform on a group creates tension amongst the group, while the uniform might not be suitable for the work that the group has to perform. However, all the respondents from the individual interviews indicated support for the uniform, as it is perceived as a way to unite specific groups of people in a specific field of work, while also promoting equity with regards to gender, financial means, and job ranking.

Some respondents felt that the use of suits for the uniforms were not always suitable for the Technikon environment and the types of work those individuals performs, and suggested a more ethnic approach.

#### **4.4.2 Culture**

The bureaucracy at the Technikon results in the continuous changing of procedures, which frustrates the employees of the Technikon. The perception of both management and the focus group is that the rules and procedures are necessary due to mistrust amongst the Technikon's internal stakeholders.

The view amongst stakeholders of the Technikon is that the emphasis of the management is on the financial stability of the Technikon, without giving attention to the core business, being teaching and learning.

Although relationships amongst the stakeholders of Eastern Cape Technikon are deemed very special, there is a general perception amongst Technikon stakeholders that the management does not care about the relationship between management and stakeholders.

Furthermore, the location of the Technikon within the rural area, results in the influence of Xhosa traditions on the employees and students of the Technikon, ultimately influencing the organizational culture.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

#### **6.1 Summary of the embedding and transmitting of the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon through uniforms.**

The focus of the methodology of this study has been to firstly determine the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon, and secondly to determine the importance of uniforms as a secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanism of culture. Through the use of these two sub-goals, the main objective of the research, namely to explore the role of uniforms in embedding and transmitting organizational culture, has been addressed. In Chapter five(5), the discussions compare the results of the two sub-goals with each other, as well as with the literature available on the topics of the two sub-goals, to determine the results of the research.

This research has found that the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon was embedded and transmitted through the use of the uniforms by the organization's employees. The findings are based on the levels of culture, as advocated by Schein (1985: 223), and the culture dimensions of Hofstede, as set out below.

Using the Hofstede (1991:113) dimensions of culture, the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon was found to be as follows: Firstly, the uniform indicated the high power distance if the research considers the fact that the different job divisions and job levels have different uniforms. This indicates different status groups and thus an inequality amongst Technikon employees. This is consistent with Hofstede's (1991: 13) description of the culture dimension, where relationships and equality differ amongst people with different authority. Furthermore, the secretaries voiced their desire for their uniform to be unique, as well as for some form of ranking, to be indicated on the uniforms, to distinguish the senior employees. There might be serious reservations raised against this deduction due to the fact that the same group of secretaries introduced their uniform specifically as equalizing mechanism amongst themselves. This matter was debated in

section 5.2.3.1 of the discussion. There is no doubt that the secretaries wanted to remove the inequality amongst them. The determining factor, however, is that they want to be equal within the group, while the group wants to be distinguished from other groups, thus having a power distance culture amongst groups. One other argument of the equality within the group is the collectivist culture of the Technikon, which would be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

Secondly, the high uncertainty avoidance culture, which is the extent to which unknown situations are perceived as threatening and thus creating tension and anxiety (Hofstede, 1991: 110), was embedded and transmitted by the uniform through the symbolism attached to the uniform, which served to reduce anxiety. Using the uniform as symbolic message has been suggested by Rafaeli and Prat (1993: 55) and Kaiser (1990: 308) and was discussed in section 2.2 of the discussion of this research. The uniform serves as symbol of stability in the environment where there is lack of consistency with regard to the policies and procedures of the organization. The uniform is also a symbol of the wearer's competency and improved the self-esteem of the employees, resulting in reduced anxiety levels. Furthermore, the uniform symbolized the organizational wealth and image. The uniform was also seen as a physical and psychological symbol of safety and security.

Thirdly, the collectivist culture, or the power of the group over the individual (Hofstede, 1991: 50), of the Technikon was embedded and transmitted by the uniforms in that the groups wearing the uniforms were unified through the clothes that they wore. This enhanced the group's relationship with one another. This matter was discussed at length in section 5.2.3 and 5.2.3.1 of the dissertation.

Fourthly, the uniforms conveyed a message of the feminine culture of the organization, through the need to eliminate competitive dressing, which was addressed by the uniform. This deduction made is based on the fact that competition is seen as a masculine trait (Hofstede, 1991: 85). Other indicators of a feminine culture are the social roles for men and women that overlap, and the tendency for everybody to be tender and focusing on

relationships (Hofstede, 1991: 80). The relationship between femininity was discussed in detail in section 4.2.4 of the discussion.

The last cultural dimension of Eastern Cape Technikon is the Short-term Orientation. A typical short-term orientation is where traditions and social obligations are respected, with an emphasis on the past and present (Hofstede, 1991: 263). The finding here was that the uniforms were opposing the culture where traditions of the past are maintained, towards a future, more western uniform. However, opposing this argument is the desire expressed by the participants to establish a uniform reflecting the Xhosa traditional ethnic clothing. If the uniforms were to be changed to this suggested style, it would reflect the Technikon's culture. One of the main arguments against the ethnic uniform is the stakeholders' viewpoint that the organization must change towards a long-term, future orientated culture. If this is to be the case, it can be said that the uniforms are transmitting that culture, due to its western business-like design.

The significance of the findings of the research lies in the fact that the leaders of the organization may manipulate the use of uniforms to embed and transmit a desired culture, as suggested by Parker (2000: 01). However, it is clear that the leadership of Eastern Cape Technikon does not shape the organization's culture through the uniforms. This was proven by the lack of involvement in the use of uniforms together with the lack of support for the replacement of the uniform. Instead, the uniform is managed from an employee perspective. What is meaningful, however, is that despite the lack of intervention from management, the uniforms embed and transmit a true reflection of the organization's culture.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the available literature as discussed in chapter two, the researcher recommends that the following procedures be followed when implementing uniforms at an organization: Conduct a survey to establish the current culture of the organization; Determine what culture the organization would like to portray in future; Establish a

discussion forum that can investigate and discuss the organization's corporate image and branding, and ensure that the uniforms will be portraying the same image and branding. This forum will also liaise with all employees throughout the process of implementing the uniforms, as negotiation and consultation is crucial to ensure that the uniform not only embeds and transmits the culture of the organization, but also improves the group formation and development, as was discussed in chapter five (5); Conduct a survey amongst all employees to determine the needs of the employees with regards to the uniforms or corporate wear that will be implemented. This includes aspects such as design, care and durability, price, suitability for climate and the fitness of the uniform for the intended use, based on the work performed by the employees; Shortlist suitable suppliers of the uniform, and compare the cost; Negotiate through the forum the payment of the uniforms. This includes aspects such as who pays, when and where, and how much; Do an organizational cost analysis to determine the sustainability of the uniforms; Implement the uniforms with the input and approval of all stakeholders of the organization.

Throughout the whole process it is crucial that management ensures the embedding and transmitting of the culture of the organization. Different work-wear, or 'uniforms' are recommended below for each of the culture dimensions.

Firstly, a high power distance culture could be portrayed through compulsory uniforms of similar design for all employees, excluding management, who would not wear uniforms. The different job grades and division would have different features on the uniform to indicate the rank and status of the position that the person occupies. On the other hand a low power distance organization will be reflected when all employees, including managers, have a range of corporate wear that caters for formal and informal events. The corporate wear would be compulsory to wear.

Secondly, a high uncertainty avoidance would be embedded through uniforms with clear branding and logo's which would be compulsory to wear. The low uncertainty avoidance

culture would be embedded through an expanded range of branded clothing, which employees may wear voluntarily.

Thirdly, an individualistic culture would be embedded when employees are free to wear whatever they want, and identification within the organization might be through nametags. On the other hand a collectivist culture would be embedded if all employees, including managers, have a range of corporate wear that caters for formal and informal events. The corporate wear would be compulsory to wear.

Fourthly, a feminine culture will be embedded when all employees, including managers, have a range of corporate wear that caters for formal and informal events. The corporate wear would be compulsory to wear. There would, furthermore, be no visual difference between male and female clothing. A masculine culture in contrast, would be embedded through the use of compulsory uniforms for all employees, excluding management, who would not wear uniforms. The different job grades and division would have different features on the uniform to indicate the rank and status of the position that the person occupies. Management might have corporate clothing.

Fifthly, corporate clothing that reflects the organization's heritage and surroundings will embed a short-term orientation. This orientation might be further embedded through the use of environmentally friendly clothing which would indicate the organization's social obligations towards the environment. Alternatively, the organization would have no uniform or corporate wear, as using a uniform will alter the individuals "past and present". For a long-term orientation, all employees, including managers, have a range of corporate wear that caters for formal and informal events. The corporate wear would be compulsory to wear. Furthermore, the corporate wear should reflect the organization's long-term strategy and portray the image of where the organization aspires to be at in future.

### **6.3 Limitations and further study**

As indicated in the introduction of this research, the limitations of this study are that the findings of this research might not be applicable to other tertiary institutions. As indicated in the introduction, this research was conducted on the Butterworth campus of Eastern Cape Technikon. As discussed in chapter two (2), uniforms are part of the external factors on organizational culture, together with other physical factors. Due to the geographical location and other special circumstances, the findings might therefore not be applicable to organizations in other locations. However, in the paradigm of this research it is acceptable if the study understands the role of uniforms in embedding and transmitting culture at the sample organization. The researcher, however, suggests a further study to include other tertiary institutions, to test if the findings would be similar. The tertiary education field differs from organizations within the manufacturing, wholesale, retail and service organization. The research thus should be widened to include such industries, to be able to compare the findings in a wider field.

Throughout the study, it was evident that there is a lack of tested theories with regard to appearance management in general, and more specific, the appearance management of the African continent. Within this wide field, there are various sub fields that can be studied. What is important, however, is the development of annotated information on the dress of people in Africa, and the role of clothing and adornment on the social interaction amongst groups.

With regard to the research findings, it should be highlighted that the researcher did not have the expertise to determine the influence of the written and spoken language on the culture of the Technikon. Furthermore, the artifacts analyzed were mainly the physical and social environments. However, the researcher deems this sufficient as the focus was on the physical embedding and transmitting mechanisms of culture.

Welman and Kruger (2001: 185) are concerned about research done at the workplace of the researcher, as this can risk the research validity. In this research the risk was



minimized due to the triangulation of data sources. In most cases the sources of data were reporting similar findings, and inconsistencies were explained by the interrelationship of the various aspects of the research. The use of multiple sources also addressed the limitation posed by the use of interviews, as highlighted by Clark (2004: 06), who states that the researcher's perspective can shape the findings. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the goal of this research paradigm, namely constructivist, is to understand and not to explain (Clark, 2004: 06). It is thus argued that the findings of this research, is a valid understanding of the role of uniforms on embedding and transmitting organizational culture at the Eastern Cape Technikon.

## 7. References

ACKERMAN, R. 2001. **Hearing grasshoppers jump**. Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers.

ARBUTHNOT, S. 2004. **Organisational Connectivity**. [Online] Available: [http://www.qld.ipaa.org.au/12\\_PDFs\\_2004/vsl\\_conectivity.pdf](http://www.qld.ipaa.org.au/12_PDFs_2004/vsl_conectivity.pdf). [Accessed 04 June 2004]

ASHKANASY, N. M., WILDEROM, C. P. M., AND PETERSON, M. F., 2000. **Handbook of Organisational Culture and Climate**. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing.

BRYANT, N., 1999. **Evaluating the Cola cultures**. [Online] Available: [http://www.wps.prenhall.com/au\\_be\\_robbins\\_mgt\\_3/0.7202.528414-.00.html](http://www.wps.prenhall.com/au_be_robbins_mgt_3/0.7202.528414-.00.html) [Accessed 04 May 2004]

CARMINES, E. G., and ZELLER, R. A., 1991. **Reliability and Validity assessment**. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

CHEMERS, M. M., OSKAMP, S., CONSTANZO, M. A. 1995. **Diversity in organisations: New perspectives for a changing workplace**. London: SAGE Publications Inc.

CHOWDHURY, S. 2001. **The Power of Six Sigma**. London: Prentice Hall.

CLARK, L. S., 2004. **Constructivist methods in the Symbolism, Media and the Life course and the Symbolism, Meaning and the New Media @ Home Projects**. [Online] Available: <http://www.colorado.edu/journalism/mcm/qmr-const-theory.htm> [Accessed 16 May 2004]

DAVEY, B., 2003. **The psychology of racism**. [Online] Available: <http://www.sharelunx.com/web/BDavey/Superiority.htm> [Accessed 13 February 2004]

Comment [NP1]: What does this refer to?

DE VRIES, M. K., 2001. **The Leadership Mystique. A user's manual for the human enterprise.** London: Prentice Hall.

DOWNEY, L., 2000. **From work wear to fashion.** [Online] Available: <http://www.levistrauss.com/about/history/denim.htm> [Accessed 05 February 2004]

D'ONOFRIO, A., 2003. **Qualitative Methods in Educational Inquiry.** [Online] Available: <http://www2.widener.edu/~aad0002/714sampling.html> [Accessed 22 May 2004]

EASTERN CAPE TECHNIKON, 1999b. **Eastern Cape Technikon Minutes of the Senate Meeting held on 18 August 1999.** Butterworth: Secretariat.

EASTERN CAPE TECHNIKON, 2004b. **Eastern Cape Technikon Profile.** Butterworth: Marketing Department.

FISCHER, S. **Culture and Organizations.** Unpublished Presentation. Grahamstown: Department of Human Resource Management, Rhodes University.

FUSSELL, P., 2003. Tees to me a suit. **The Washington Post Company.** [Online] Available: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A64.htm>. [Accessed 02 May 2004]

GILLIS, J. 2000a. Is Casual Dress Friday getting a little too, well, casual? Maybe your policy needs updating. **Staff Leader; November 2000.** 14,3: 1- 02

GILLIS, J. 2000b. One picture is worth a thousand reprimands. **Staff Leader; November 2000.** 14,3: 11.

GUBA, E. C., and LINCOLN, Y. S., **Handbook of Qualitative Research.** California: Sage Publications.

HALL, T. H., 1976. **Beyond Culture**. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc.

HILLS, M. D., 2002. **Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Values Orientation Theory**. [Online] Available: <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~culture/Hills.htm> [Accessed 13 February 2004]

HOFSTEDE, G. 1991. **Cultures and Organisations. Software of the mind**. London: McGraw-Hill.

HOFSTEDE, G. 1998. **Masculinity and Femininity. The taboo dimensions of national cultures**. London: Sage Publications Inc.

INDUSTRY WEEK, 1970. Executive Views on Employee Dress. **Management Review; August 1970**. 59,8: 49 – 53.

IOMA. 2003. Here's how your peers cut crime at their organisations. **Security Directors Report, September 2003**. 3,9: 02.

JOHNSON, D. 2004. **Psychology of Color. Do different colors affect your mood?** [Online] Available: <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/colors1.html>. [Accessed 13 February 2004]

JOHNSON, L., 1988. **Dress with style**. (1). London: Johnson Editions Limited.

KAISER, S. B., 1990. **The Social Psychology of Clothing. Symbolic appearances in context**. (2) New York: Fairchild Publications.

KEENUM, A., 2004. **Clothes make the doctor**. [Online] Available: <http://www.health24.co.za/news/Other/1-934,25959.asp> [Accessed 13 February 2004]

MOORE, P., 2004. A Uniform approach to business. **NZ Business: February 2004**. 18,1: 33-36.

MORGAN, D. 1988. **Focus groups as Qualitative Research**. Newbury Park: Sage.

NEL, P. S., GERBER, P. D., VAN DYK, P. S., HAASBROEK, G. D., SCHULTZ, H. B., SONO, T., and WERNER, A., 2001. **Human Resource Management**. (5). Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

NELLIS, C., 2004. **What your style says about you**. [Online] Available: <http://fashion.about.com/cs/tipsadvice/a/stylesaysabout.htm> [Accessed 04 June 2004]

OLSEN, E. T., 2002. **Personal Identity**. [Online] Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity~personal/> [Accessed 04 June 2004]

PARKER, M., 2000. **Organizational culture and identity**. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

PEARCE, N., 2004a. **Diversity Management: Organisational Culture**. Unpublished Diversity Management course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Management, Rhodes University.

RAFAELI, A., PRATT, M. G., 1993. Tailored meanings: On the meaning and impact of organisational dress. **Academy of management Review**. 18, 01: 32 – 55.

REMENYI, D. 1998. **Central Ethical Considerations for Masters and Doctoral Research in Business and Management Studies**. Gothenburg: Chalmers university of Technology.

ROSE, G. M., SHOHAM, A., KAHLE, L. R., and BATRA, R., 1994. Social Values, Conformity, and Dress. **Journal of Applied Social Psychology**, 24, 17.

SCHEIN, E. H. 1980. **Organisational Psychology**. (3). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

SCHEIN, E. H., 1985. **Organisational culture and leadership**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

SCHNEIDER, A. 1998. **Frumpy or Chic? Tweed or Kente? Sometimes Clothes Make the Professor**. [Online]. Available: <http://chronicle.com/colloquy/98/fashion/background.htm> [Accessed 02 May 2004].

SEIDMAN, I. E., 1991. **Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences**. New York: Teachers College.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AT ANU. 1999. **Social Identity**. [Online] Available: <http://www.anu.edu.au/psychology/social/socident.htm> [Accessed 04 June 2004]

SMITH, C., 1998. **Conceptual and Methodological Research Frameworks**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002a. **Interviews**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002b. **Focus Group Interviews**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002c. **Document analysis or review: using documents as sources of data**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002d. **Qualitative (Data) Research**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002e. **Data analysis**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

SMITH, C., 2002f. **Observation**. Unpublished Research Methodology course notes. Grahamstown: Department of Education, Rhodes University.

STAPLEY, L. F., 1996. **The personality of the organisation**. London: Free Association Books.

THOMAS, D. R., 2003. **A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis**. Auckland: University of Auckland.

THOMPSON, P., MCHUGH, D., 2002. **Work organisations**. (3) London: Palgrave.

VAN MAANEN, J. 1988. **Tales of the field. On writing Ethnology**. Chicago: The university of Chicago Press.

VELTHEIM, J., 2004. **Psychology of the Body**. [Online]. Available: [http://vanudist.home.att.bet//psychology\\_of\\_the\\_body.htm](http://vanudist.home.att.bet//psychology_of_the_body.htm) [Accessed 13 February 2004].

WELCH, J., 2001. **Jack**. London: Headline Book Publishing.

WELMAN, J. C., KRUGER, S.J., 2001. **Research Methodology**. (2). Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

WIKIPEDIA, 2003. **Blue-collar Worker**. Wikipedia; the free encyclopedia. [Online]. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue-collar> [Accessed 04 February 2004].

ZEITHAML, V. A., and BITNER, M. J. 2003. **Services Marketing**. (3). New York: McGraw-Hill.

## 8. Appendices

### 8.1 Observation Checklist

<b>Buildings</b>	
Office allocation	Individual offices for staff. Offices are not planned, and space that was available was converted into office space through the use of dry walls.
Building allocation	Business and Applied Technology faculties each have one building, with Engineering having two buildings on the main campus. Admin has one building that is facing away from the other building entrances. There is no area for students to sit or relax.
Gardens	Gardens are well kept around the entrance and Admin area, and Admin entrance landscaping are continuously changed and renewed. Lawns are always neatly cut. The gardens around the faculty buildings are tramped and do not withstand the student traffic.
Paths and corridors from one office to another	The internal roads and pavements are paved. However, paths have been formed where people walk through the gardens and across the grass. Paths are wide, but roads are too narrow for two vehicles to pass each other. There are no undercover pathway or corridor from one building to another.
Use of space	The layout of buildings is not suitable for the practical Technikon class set-up, and does not cater for the number of students.
<b>Physical Layout</b>	
Safe convenient circulation	The access roads to the Technikon and faculty buildings are not safe, due to its layout and width.
Access and clearance	Due to office furniture being bulky compared to the size of the offices, there is limited clearance between furniture. The same situation is observed in the classrooms, where there are no space to move around in between student workstations.
Lighting	Office lighting is sufficient, but classrooms are poorly lit.
Width of Corridors	Corridors in the admin building are very wide, while corridors in the faculty buildings are wide, but not wide enough for students changing classes.
Neatness of offices	Offices do not allow for filing space and files are untidy and stacked up all over.
Noise levels	The campus is noisy, and classes are interrupted when another class is changing, or when the lawn is mowed.



	Offices are noisy and not sound proof with regard to students outside.
Temperature settings	The admin and engineering buildings are air-conditioned. However, heaters in these areas are always turned on, making the areas warm. Classrooms are very cold in winter and very warm in summer.
Cleanliness	Internal roads are covered with broken glass, especially on Mondays. Papers and rubbish are always lying around on campus, and the areas around the hawkers who sit on campus are very littered. However, there are rubbish bins on all corners of the buildings.
Impact on safety	The researcher was not able to make an observation with regards to this.
Signage	Signs and directions are not clear, and often direct towards roads that are locked with boom gates.
<b>Furniture</b>	
Proportion of furniture to offices	Office furniture are big and bulky, and not in proportion to the office space.
Style	The office furniture is modern and trendy.
Comfort	Apart from the lack of filing space and storage areas, the furniture is comfortable. However, the chairs used in the admin areas are not comfortable and does not support a person's back.
<b>Uniforms</b>	
Type of fabric used	Synthetic with lining.
Color of fabric	Gray, Red, Navy, Lime.
Design/ Style	Formal suits with matching shirts.
Quality	Average.
Comfort	Jackets are not fitting comfortably, especially around the arms, making movement difficult. Skirts are all tight fitting and look uncomfortable, but might be chosen that way by the wearers.
Care	Suits have to be dry-cleaned.

## 8.2 General Interview Guide – Uniforms

### Interview Guide

#### Individuals: Uniforms

Thank you for participating in this interview. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

I am doing this research as an exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. My research has two goals; the first is to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. The second is to determine the role of uniforms in embedding and reinforcing culture.

Your input will be used to help add richness and depth to the information obtained from the available documentation and through observation. I have provided you with copies of the documents that were accessed as part of the research. Your input will be combined with what is learned from other interviews to provide information that will outline the role of uniforms on the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon.

Your answers and comments are confidential. Nothing you say will be identified with you personally, to ensure confidentiality. Your signature on the consent form indicates your consent for this interview. With your permission, this interview will be recorded only to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Are you aware of how the implementation of the uniforms for staff came about?**

Probe:

Do you think this process was appropriate?

Would you like to be involved in such a process?

*How do you feel about admin having to wear uniforms but the academics don't.*

**What does wearing a uniform mean to you?**

**What is your perception of groups who have a common uniform?**

**How do you feel about wearing the uniform?**

Probe:

Does it make you feel different to wear a uniform?

**Do you normally dress in a similar way to the other people in your social group?**

Probe:

Why? How does it make you feel?

Do you feel out if you are not dressed like the other people in the group?

Do you think the type of clothes you wear helps for you to be accepted in a social group?  
Would a group accept or reject you because of your clothes?  
What do you have in common with your social group?  
Is this evident from the way you dress?

**Do you have something in common with the people you work with? Apart from the work?**

**Why were uniforms only implemented for women?**

Probe:  
How do the women feel about this?

**Do you have a choice whether you want to wear the uniform or not?**

Probe:  
Is having a choice important to you?  
Are people allowed to get away with not wearing a uniform?  
Do you tend to not wear your uniform? Why/why not?

**Does having to wear a uniform, impact the team in any way?**

**How do you feel about the female managers in admin also wearing uniforms?**

**What is your understanding of the Technikon dress code?**

Probe:  
Is it common knowledge?  
Are new employees aware of it?  
What is your view on the dress code?  
Do you have casual days at work? Does this impact people's approach to their work at all e.g. are being more relaxed etc?

**Do you think there is a need to change the uniform?**

Probe: Why?

**What purpose do you think uniforms should serve?**

**Why should organizations have uniforms?**

**What do you think about the style and design of the uniforms?**

**What considerations should be taken into account when choosing a uniform?**

**Does the current uniform meet these needs?**

Probe:  
Did you consider comfort?  
Did you consider durability?  
Did you consider freedom of expression?

Are the uniforms easy to care (wash, laundry etc.) for?

**Do you feel proud to wear the uniform?**

Probe: why?

*Did you have to pay for your uniform?*

*How do you feel about this?*

*Why?*

Probe: Where there any financing arrangements made?

**Were new employees offered the opportunity to obtain the uniforms?**

**May not know unless they were new at some stage since introduction.**

Probe: Who pays for the uniform of new employees?

**Do you think the uniforms say anything about the Technikon?**

*Thank you for this interview. The information you provided will be very helpful as I complete my exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture*

## 8.3 Interview Guide: Individual Interviews – Uniform and Culture: Management

### Interview Guide

#### *Interviewees:*

*Director Marketing, Communication and Development*

*Representative from the office of the Vice Principle Administration*

*Institutional Planner*

*Representative from the office of the Vice Principle Academic*

Thank you for participating in this interview. It is anticipated that the interview will take 20 minutes.

I am doing this research as an exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. My research has two goals; the first is to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. The second is to determine the role of uniforms in embedding and reinforcing culture.

As Vice Principal Administration/ Academic you are the leaders of the institution and thus have an important influence in embedding and transmitting the organizational culture.

Your input will be used to help add richness and depth to the information obtained from the available documentation. I have provided you with copies of the documents that were accessed as part of the research. Your input will be combined with what is learned from other interviews to provide information that will outline the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. A copy of the transcript of the interview will be forwarded to you for verification.

Your answers and comments are confidential. Nothing you say will be identified with you personally, to ensure confidentiality. Your signature on the consent form indicates your consent for this interview. With your permission, this interview will be recorded only to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The interview will consist of two sections; the first will determine the culture of the Technikon while the second will look at the use of uniforms within the Technikon.

### **Section 1**

**Can we discuss the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon?**

### How does the institution respond to issues of ...

Probe: Questions from the grid:

Low	Low –High Power Distance		High
	All people should be equal	People should have different levels of power, depending on their role in the group.	
	Authority improves if it is questioned, and it is every person's responsibility to question it.	Authority should not be questioned.	
	Employees should not be afraid to express disagreement with their managers.	Employees should be afraid to express disagreement with their managers.	
	Managers should not be autocratic.	Managers should be autocratic.	
	Managers should consult their subordinates.	Managers should not consult their subordinates.	
	There should be an equal distribution of power between workers and their managers.	There should not be an equal distribution of power between workers and their managers.	

	High – Low uncertainty avoidance		
	I take a long time to make decisions.	I decide quickly.	
	I am reluctant to take risks.	I am comfortable taking risks.	
	I am reluctant to contradict others, urge changes or challenge the system.	It is okay to come forward with new ideas, and urge changes in procedures and policies.	
	Organization rules should not be broken, even if it seems to be in the organization's best interest to do so.	Organization rules should be broken, if it seems to be in the organization's best interest to do so.	
	I feel threatened by uncertain, unknown or novel situations.	I do not feel threatened by uncertain, unknown or novel situations.	

	Individualism - Collectivism		
	Individuals should have independent thoughts, beliefs and actions.	People should integrate their thoughts and beliefs with those of the group.	
	I am what I do, and this	Belonging to a group and having	

	determines my value to the group.	a role, creates my social worth.	
	I value a job that leaves enough time for my personal and family life.	I value a job that provides opportunity for training.	
	I value a job that provides freedom to approach the job in my own way.	I value a job that provides good physical working conditions.	
	I value a job that provides a personal sense of achievement.	I value a job that allows me to fully utilize my skills and abilities.	
	What job I do is more important than who I work with.	Who I work with is more important than what job I do.	

	Masculinity - Femininity		
	Competition motivates us.	Competition tends to demotivate.	
	I value directness and assertiveness.	I value being indirect and polite.	
	It is fine and sometimes useful to call attention to abilities, my accomplishments and myself.	I am reluctant to call attention to abilities, my accomplishments and myself.	
	At work it is important that I receive the recognition I deserve for doing a good job.	At work it is important that I have good working relationships with my immediate supervisor and where we cooperate well with each other.	
	It is important to me to have a job that is challenging and where I get personal sense of accomplishment.	It is important to me to have a job that is secure and that I will be able to work in as long as I want to.	

	Long term – Short term orientation		
	When I encounter obstacles, persistence and perseverance is important.	When I encounter obstacles, it is better to look for an easier option.	
	I value thriftiness and believe in investing in the future.	I respect tradition and history.	
	People who make mistakes should be ashamed.	People who make mistakes should try and save face.	
	It is important to order relationships and respect the status that people have.	It is important to reciprocate greetings, favors and gifts.	
	Actions should be based on considerations about the future.	Actions should be based on history and current circumstances.	

	Traditions should be respected and preserved.	Traditions should be adapted to the modern context.	
	I value thrift and being sparing with resources.	I believe it is important to keep up with others.	
	I persevere towards slow results.	I expect quick results.	

**Can you tell me of an example where you handled a crises situation successfully?**

**Can you tell me of an example where you handled a crises situation unsuccessfully?**

How easily do you take risks?

**How often do you have rectorate meetings?**

Probe: What are typical agenda items for such meetings?

**What are the values that the Technikon strives to?**

**DO you think the day-to-day life at the Technikon reflects these values?**

Probe:

The promotion criteria do not reflect the aspects of teamwork/ participative management/ transformation/ transparent decision making as highlighted by the institutional values. Please respond?

How would you explain the gap between practice and policy?

**Where did the mission and vision, as well as the institutional values originate?**

Probe:

Do you think staff at the Technikon identify with these? Are they living them out on a Day-to-day basis at the Technikon? Why/why not?

## **Section 2**

**How is the decision taken regarding which staff wear uniforms and which do not?**

**What is the basis for these decisions?**

**Is consideration given to the following purpose of uniforms:**

- Corporate image?
- Relationships?



I would like to highlight the difference between uniforms, corporate wear and safety wear. Safety wear are protective clothing worn due to the nature of a person's work environment. A Corporate Wardrobe consists of fashionable, wearable clothing for employees to enhance the image of and relationships within the organization. Sometimes a corporate wardrobe is referred to as a Uniform, as is the case with this research. The true meaning of uniforms is the garments worn by organizations representing state authority, such as the police service.

**Would you like all employees of ECT to wear uniforms?**

Probe: Why?

What would the purpose of these uniforms be?

**Uniforms were only implemented for Administrative Staff. Why was that decision taken?**

Probe: and academics?

**Do you know how the employees feel about wearing a uniform?**

Probe: Does wearing a uniform not cause a divide between administrators and academics?

**Why were uniforms only implemented for women?**

Probe:

How do the women feel about this?

Will you wear a uniform?

Will you wear corporate wear?

**Does the Technikon have a dress code?**

Probe: Is it common knowledge?

Are new employees aware of it?

What is your view on the dress code?

If there are no dress code: Do you think the Technikon needs a dress code?

Casual Friday? = No Friday?

**Do you think the way in which people dress affect the stakeholders of the Technikon?**

Probe: Why then uniforms?

Any social control / peer pressure that plays a role in dress codes? Whether formal or informal.

**Who do you think should decide on the style and design of the uniforms?**

Probe: What is a major consideration in the choice of uniforms?

**In your opinion, does the uniform portray any specific image?**

Probe: Then why the specific uniform?

**Who was responsible for the payment for the uniforms?**

**Who do you think should be responsible?**

Probe:

Did employees pay out of their own pockets?

If so, were there any financing arrangements made?

**Were new employees offered the opportunity to obtain the uniforms?**

Probe:

Who pays for the uniform of new employees?

**Do you think the uniforms say anything about the culture of an organization?**

*Thank you for this interview. The information you provided will be very helpful as I complete my exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture.*

## 8.4 Focus Group Interview Guide

Interviewees:

Sample from Institutional Forum

Member of Council  
Member from Top Management  
Member from Top Management  
Member from Senate  
Member from Senate  
Member from Staff Union  
Member from Staff Union  
Member from Student Representative Council  
Member from Student Representative Council  
Member from Technikon Convocation

Thank you for participating in this focus group. It is anticipated that the discussion will take between 20 to 30 minutes.

I am doing this research as an exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture. My research has two goals; the first is to explore the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. The second is to determine the role of uniforms in embedding and reinforcing culture.

Your input will be used to help add richness and depth to the information obtained from the available documentation. I have provided you with copies of the documents that were accessed as part of the research. Your input will be combined with what is learned from other interviews to provide information that will outline the culture of Eastern Cape Technikon. A copy of the transcript of the interview will be forwarded to you for verification.

Your answers and comments are confidential. Nothing you say will be identified with you personally, to ensure confidentiality. Your signature on the consent form indicates your consent for this interview. With your permission, this interview will be recorded only to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The interview will consist of two sections; the first will determine the culture of the Technikon while the second will determine the role of uniforms within the Technikon

### **Section 1**

**How would you describe the Technikon as a place to work to someone who has never been here?**

Probe: Questions from the grid:

Low	Low –High Power Distance		High
	All people should be equal	People should have different levels of power, depending on their role in the group.	
	Authority improves if it is questioned, and it is every person’s responsibility to question it.	Authority should not be questioned.	
	Employees should not be afraid to express disagreement with their managers.	Employees should be afraid to express disagreement with their managers.	
	Managers should not be autocratic.	Managers should be autocratic.	
	Managers should consult their subordinates.	Managers should not consult their subordinates.	
	There should be an equal distribution of power between workers and their managers.	There should not be an equal distribution of power between workers and their managers.	

	High – Low uncertainty avoidance		
	I take a long time to make decisions.	I decide quickly.	
	I am reluctant to take risks.	I am comfortable taking risks.	
	I am reluctant to contradict others, urge changes or challenge the system.	It is okay to come forward with new ideas, and urge changes in procedures and policies.	
	Organization rules should not be broken, even if it seems to be in the organization’s best interest to do so.	Organization rules should be broken, if it seems to be in the organization’s best interest to do so.	
	I feel threatened by uncertain, unknown or novel situations.	I do not feel threatened by uncertain, unknown or novel situations.	

	Individualism - Collectivism		
	Individuals should have independent thoughts, beliefs	People should integrate their thoughts and beliefs with those	

	and actions.	of the group.	
	I am what I do, and this determines my value to the group.	Belonging to a group and having a role, creates my social worth.	
	I value a job that leaves enough time for my personal and family life.	I value a job that provides opportunity for training.	
	I value a job that provides freedom to approach the job in my own way.	I value a job that provides good physical working conditions.	
	I value a job that provides a personal sense of achievement.	I value a job that allows me to fully utilize my skills and abilities.	
	What job I do is more important than who I work with.	Who I work with is more important than what job I do.	

	Masculinity - Femininity		
	Competition motivates us.	Competition tends to demotivate.	
	I value directness and assertiveness.	I value being indirect and polite.	
	It is fine and sometimes useful to call attention to abilities, my accomplishments and myself.	I am reluctant to call attention to abilities, my accomplishments and myself.	
	At work it is important that I receive the recognition I deserve for doing a good job.	At work it is important that I have good working relationships with my immediate supervisor and where we cooperate well with each other.	
	It is important to me to have a job that is challenging and where I get personal sense of accomplishment.	It is important to me to have a job that is secure and that I will be able to work in as long as I want to.	

	Long term – Short term orientation		
	When I encounter obstacles, persistence and perseverance is important.	When I encounter obstacles, it is better to look for an easier option.	
	I value thriftiness and believe in investing in the future.	I respect tradition and history.	
	People who make mistakes should be ashamed.	People who make mistakes should try and save face.	
	It is important to order relationships and respect the status that people have.	It is important to reciprocate greetings, favors and gifts.	
	Actions should be based on	Actions should be based on	

	considerations about the future.	history and current circumstances.	
	Traditions should be respected and preserved.	Traditions should be adapted to the modern context.	
	I value thrift and being sparing with resources.	I believe it is important to keep up with others.	
	I persevere towards slow results.	I expect quick results.	

**What behavior is admired at Eastern Cape Technikon?**

*What behavior is not accepted?*

*What is important?*

**Section 2**

I would like to highlight the difference between uniforms, corporate wear and safety wear. Safety wear are protective clothing worn due to the nature of a person's work environment. A Corporate Wardrobe consists of fashionable, wearable clothing for employees to enhance the image of and relationships within the organization. Sometimes a corporate wardrobe is referred to as a Uniform, as is the case with this research. The true meaning of uniforms is the garments worn by organizations representing state authority, such as the police service.

**How is the decision taken regarding which staff wears uniforms and which ones do not? What is the basis for these decisions?**

**Is consideration given to the following purpose of uniforms?**

- Corporate image?
- Relationships?

**Would you like all employees of ECT to wear uniforms?**

Probe: Why?

What would the purpose of these uniforms be?

**Uniforms were only implemented for Administrative Staff. Why was that decision taken?**

Probe: and academics?

**Do you know how the employees feel about wearing a uniform?**

Probe: Does wearing a uniform not cause a divide between administrators and academics?

**Why were uniforms only implemented for women?**

Probe:

How do the women feel about this?

Will you wear a uniform?

Will you wear corporate wear?

**Does the Technikon have a dress code?**

Probe: Is it common knowledge?

Are new employees aware of it?

What is your view on the dress code?

If there are no dress code: Do you think the Technikon needs a dress code?

Casual Friday? = No Friday?

**Do you think the way in which people dress affect the stakeholders of the Technikon?**

Probe: Why then uniforms?

Any social control / peer pressure that plays a role in dress codes? Whether formal or informal.

**Who do you think should decide on the style and design of the uniforms?**

Probe: What is a major consideration in the choice of uniforms?

**In your opinion, does the uniform portray any specific image?**

Probe: Then why the specific uniform?

**Who was responsible for the payment for the uniforms?**

**Who do you think should be responsible?**

Probe:

Did employees pay out of their own pockets?

If so, were there any financing arrangements made?

**Were new employees offered the opportunity to obtain the uniforms?**

Probe:

Who pays for the uniform of new employees?

**Do you think the uniforms say anything about the culture of an organization?**

*Thank you for this interview. The information you provided will be very helpful as I complete my exploration of the role of uniforms in contributing to the embedding and transmitting of organizational culture.*

## 8.5 Demographics Questionnaire

### Interview Consent Form.

I hereby give consent to this interview. I agree that the interview may be recorded, with the understanding that it is only for clarity purposes. I further understand that my input in this interview is confidential and that I would receive a transcript to verify the information therein contained as true reflection of the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Male	Female
------	--------

Age:

18 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65
---------	---------	---------	---------	---------

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Section/ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose a category which best describes your ethnic culture:

*Tick the appropriate block.*

African Culture	American Culture	Afrikaans Culture	Western Culture	Other
-----------------	------------------	-------------------	-----------------	-------

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

---

Thank you for participating in this interview.

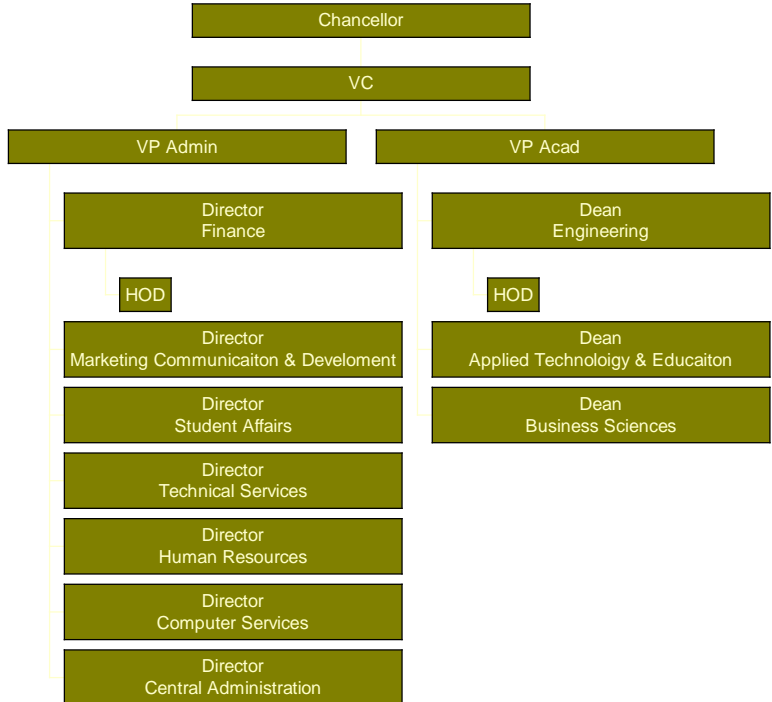


## 8.6 Summary of Documents Accessed - Research Document Analysis

### Findings

	Information to be accessed from the documents	What was found in the documents	Comments
<b>Eastern Cape Technikon Prospectus</b>	<p>Mission Vision Value Statement =Formal statement of organizational philosophy, creeds and charters (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)</p> <p>Messages from leaders – determining leadership style (Primary Embedding Mechanism)</p> <p>Color and Design of Technikon logo and image (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement</p>	<p><b>Vision</b> = The Eastern Cape Technikon will be a leading institution of higher learning, striving for excellence in Engineering, Technology, Applied Sciences, Education and Commerce and offering career-orientated degrees, diplomas and certificates relevant to the socio-economic needs of the region, the country and the sub-continent it serves.</p> <p><b>Mission Statement:</b> The mission of the Eastern Cape Technikon is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of appropriate, technological, career-orientated education in co-operation with commerce, industry, the government and the community;</li> <li>• The provision of high quality teaching, research, development and community services sensitive to needs and trends;</li> <li>• The production of graduates with an entrepreneurial spirit, good work ethics and responsible leadership ability and</li> <li>• The fostering of local and international partnerships and linkages.</li> </ul> <p><b>Institutional Values:</b> The Eastern Cape Technikon is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Excellence and freedom. As an accountable public higher education institution, we acknowledge at institutional, faculty and</li> </ul>	<p>Observation: The documents displayed in offices are outdated.</p>

	Mechanisms)	<p>departmental levels, our right to exercise our academic freedom in a responsible way, in teaching and learning, in research and in community service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality. We commit ourselves to quality assurance as a benchmark for excellent performance.</li> <li>• Transformation. We commit ourselves to managed transformation throughout the Institution.</li> <li>• Transparency. We commit ourselves to be transparent in decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Participative Management. The people who are substantially affected by our decisions should have a say in the making of those decisions.</li> <li>• Teamwork. We commit ourselves to teamwork and mutual support as a mechanism to realize the Institution's vision.</li> <li>• Equity. We commit ourselves at all levels to promoting equity as a strategy to address national policy priorities.</li> <li>• Respect. We commit ourselves to respect for others in the workplace, immediate surroundings and the community at large.</li> <li>• Responsiveness. We commit ourselves to be responsive to the changing, competitive and challenging environment.</li> <li>• Good Governance, Work Ethics and Moral Standards. We commit ourselves to promote Good Governance, Work Ethics and high Moral Standards.</li> <li>• Efficiency and Entrepreneurship. We commit ourselves to the promotion of a culture and spirit of entrepreneurship and efficient utilization and conservation of the Technikon resources.</li> </ul> <p>Technikon colors = red, green Logo of aloe.</p> <p>Eastern Cape Technikon (2004: 03 – 07)</p>	
--	-------------	---	--

<p><b>Technikon Organogram</b></p>	<p>Determining Organizational Structure and Design (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)</p>	<p><b>Traditional Hierarchy</b></p>  <p>Eastern Cape Technikon (2004: 23 – 43)</p>	<p>Hierarchy promoted through structure. Schools were done way with in an attempt to promote flatter structures. Associate Dean positions were done away with to promote flatter structures. Successful?</p> <p>Not indicating participative management. Not promoting teamwork.</p>
<p><b>Performance Management Policy/ Performance Agreement</b></p>	<p>To determine the type of behavior that will get rewarded – What leaders measure? (Primary Embedding Mechanism) To determine the communication lines (Primary Embedding Mechanism)</p>	<p><b>Teaching Research Community Development</b></p> <p>Lecturer/ Officer → HOD → Dean/ Director → VP</p> <p>Eastern Cape Technikon (2002: 03 – 05)</p>	<p>No rewarding of teamwork. No reward for entrepreneurial effort No reward for compliance with institutional values?</p> <p><b>Communication lines hierarchical while valuing teamwork?</b> <b>Observation</b> No implementation yet.</p>

			Necessary resources not available to staff to comply.
<b>Academic Achiever Policy</b>	To determine the type of behavior that will get rewarded – What leaders measure? (Primary Embedding Mechanism)	Nominations and voting by faculties. Criteria in line with PMS  Eastern Cape Technikon (2003: 01 – 03)	<b>Observation</b> No implementation yet. Necessary resources not available.
Recruitment and Selection Policy / <b>Policy on appointment of new staff</b>	To determine the assumptions, values and beliefs that is unconsciously used as guideline for recruitment. (Primary Embedding Mechanism)	Salary offer and appointment considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salary range of post</li> <li>• Scarcity of skills</li> <li>• Relevant experience</li> <li>• Qualifications</li> </ul> SA Residents first option, in line with equity policy and AA. Non South Africans 3-year tenure. Internal & External Advertising All stakeholders involved in all processes. Eastern Cape Technikon (2004: 01 – 05)	Not inline with PMS  All-inclusive participatory management visible.
<b>Conditions of Service</b>			
<b>Academic Promotional Criteria</b>	To determine the type of behavior that will get rewarded – What leaders measure? (Primary Embedding Mechanism) To determine the communication lines (Primary Embedding	Based on qualifications Other Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Institutional Service</li> <li>• Administration and project management</li> <li>• Professional and Technological Achievements</li> <li>• Curriculum Development and RPL techniques and</li> </ul>	Criteria from HOD, Senior Lecturer levels to that of VP the same.

	Mechanism)	application. Eastern Cape Technikon (2003: 01 – 09)	
<b>Policy on Study Leave</b>	MD	After 5 years of service. Council approval with prior dept approval No replacement No subsidy. Eastern Cape Technikon (2003: 01 – 05)	Policy makes promotion possibilities very difficult to reach.
<b>Policy on tertiary education subsidy</b>		75% of tuition fees Study at ECT 100% tuition fees 2 years honors 3 years masters 5 years Doctors. Repeat studies not subsidized Study field to have Direct bearing on duties Eastern Cape Technikon (2003: 01 – 03)	
<b>Policy on exit interviews</b>		Purpose: Alleged unfair labor practice should be investigated. Eastern Cape Technikon (2004: 01 – 03)	
<b>Job Evaluation Policy</b>		Re-evaluation in no less than 12 months. Based on job description – responsibility of line manager Senior management done by consultant  Eastern Cape Technikon (1999: 01 – 05)	
<b>Policy: Appointment of Head of Departments within faculties</b>	<b>To determine the organisational systems and procedures (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)</b>	Duties: Academic & Administrative Management of dept's Prepare & Control Budget Administer quality assurance Appointment by Vice Chancellor Term of office = 3 years Dean does performance appraisals  Eastern Cape Technikon (2002: 01 – 03)	No participatory management w.r.t election.  Observation: No PMS implemented.

	Decentralized or Centralized (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)		
<b>Policy on election of Deans</b>	To determine the organizational systems and procedures (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms) Decentralized or Centralized (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)	Election by secret ballot. All faculty members participate. Term of office = 3 years  Eastern Cape Technikon (1999: 01)	Observation: No mention of PMS
<b>Annual Reports *</b>	Reporting structures Forms of reporting Stories about important people and events (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)		
<b>Minutes of Physical and Spatial</b>	Decision-making with regard to artifacts of the	No minutes available. No meeting for the last three years. No chairman or committee.	

<b>Planning Committee</b>	Technikon. (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)		
<b>Technikon management committee meeting minutes *</b>	To determine leadership behavior in crisis situations (Primary Embedding Mechanism)	Crisis situations only discussed with EXCO.  Minutes not available to researcher. Attended meeting as observer on Wednesday 11 August 2004: Agenda on recent strike.	Leaders take a bottom-up approach. Thus participatory management?
<b>Technikon Succession Plan *</b>	To determine the deliberate teaching and coaching as part of role modeling (Primary Embedding Mechanism)	Available only for HOD's	No succession planning for Top Management.
<b>Graduation Ceremony Programs *</b>	Stories about important people and events (Secondary Articulation and Reinforcement Mechanisms)	None determined through documentation.	

## **8.7 List of maximum variation sampling participants for the uniform interviews**

One female gardener

One male gardener

One female security officer

One male security officer

One female catering supervisor

One male caterer

One female maintenance officer

One male maintenance assistant

One female administrative officer working within an academic department

One female administrative officer working within an admin department

One female manager wearing uniform

One male manager